

# What happens in a wedding service?

## Modern service



"To win people for Christ and to build them up in Christ."  
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The church is normally open about an hour before the service. The Groom normally arrives at least half an hour before the service time. The minister will ask him to check the registers and ensure that the Best Man has the ring(s).

If there are ushers they should ensure that guests are shown to their seats on arrival. Traditionally the Grooms family sit on the south (far side) of the Church whilst the Bride's family sit on the north (near side). (Most, but not all, Church of England churches face east).

A few minutes before the Bride is due to arrive the Groom and Best Man will sit at the front on the south side.

When the Bride has arrived and is ready to enter the Minister will ensure that the Bridal Party is properly arranged at the door. The Minister will go to the front of the Church, invite people to stand and then the processional music will start. The Bride normally walks down the aisle accompanied by her father who will be on her left hand side. Any family member or friend can take the place of her father should she so choose but for convenience references below are to the Bride's father.

The Bridal party are now standing at the foot of the chancel steps facing the front. From left to right they are Bride's Father, Bride, Groom, Best Man. Any Bridesmaids and/or page boys will be standing directly behind them.

The chief Bridesmaid or maid of honour will make sure that the Bride's dress is orderly and take any bouquet from the Bride. If there is a service sheet, hymn sheet or hymn book the Minister will hand these to the Bridal party.

Although certain parts of the service must be used using the authorised words there are various options in the modern service. The following pattern is that most used at St. James which roughly follows the traditional order of service.

### **The Service**

[The Minister welcomes the congregation.](#)

[Opening prayer](#)

[First hymn.](#)

### [Minister reads the preface \(explaining the Christian teaching about marriage\)](#)

We have come together in the presence of God, to witness the marriage of NNN and NNN, to ask his blessing on them, and to share in their joy. Our Lord Jesus Christ was himself a guest at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and through his Spirit he is with us now.

The Bible teaches us that marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace, a holy mystery in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.

Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given as the foundation of family life in which children may be born and nurtured in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory.

In marriage husband and wife belong to one another, and they begin a new life together in the community. It is a way of life that all should honour; and it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly, but reverently, responsibly, and after serious thought.

This is the way of life, created and hallowed by God, that NNN and NNN are now to begin. They will each give their consent to the other; they will join hands and exchange solemn vows, and in token of this they will [each] give and receive a ring.

Therefore, on this their wedding day we pray with them, that, strengthened and guided by God, they may fulfil his purpose for the whole of their earthly life together.

#### The minister says to the congregation

First, I am required to ask anyone present who knows a reason why these persons may not lawfully marry, to declare it now.

#### The minister says to the couple

The vows you are about to take are to be made in the presence of God, who is judge of all and knows all the secrets of our hearts;

therefore if either of you knows a reason why you may not lawfully marry, you must declare it now.

#### The minister says to the Groom

NNN will you take NNN to be your wife?

Will you love her, comfort her, honour and protect her, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

He answers : **I will.**

#### The minister says to the Groom

NNN will you take NNN to be your husband?

Will you love him, comfort him, honour and protect him, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

She answers : **I will.**

#### The minister says to the congregation

Will you, the families and friends of NNN and NNN support and uphold them in their marriage now and in the years to come?

All : **We will.**

#### The 'giving away' that follows is optional. The minister asks:

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

#### The Bride's father responds : **I do**

he steps forward, takes the Bride's right hand and passes it to minister who in turn passes the Bride's hand to the Groom. The Groom is thus holding the Bride's right hand in his right hand.

The Bride and Groom face one another.

#### The Vows

Normally the minister reads the vows a few words at a time and the Bride/Groom repeat each phrase (for everyone to hear). A couple may choose to memorise or read the vows.

#### Groom's vows

I, NNN, take you, NNN, to be my wife,  
to have and to hold, from this day forward;  
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish, till death us do part;  
according to God's holy law. In the presence of God I make this vow.

#### Bride's vows

I, NNN, take you, NNN, to be my husband,  
to have and to hold, from this day forward;  
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health,

to love and to cherish, till death us do part;  
according to God's holy law. In the presence of God I make this vow.

**The minister receives the rings from the Best man and prays:**

Heavenly Father, by your blessing let these rings be to NNN, and NNN,  
a symbol of unending love and faithfulness, to remind them of the vow and covenant  
which they have made this day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All : **Amen.**

Again the Bride and Groom repeat a few words at a time after the Minister. If there is only one ring  
then a slightly different form of rings is used for the Bride.

**The Groom places the ring on the Bride's finger and says:**

NNN ,I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage.

With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you,  
within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Bride places the ring on the Groom's finger and uses the same words as above.

**The minister says:**

In the presence of God, and before this congregation,

NNN and NNN have given their consent and made their marriage vows to each other.

They have declared their marriage by the joining of hands and by the giving and receiving of rings. I  
therefore proclaim that they are husband and wife.

**The minister joins their right hands together and says**

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder

Bride and Groom kneel and the minister prays a prayer of blessing.

The couple stand. The minister may then say to the Groom "You may kiss the Bride."

The congregation and bridal party then sit (they have been standing to this point). The minister will  
read a passage from the Bible and give a short talk.

A hymn is normally sung.

During the last verse of the hymn the minister leads the couple to the table at the East end of the  
Church for the prayers. The couple are asked to kneel whilst the minister leads the congregation in  
prayer. The prayers will normally include the Lord's Prayer in either its modern or traditional form.  
The minister prays the prayer of blessing.

The Bride and Groom then accompany the minister into the vestry for the signing of the registers. The  
Best man is asked to usher into the vestry the two people who will sign as witnesses.

When the signing is complete the photographer(s) will wish to arrange things to take a mock up the  
signing.

The service closes with the Bride and Groom processing through the side door and down the main  
aisle of the Church to whatever music has been chosen. Ordinarily this procession includes others but  
exactly who is included is up to the couple themselves. The next in procession would normally be the  
Best man and Chief Bridesmaid followed by any young Bridesmaids and pageboys, any adult  
Bridesmaids possibly with usher to accompany them, and then the parents or step parents. The  
Groom walks with the Bride on his left and couples behind follow suit.