

Marriage Information Pack



Greater Corsham and Lacock Team

St Bartholomew, Corsham

St John the Baptist, Gastard

St Cyriac, Lacock

St Anne, Bowden Hill

St Philip and St James, Neston

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Congratulations!

We would like to thank you for your enquiry about a wedding or marriage blessing service and are delighted that you are considering holding your ceremony in one of our churches. The Bible tells us that marriage is a gift from God offered to us, and a way through which we may know the grace of God. So, as the church we welcome all enquiries for weddings and blessings. However, as a church wedding is a legal as well as a Christian ceremony, there are legal requirements that determine whether or not we are able to carry out a wedding ceremony for you.

In marriage you begin a new life together as husband and wife, but we also hope and pray that as you prepare for a marriage or blessing service in church you will also find the invitation to begin a new life together with God at the centre of your relationship. We hope that this pack will help you to think through what marriage in a church is all about, and to give you all of the information and guidance you will need.

With every blessing on you and your plans,

The Clergy team

Marriage in the Greater Corsham and Lacock Team

The Greater Corsham and Lacock Team is a group ('benefice') of 5 churches in and around Corsham, Wiltshire, served by three full-time clergy and a number of retired clergy. Each year we conduct between 30 and 40 weddings, mostly in the summer months, so it is important that you speak to us before booking a reception venue to ensure that we can offer the date or time that you prefer. Obviously, we can only book wedding services when a minister is available.

Before the marriage service, you will be invited to meet with our clergy team and with other couples. There are two parts to this. Firstly, you will need to attend our '*Getting Ready for Marriage*' day (usually a Saturday morning) that we run in February - further details about this will be sent to you nearer the time, but the office will be able to tell you the date for the next scheduled day. Secondly, you will need to meet with the minister taking your wedding service to talk through anything that you would like to discuss, as well as to plan your service details. Ideally both of you will attend both meetings, so that you can discuss and make decisions together.

A couple of websites that will help you in your planning are www.achurchnearyou.com and www.yourchurchwedding.org. Our own website is www.corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk where you will find copies of this document and its Appendices in our Life Events section (http://corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk/?page_id=44).

Who can be married here?

It is usually best for your wedding to take place in your *local* church, as part of your local community, and so if you are resident in one of our parishes then we would be very happy to talk further with you about your wedding. Of course there are sometimes very good reasons why you are looking for a wedding service somewhere other than your local church or area. As long as you can show one of the below connections to one of the churches in our team, we may be able to offer you a wedding service or marriage blessing service. If you aren't sure where your local church is, you will be able to find out by looking at www.achurchnearyou.com.

Showing a connection with our churches

You can marry in a Church of England church if you can show that:-

one of you:

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

one of your parents, at any time after you were born:

- has lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months **or**
- has regularly attended normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months **or**

one of your parents or grandparents:

- was married in the parish

If you are looking to get married here by one of these links other than residency or regular church attendance, then we will need to see evidence of your connection to the parish in which you would like to be married; please see **Appendix B**.

You can check the parish relating to a particular address by visiting www.achurchnearyou.com

Marriage Blessing Services

There may be reasons why you have not been able to be married in church, or you may already have been married. If you want a service of Marriage Blessing, please get in touch with one of our clergy team to discuss your situation.

Basic Legalities

There are a few other important legal requirements that you need to be aware of:

- No one under the age of 16 may be married
- No one under the age of 18 may be married without parental consent
- There are a number of close relationships between people which are not permitted to marry (if you are not sure if you might fall into this category then please just ask us)
- Marriages in church can only take place between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm.
- We will need to be satisfied that foreign nationals are legally entitled to be married in the UK

What can we expect from the church?

The church takes marriage very seriously, which is why we like to spend time with you helping you to think about your marriage in the months before the service. We will seek to help you understand what promises you will be asked to make and also to think through what marriage is all about. This is to help to ensure you have put the best possible foundations in place for your marriage. We do hope that you will want to come to church whether you need to or not so that we can welcome you, get to know you, and support you as you begin your married lives together. If you live locally we hope that you may continue to be a part of the church community after your wedding day. We also offer groups for children and for adults to help you to grow in our Christian faith.

For more information on the activities taking place in or associated with our churches, please see our website www.corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk or contact the Rector.

I think I qualify for a marriage service. What do I do next?

Once you have read through the frequently asked questions (FAQs) - see page 9 - please work through the steps below so that we can gather all the information that we need in order to progress your application.

