

All about

# *Weddings*

St Thomas' Church  
Wednesfield

and

St Alban's Church  
Ashmore Park



2016



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Discover all you need to know about Church of England weddings and blessings. Marrying in church is personal, meaningful, spiritual and beautiful, just as you want it to be. Get the right advice and some great ideas from the Church of England's official weddings website.

[www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org)

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# *Congratulations!*

That's the first thing we want to say. If you're planning or just wondering about a wedding, then you're thinking about one of the most important commitments you'll ever make, and it's one that we at St Thomas' and St Alban's churches want to help you to celebrate.

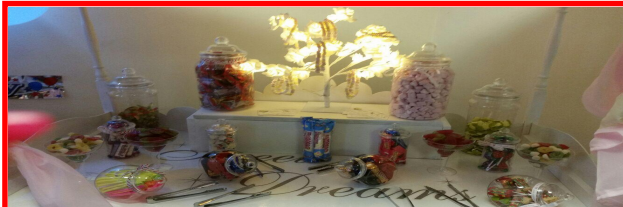
We believe that marriage is one of God's gifts to the world – and not just for people who share all of our beliefs. That's why the Church of England offers marriages to people who are part of our local community, as well as to people who are regular church members.

Whether you come to one of our churches or go elsewhere, we hope that your wedding is a great occasion – and, more importantly still, that the marriage which follows it is a life-long and life-giving blessing to you both.

## **Why get married in church?**

Apart from being a great venue for your celebration, there are some things which only a church wedding will give you.

- First and foremost is the spiritual side of the service. You'll begin your married life with a blessing, wearing rings blessed by a priest as a lasting sign of the commitment you make to each other. We'll pray for you, and if there are particular things you'd like to include in the prayers we can usually arrange that.
- Your priest will prepare the service with you, and help you to get the most out of the wedding by thinking through how its words and actions set the stage for the rest of your life together.
- A traditional church wedding is as traditional as weddings get – or you can do it a bit differently (see James and Steph's story on page 20). Your priest will take you through the planning and talk about what works well, bringing together ancient traditions and modern possibilities to make the service right for you.
- You'll be married at the heart of your community, rather than away from the centre of things. At St Thomas', you'll be standing in the same spot where people have come to be married since 1750!
- The church will be here to support you after the wedding as well as before, if ever you need our prayers or someone to turn to – or perhaps to come back in 25 years' time to celebrate your anniversary, renew your vows and be blessed again!



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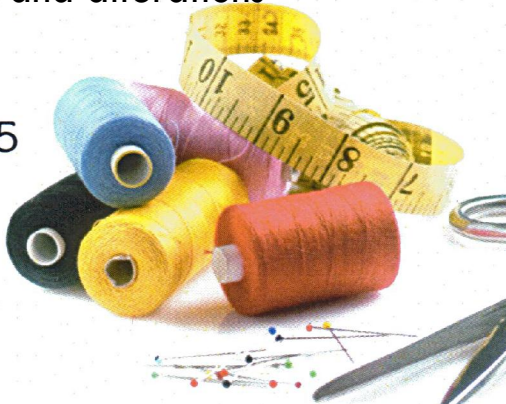
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# Can we get married in church?

If you're a man and a woman from a country in the European Economic Area, you're both over 18 (or 16 if your parents agree), it's a first marriage for both of you (or you're widowed) and at least one of you lives in the parish\*, yes you can!

If you don't live in the parish, you can still be married here if you are on the electoral roll of the church or if any of these apply for at least one of you;

- You or your parents have at any point during your lifetime lived in the parish for a period of at least six months;
- You, or your parents during your lifetime, have regularly attended worship at one of our churches (St Thomas', St Alban's or St Chad's) for a period of at least six months;
- You were baptised (christened) at one of our churches, or prepared for confirmation here;
- Your parents or grandparents were married at one of our churches;

If at least one of you is divorced, you may be able to be married at St Thomas' or St Alban's, but you'll need to meet with one of the priests before we can book the wedding. It's not a matter of working out who was at fault, but of helping to sure that this is all behind you and that you're ready to begin again. We also need to be clear that your current relationship could not be seen to be part of the reason for the breakdown of your first marriage.

