

Frequently Asked Questions on Wedding Services in the Parish of Rowlands Castle at the Church of St John the Baptist

Thank you for taking the next step and checking out the details regarding your marriage at St John's. We hope that many of your initial questions will be answered but please do not hesitate to get in touch with our parish administrator at admin@saintjohnschurch.org.uk or on 02392 410111 between 9am and 1pm on Fridays.

I would like to be married at St John the Baptist Church

Simply the answer is that we would love to make this happen. There are, however, legal formalities attached to weddings in the Church of England and we have to make sure that these legalities are met before agreeing to go ahead with the marriage.

You can be married at St John's providing you fulfil the legal criteria for marriage in a Church of England church and have the agreement of the Vicar.

To qualify the law requires that at least one partner be resident in the parish, or that either partner has a 'qualifying connection' to the parish. The conditions that define this qualifying connection are any of the following:

That one of the couple:

- was baptised in the parish concerned, or
- was prepared for confirmation in the parish, or
- has at any time lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months, or
- has at any time regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months

That one of the couple's parents, at any time after they were born:

- has lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months, or
- has regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months
- That one of the couple's parents or grandparents:
- was married in the parish

More complete details about eligibility for marriage are available on the Church of England website at www.yourchurchwedding.org

If you want to know if you are in our parish or which parish church to approach to have your banns read, the website: www.achurchnearyou.com which allows you to check by postcode.

We reserve the right to ask you to provide evidence of your identity and evidence of your address.

When can I be married?

Weddings can take place any day of the week. We would not normally conduct weddings in Holy Week (from Palm Sunday until the day before Easter Day).

Weddings can take place (subject to other church services) after 8am and must be completed before 6pm (because that is the law).

What if I am divorced?

If either of you is divorced and have a partner still living, please contact the Parish Administrator for more information.

I've heard about Banns of marriage. What are they?

Most marriages in our churches take place after the Reading of Banns. This is a special legal preliminary for the Church of England. 'Banns' is a simple declaration of the names, parish of residence of the couple and their intention to marry. Banns are read in a service on three Sundays at the church where the wedding service will take place during the three-month period before the wedding.

If one, or both, of you live(s) outside the parish, banns also need to be read at your own parish church (if you want to know which parish church to approach to have your banns read, the website: www.achurchnearyou.com allows you to check by postcode.)

In our parish banns are usually read on the first three Sundays of the month two months before the wedding. If either of you reside in another parish, it is your responsibility to arrange with that parish church to have the banns read there as well

(each parish differs as to when they read banns of marriage). Once these are read, you will receive a certificate from that parish, which must be given to our office before the wedding can take place.

If you request only a banns certificate from this parish, (because you are being married elsewhere) you must have paid for this in the month before your banns are to be read.

How much will it cost and how do I pay?

The Church of England sets the wedding fees each year and they are available from the Church Office. On booking your wedding we ask you to pay a deposit of £100.00. You must have paid the balance of your wedding fees to the office one month before the wedding. Payment can be made by Bank Transfer or by cheque payable to St. John's PCC.

What about wedding preparation?

It is usual to meet with the minister who will be officiating at your wedding a couple of times so that you are clear on the details and your understanding of marriage, and to plan out your order of service. For the initial meeting couples may be grouped together so that the Vicar can discuss general matters before a more personal meeting is arranged. The office will give these dates when you apply.

Getting married is something not to be entered into lightly, so if you feel that as the planning becomes more detailed that you are increasingly unhappy with proceeding, please talk to the minister as soon as you can.

We hope that getting married in our Parish will be an enjoyable experience and a good beginning to your life together as a married couple.

Can we arrange to record or photograph the Service?

One video operator (which might be a professional or one of your guests nominated by you to record the service) and photographer (or, if no video operator, two photographers) are permitted in church. Please do not arrange for more than this. They must work strictly under the direction of the minister conducting the wedding service.

What about Flowers?

There will be some flowers in church at most times of the year when weddings take place. It is our custom not to have flowers in church during Lent; we can give you the relevant dates. If flowers are particularly important, you may wish to choose another date.

Can we throw Confetti?

Confetti is part of the wedding celebration; all we ask is that it be bio-degradable and be thrown away from the church entrance and never in church. Please ask your guests not to use chromed or plastic confetti as it does not degrade and makes our churchyard very untidy.

Do we need Service Sheets?

Our advice is yes please but they can be kept quite simple, even down to a single sheet of paper. Please check the layout with the minister taking the service before going to print. The Vicar will be able to provide guidance. Again, the Church of England website has helpful guidance about producing an Order of Service sheet.

How many Guests can I Invite?

The maximum number of guests we can seat at St. John's is 150.

Is there a Choir?

We are not able to offer you a choir to sing at your wedding, but you may arrange one privately.

What about Music?

We can discuss the choice of hymns (usually 2 or 3) and any requests you may have for additional music (before the service starts, entrance, exit or during the signing of the Register).

Organists are pleased to advise and may have additional ideas to yours. It will be your responsibility to consult the relevant organist and complete arrangements with them. Our office can put you in touch with organists but make sure you have booked

an organist no later than 6 months before the wedding. Alternatively, you may decide not to have an organist and can choose music to be played from the sound system.

Is there a Rehearsal?

The minister who will be taking your wedding service will arrange for a rehearsal sometime during the week before the service. The rehearsal is for the bride and the groom but you may wish to involve others in your wedding party.

What about Car Parking?

Official cars will use the purpose-made 'lay by' outside the church entrance. For other guests there is usually sufficient space in our car park, and there is unrestricted parking along Redhill Road.

Do I need Ushers?

It is helpful to have at least one representative from each family in church half an hour beforehand, to look after early guests and to distribute the Orders of Service. Sometimes spare copies get left in the church and later on guests want to take them away as mementos. It is helpful if the ushers gather these up after the service and take them to the reception.

Could I hold a Reception at the Church?

We have an excellent modern Church Centre next to the church with good kitchen facilities which may be hired for receptions. Please contact the Church Office to arrange to view the facilities. Like many places this must be done early.

What about my Passport?

If you are planning a trip abroad immediately after marrying, it is possible for the bride to apply for a new passport in her married name before the wedding, post-dated for the date of the wedding but be sure to allow plenty of time for the application! Further information can be found on the HM Government website <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81530a40f0b62305b8e567/passportsnewlywedscivilpartnershipsPD2.pdf>.

What Next?

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ring or email. You can also complete the Marriage and Wedding Request Form and (if appropriate) the Qualifying Connection Form. These are also available on the church website or from the Church Office.