- 1) Please contact our team office to check if the date you would like is available. They will make a provisional booking, take some contact details from you and give (or send) you this booklet, which includes a booking form (you may already of course have taken this step!)
- 2) Complete the attached Wedding Booking Form (**Appendix A**).
- 3) If your marriage is by qualifying connection rather than residency, please also complete the attached 'Connections' form and return it with your application and evidence to show the connection (**Appendix B**).
- 4) If you have been married previously, and are now divorced you need to complete the "*Marriage in Church after Divorce*" form (please see the FAQ section). You will need to show your original *Decree Absolute* to the Minister when you meet.
- 5) If you have been married but your previous partner has died we simply need to see their death certificate when we meet you.
- 6) Return all appropriate paperwork to our team office, along with a cheque for £50 (returnable) deposit
- 7) Once we have received your application pack and accompanying paperwork and processed it we will then tell you whether you can be married by the calling of banns or if you will need to apply for a common licence. We will also tell you which minister will be taking your service.
- 8) The minister will arrange an initial meeting with you, just so we can get to know you.
- 9) Come along to the 'Getting Ready for Marriage' day.
- 10) Meet with your minister again to talk through the details of the service.
- 11) Nearer the service, we will arrange the calling of your banns which are usually required. The Banns are an announcement in church of your intention to marry and a chance for anyone to put forward a reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place. When we call your banns, we pray for you, and it can be quite a special occasion if you are able to attend.
- 12) If you live outside the benefice, it is your responsibility to arrange for banns to be called in your local parish church as well. To find your local parish church, please have a look at www.achurchnearyou.com. Once they have been read, you will be given a banns certificate, which you will need to return to us as soon as you receive it.
- 13) About 2 months before your wedding, you will be sent an invoice for the fees. The fees for this year are set out in **Appendix D**, and are reviewed annually, towards the end of the year – so if you are booking for next year or beyond we won't be able to confirm the exact fees until the autumn before your wedding. The fees need to be paid a month before your

service otherwise we won't be able to hold the date. If there are any problems in paying a month in advance, please do let us know as soon as possible. The fees vary by church, and depend on additional requirements.

- 14) We will arrange for you to have a rehearsal in the church, usually a few days before your wedding, to rehearse the words you will say to one another, and to practice the all-important entry and exit of the bride and groom. Please try to arrange for your best man, 'father of the bride' and chief bridesmaid to be there. It is also a good chance for the photographer and videographers to get to know the building, and for anybody who is reading to have a chance to practice.
- 15) The big day. We will do our best to make it as special as we can for you!

Preparing to meet the vicar!

Ideally we'd like to visit you in your home, if you live within our parish, but if you live further away we'll probably ask you to come to us.

Before first meeting the minister, there are a couple of things that you can do to prepare. Firstly, have a look at www.yourchurchwedding.org and start to think about the questions that you might have. This brilliant website may answer some of them, but it can't cover everything!

Secondly, because of the increase in 'sham weddings', we will need to ask you both to confirm your identity, and it's easiest if we can do this check during this first meeting, as you're most likely to have the relevant documents handy when we meet you at home.

You will both need to show us 3 forms of ID: one from Group 1 plus any two from Groups 1 or 2.

Group 1:

Passport

Driving licence (paper + photo card)

Birth certificate

EU National Identity Card

Adoption Certificate

Group 2:

Bank/building society/credit card statement*

Utility bill*

Insurance certificate**

Addressed payslip*

National Insurance Card

Vehicle registration document

* should be issued within the last 3 months.

** should be issued within the last 12 months.

We don't need to take your documents away; we'll just check them there and then.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get married in any Church of England church?

Unfortunately not, but you can either get married in your local parish church, or in any other church where you can demonstrate a relevant qualifying connection. The details of these are given elsewhere in this pack.

I'm not baptised (christened) and I don't attend church. Can I still get married in a church?

Yes you can! If as part of the process of preparation for marriage you feel that you would like to be baptised, we would be very happy to talk that through with you too.

We have a date in mind, what should we do next?

Before you book anything else, please speak to us. We realise that you will be under pressure to book reception venues, florists, photographers, cars etc., but if we don't have a minister or the church available we will need to look at alternatives. It's easier to speak to us to make sure that date is free before you book anything else.

Are there any restrictions to when a wedding can take place?

Marriages can only take place between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm, but can take place on any day of the week. In the periods leading up to Easter and Christmas we are a little busier than usual, so please speak to us early if you are thinking of these times of year.

We would like to have a video of our wedding. Is that possible?

Yes, that is possible. You will need to sign and return the "Use of Video" form enclosed in this pack (**Appendix C**), and you will also need to apply for a 'Limited Manufacture Copyright Licence' if your videographer doesn't already have one. We will need to see a copy of this licence before the service: it is your responsibility to ensure that the videographer has arranged this. There is no fee payable to us, but the licence costs a modest amount and is available from: [www.prsformusic.com/users/recordedmedia/dvdsanddigitalmedia/Pages/LimitedManufactureLicence\(LM\).aspx](http://www.prsformusic.com/users/recordedmedia/dvdsanddigitalmedia/Pages/LimitedManufactureLicence(LM).aspx)

What happens if one of us is a foreign national?