If one of you is a foreign national, special rules apply to the legal preparations for marriage. Please ask for advice.

\*To find out if you're in the parish, ask one of the clergy or check online at [www.achurchnearyou.com/parishmap.php](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/parishmap.php).





## When can we get married?

Weddings can take place on any day of the week, not just Saturdays! You might find that reception venues are easier to book (and cheaper!) on other days. Whichever day you choose, we'll see what we can do!

The wedding can't start before 8am (which has never been a problem!) and must be completed by 6pm, or it doesn't count! The service itself normally takes around 45 minutes, and you need to allow time before and after the service for guests arriving, photographs etc.

The church buildings are heavily booked at some times of year, especially for summer Saturdays and around Christmas and Easter when a lot of other events happen – so especially if you're looking for one of those times, do enquire as soon as you can!

The only time when we *don't* celebrate weddings at all is at Good Friday and Holy Saturday (the two days before Easter) as these are specially solemn days in church.

We do need at least three weeks' notice of a wedding to complete the legal preparations – and you can book as far in advance as you like!



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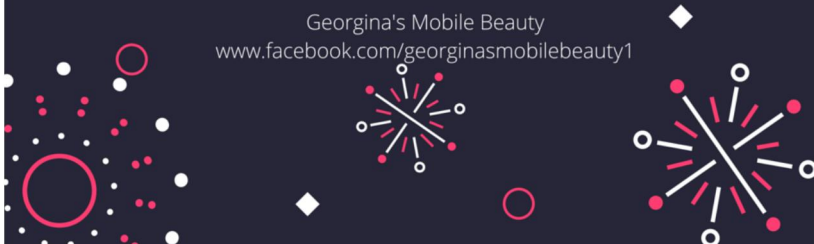
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## What happens in a church wedding service?

- Traditionally, the groom arrives early, and the service begins when the bride and her bridesmaids process into church, usually to stirring organ music!
- Then we pray together and sing a hymn or worship song. The priest helps us to focus on the meaning of marriage, and then we have the slightly nerve-wracking bit where anyone who knows a *legal* reason why the wedding can't take place has their chance to say so. (It never happens outside films!)
- The couple declare their love and commitment to each other, and we promise them our support in the years to come.
- We hear a Bible reading, and the priest helps us to think about what it means for the couple.
- Then the couple join hands to make their vows and exchange rings blessed by the priest, before they're announced as husband and wife. The priest 'ties the knot' by wrapping the stole, the special priest's scarf, around their joined hands, and they kneel as we bless them.
- We record the marriage in the church registers, while we sing another hymn or song, or while the choir sing an anthem.
- We pray for the couple's future, then after a final blessing they lead us out of church together as husband and wife!

## Can we have extra music, readings and so on?

Yes you can, so long as they're appropriate for church!

Your priest will talk with you about what you'd like to include in the service, and may have suggestions and advice on how well some things will work in the building. We do ask that any visiting musicians work with our own organists to ensure that everything goes smoothly.

Both churches have PA systems with CD players, so if there's recorded music you'd like to include that's usually possible.

## Can we involve our children in the service?

Many people booking a wedding already have a family, either together or with children from previous relationships. We encourage you to involve children as fully as you can in planning the service and on the day. We'll help you to think about ways to include them where that's appropriate.

- If your children are old enough, why not ask them to read from the Bible or say a prayer during the service?
- Children can carry rings to the front, or walk up the aisle with Mom;
- If you wish, children can join you at the altar at the end of the service, so you can be blessed together as a family.

## What does a church wedding cost?

Probably less than you think!

The biggest part is the 'statutory fees' which cover all the legal parts of the service, the priest and the use of the church building. That's set by the national church in October each year, and for 2016 is £446.

We can't do the job well without our vergers (who sets up and opens up, welcomes people and manages the practical bits of the service) and organist (who will also work with any other musicians and recorded music). For their services we add £130, so the total cost is **£576** for the service.

There are extra things you may wish to add on top;

- If you'd like our choir to sing, that's an extra £70
- If the service is filmed, there's an extra fee of £30 to the organist
- If you'd like special flowers, or would like us to print a service sheet for you, we'll discuss costs - we don't try to make a profit on this!
- If you'd like to hire the St Thomas Centre - either for coffee before the wedding, drinks afterwards or a whole reception, that's £25/hr

If you don't both live in the parish, there will also be a fee of £40 at your 'home' church for calling banns there - we'll discuss this if it applies.

We don't ask for a deposit - just that you let us know if plans change.

These prices are all for 2016. For future years, we'll let you know prices as early as possible.

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## How do we book a wedding?

Either come to any of the church services and talk to a priest afterwards, or come along to St Thomas' on Friday evenings between 6.30pm and 7.30pm. If that's difficult, please call Rev'd Nick on 01902 731 462, Rev'd Sam on 01902 732 317 or the parish office on 01902 723 310. You may need to leave a message! We'll get back to you and if necessary make an appointment to meet you.

We'll take some details from you, and check that you're okay under one of the headings under 'can we get married in church?' It will help if you can bring some photo ID with you, ideally a passport, as we will need to take a copy of this to establish that you are a British or EU national.

We'll arrange a date and time with you, and answer any questions you may have.

## What happens next?

At any time that you want to meet with your priest before your wedding, please get in touch – especially if there's something you're concerned about! We've probably come across most worries and potential problems before, and will usually be able to help.

We also recommend that you have a good look at the 'yourchurchwedding.org' website – it's full of useful advice and resources that will help you with things like planning the service, choosing hymns etc.

The next thing that happens is that, about three months before the wedding, we'll let you know that we're going to call the banns. This means that we announce in church at the main Sunday service for three weeks that you're getting married, so that anyone who has a legal objection can say so. We also pray for you both during those services.

At that point, we'll check that all of the details you gave us when you booked the wedding (address, job etc.) are still the same, and arrange a meeting with your priest and a rehearsal in church.

At the meeting with the priest, usually at your home a couple of months before the wedding, he or she will go through the service with you, not just to agree on readings and hymns, but also to help you to get the most out of the wedding by filling the words of the vows etc. with your own meaning. We'll also ask you to confirm whether or not you'd like to book the church choir and so on.



At the rehearsal, usually a few days before the wedding, you'll come to church with everyone else who's going to be involved, and walk through the whole service so that it feels comfortable and familiar when you do it for real! We encourage photographers to come to the rehearsal if possible, so that they can plan in advance where they will be to get the best pictures. We ask for payment in cash at the rehearsal, please.

Then it's the wedding itself! And then, even more important, the rest of your life together.

## Coming to church on Sundays

We do encourage you to join the church in worship on Sundays, before and after the wedding. First of all, it's just a good thing to do, which will help you to grow in faith and as a person.

It'll also help you to feel at home in the building, and to get to know the people who'll be involved in the service more deeply. It really does make a difference!

The best service to come to for most people is on Sunday morning – 10am at St Alban's, 10.15am at St Thomas'. Those are the biggest services, with music and with all kinds of people there. Give it a try!

To keep in touch with St Thomas' online, the best way is to find us on Facebook. We'll let you know church news or future events there, and you're welcome to take as much of a part as you like!

## Would you like to know more?

Just call in to either of our churches, or telephone one of the priests to ask for more details. Or go to [yourchurchwedding.org](http://yourchurchwedding.org), where you'll find all kinds of useful information.

Whether you come to us for your wedding or not, may it be a wonderful day, and the start of a long and happy new chapter in your life and relationship.

*The Rev'd Nick Watson*



*Rev'd Nick Watson*



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Contact us for a no obligation meeting to chat about your big day!

# Making, borrowing and skill swapping - we had the wedding of our dreams.

Getting married means a wedding and that can mean big bucks with the average wedding reportedly costing anything from £15,000 upwards! But it doesn't have to.

You can have the perfect wedding on any budget and we proved it! A large wedding, afternoon tea, ice cream van, live music, a hog roast, the perfect dress, this was our perfect day and this is how we did it for less than £4,000!

James and I had been together 7 years before we finally decided the time was right to get wed. While we both wanted to get married, neither of us wanted anything extravagant and we both agreed it was more important to have who we wanted there, then to spend lots of money on expensive meals and venues that would restrict our numbers. So the first thing we decided on was venues. Well actually that was decided in part for us (and also couples as a proposal - of sorts).

Neither James or I are regular Church goers and always felt a little uneasy about rocking up to a church we didn't attend and saying "nice gaff, can we use it for the day?" and disappearing again, but neither of us really wanted a registry office either.

One day while discussing why we weren't yet married with Sam (the vicar at St Albans!) and expressing our feelings on a having a church wedding - he allayed our worries explaining Churches really didn't mind and then asked a simple question; "What if I were to marry you....?" and a penny dropped. On the walk home that night James looked at me and said "Why not?". We might not go to church, but here's someone we know who

happens to be a vicar in a church that's not as obviously a traditional church as St Thomas' and somewhere we felt part of a community - so that was decided, we were getting married!



With the church set all we needed to look for was a reception venue and we decided on the local Corpus Christi Social Club. It was walking distance from the church, had a nice large room that I was able to decorate, with a bar, a stage and it was cheap. It was also where my parents had held their wedding reception so there was a nice synchronicity to using it.

So the date was set, venues were booked, now to the planning and to the saving! We were determined that the getting married part was the important bit and with a church booked that was guaranteed, so everything else was just a bonus. This is what we did:



**The Dress:** I am a girl, who struggles to girl. I had no idea where to start with wedding dresses, so started to try and gain inspiration by looking around bridal shops with no real focus, until one day I was walking past the Custard Factory in Birmingham and fell in love. There used to be an quirky bridal shop based there and in the window was the most stunning dress, but with an equally stunning £1,200 price tag. I couldn't justify it, BUT now knowing the style I wanted to look for I hit the web and very quickly found a shop called Vivien of Holloway in London, where I bought my dress, underskirt, belt and flowers for my hair for a much more respectable £191!

I paired it with some Rocket Dog shoes I'd previously bought in a sale for £30 (for the service) and donned my much worn converse trainers for the evening. Even better, whilst I could have just ordered the dress online the money I saved meant a day trip with my Mom and Bridesmaids to London so I could

try it all on.

**The Flowers:** Originally I was going to make myself a bouquet, in fact I actually did make one and I'd bought all the bits to make the buttonholes for the groomsmen too, it cost me less than £20 for everything I needed from Latiffs, but then a friend of ours decided that we *must* have fresh flowers and offered to buy them as a wedding gift. So whilst I would have been completely happy with my handmade felt bouquet, a wedding gift meant we all had fresh flowers on the day.

**Bridesmaids:** I had two grown up bridesmaids and was determined that whatever we bought for them was going to be something they could use again. Our colour scheme was red, white and black, so I eventually settled on black halter neck dresses from eBay, paired with matching red shoes and clutch bags from the sale at Debenhams. I'd decided on clutches instead of flowers for bridesmaids early on as having been a bridesmaid previously I know just how useful having something to carry money, tissues, your mobile etc. can be.

The dresses cost £20 each, the shoes £15 and the bags £8 - so a complete bridesmaid outfit for £43 each.

**Hair and Makeup:** Saving money here was easy we all did our own make up and I called around all the local hair dressers to find someone I was happy with and





could fit us all into the salon that morning. I agreed I would pay for myself and my bridesmaids, and my Mom offered to pay for herself. It cost less the £100 for us all. A far cry from the £700 it cost a friend of mine.

**Groomsmen:** The groomsmen were easier than the bridesmaids to shop for, we asked them all in advance if they owned black suits and asked them all to wear white shirts, we then bought them all matching red ties - again another eBay purchase for just £5 each. We asked the grooms lady to wear a black dress in a different style to the bridesmaids and that was that. James, 2 best men, 3 grooms "people", mine and James' Dads and my Grandad all kitted out for £40!

Although at the very last minute we decided to hire a suit for the groom and best man, but by shopping local we kept the cost down and managed to get a deal which meant our son and my Dad could have suits as well for just £120, so it was still less than £200 to dress 9 people!

**The Transport:** I live a 10 minute walk from St Albans and had the idea I was going to walk it there on the day, that was until everyone I told my plan to looked aghast "What if it rains?". They were right and so started the head scratching. We didn't want to spend £'s on a something to take me less than 2 minutes down the road, I even seriously considered catching the bus!

But then inspiration struck. I roped in my uncle to collect the bridesmaids and I called in some favours and travelled to the church in the local ice cream van, complete with jingle! We even asked the ice cream man to stay around for photos afterwards! It didn't cost us anything and in exchange he sold ice creams to our guests!

**Do it yourself:** The invitations were hand made. I took photos and turned them into a photo strip, which was attached to a luggage label that had the details of the wedding stuck on and we enlisted the help of my mother in law to construct them.

We also handmade the order or service and all the table decorations. The order of service followed the theme of the invitations using brown cardboard, some crafty printing and were tied together with string. For the table decorations we used red table cloths and two kilner jars, one filled with sweets, the other white fairy lights on each table. We also scattered clear crystals to reflect the lights and finished the room with red and white paper chains and helium balloons - which we first used in the church and then asked the guests to carry to the reception when we all walked up the road together. Simple but effective, buy by shopping local and online, all the decorations, invitations and order of service cost less than £300 and the most expensive of all that was the helium.

**Photos, Food and Entertainment:** In our opinion no wedding is complete without a good party and we wanted our day to be one long party that we could enjoy.

We did away with a sit down meal in favour of an afternoon tea, followed by a live band and a hog roast.

During the signing of the register a friend of ours Dan sang for us, performing one of his own songs and a cover of one of our favourite bands. Dan is a professional musician, but in exchange for some help with his website he sang for free.

The afternoon tea was served immediately after the service in the church. We asked some lovely friends from the local community centre if they would help and James' Mom and Auntie Helen made the cakes. It was lovely. Jo, Rev Sam's wife had dressed the church with bunting and the cakes and music gave our guests something to do whilst we had our photos taken.

The photographers (yes plural) were friends of ours who all offered their services at mates rates. Over the years we had been willing to give time and support to their pursuits and so they wanted to return the favour. We couldn't have been more gratefully as a full price wedding photographer would have been one stretch too far and having shot weddings myself I knew I didn't want just anyone doing the photos.

Being geeks, we also encouraged guests to take their own photos and used our own #jamesandsteph wedding hashtag for Twitter & Instagram so we could easily collect the photos afterwards - this could be an alternative option to an official photographer.

The Hog Roast was provided by a local company and we paid for this, but all the other catering was done for us at cost price by a friend that runs a local cafe. I had shot her wedding a few years before free of charge as I was just starting out and she needed someone cheap and available at short notice so we struck a deal and I called upon her to return the favour here.



The band was also a local band and we booked them the conventional way. We got a good deal by looking around online and were really pleased with them as they even learned a couple of songs especially for us!

We also saved money serving Prosecco instead of Champagne for the toasts and having a friend bake us the most beautiful 4 tiered wedding cake. All in all for an entire day's entertainment and food for around 170 guests we paid around £2,000 - by far the most expensive element of the wedding, but also at less than £20 a head, the area we absolutely saved the most!

We loved our wedding day and from the feedback we were given, so did our guests.

We did it our way without breaking the bank.

*Steph and James Clarke*

## ***Supporting, promoting and strengthening marriage***

If you are at the wedding fayre, visit our stand and enjoy a piece of wedding cake while you share with us your wedding plans.

Enter your names in our 'prayer book' so that we can pray for you before your wedding

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