This depends on your circumstances. If one or other of you is non-resident in the UK, please have a look at www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/visitingtheuk/marriage-cp-visitors/ to see if you need any entry clearance. Once you have Home Office entry clearance, or if you both live in the UK, the next step is to find a church in which you can legally marry according to English law (see our 'Connections' section). You will also need to contact the Diocesan Registrar to see if you need a Common Licence in order to get married. We can talk to you about this, but you will most likely need to talk to or meet the Diocesan Registrar; contact details on page 22 of this guide.

What about if we are British citizens living abroad?

You can get married in any church where you have a qualifying connection. You will need to apply for a Common Licence. Please talk to one of our clergy team to discuss this further.

What if one or both of us has been married before?

The church believes that marriage is for life, but also recognises that sadly, some marriages do fail. You will need to speak to a minister about your own situation. They will want to talk to you frankly about your past and your hopes for the future and will let you know whether they can remarry you. Even if it is not possible to provide a marriage service, we may be able to offer you a marriage blessing service. You will need to complete the form “Marriage in Church after Divorce” and return it with your application. See www.churchofengland.org/media/1162432/leafletforenquirers.pdf

Can I be married by banns or do I need a licence?

Banns need to be read in the parish where each of you lives as well as the parish church in which you are to be married, if that is somewhere else. Your banns will be read out in church in our main morning service for three consecutive Sundays during the three months before the wedding – we will let you know when this is due to happen.

If there is not enough notice given for the banns to be read before the marriage is due to take place, or in the case of the marriage of people whose nationality is not British, or if one or both of you do not live in England, it is recommended that the Licence procedure be used rather than banns. This is especially recommended if there is any doubt as to the legal requirements of the home country of a non-British person for recognition of an English Church marriage. We can advise you if you need to apply for a licence.

What does it mean to attend worship regularly for a minimum of 6 months?

If this is the type of connection that you choose, you will need to attend worship services at one of our five churches at least once a month for 6 months (it doesn't have to be the same service or even the same church each time). As we rely on a number of ministers to cover services, you will need to take a service attendance form (**Appendix F**) with you for the minister taking the service to sign. This is your responsibility, and although we can pencil in your wedding date, we are unable to confirm it until you have attended worship for 6 months and returned the completed attendance form to our office or your officiating minister. *As this is a legal requirement, we are unable to provide a wedding service if evidence is not provided.*

Who makes the Order of Service?

If you are having a printed Order of Service you can have these professionally printed, or you can make them yourself. Our ministers have a number of examples from previous weddings that they can show you to give you an idea of the different styles that people have used. As part of the time spent meeting with the minister we will talk about how we can personalise the service to make it special for you, and we will discuss your choices of hymns and readings. Please let the minister see a copy of the proposed order of service before you have it printed – sometimes hymn lyrics downloaded from the internet might not be what you actually wanted, or the overall order isn't quite right and our professional eye can help us to avoid embarrassing problems on the day. If you can, please bring the orders of service along to the wedding rehearsal and leave them there overnight – one less thing to forget on the day!

How late is 'late'?

As ministers and musicians often have multiple weddings or events in different churches on the same day, or simply another engagement to attend, extreme lateness may cause us all problems. Guests often arrive 45 minutes before the service starts, so ushers should be there early, ready to hand out Orders of Service and direct the first guests to their places. We like our grooms to be at the church 30 minutes before the ceremony is due to start and we prefer to have a stage managed 'late' bride, so we ask the bride to be at the church 5 minutes before the official start time. These timings will allow time for the various parties to have photographs outside the church, with a little reserve for delays in travel, and a moment to relax before you 'arrive' in church with the traditional lateness that a beautiful bride deserves.

We do understand that if you are travelling some distance to get to church on the day you may encounter traffic problems (the journey out from Bath is notorious!), so please build this in to your schedule for the day, and have a phone with you so that you can contact somebody who will be at the church to let us know.

How much is this all going to cost?

The Church of England reviewed and revised its fee structure for weddings with effect from 1st January 2013 to make it more straightforward, transparent and consistent in every parish. Below, you will find information to help you understand what is included in your costs, and what extras we are able to offer to make your day more special and run smoothly.

The basic fee is given in Appendix D and is reviewed annually. This fee includes the following:

- the cost of the minister taking your wedding
- use of the church, and lighting of it
- meeting with you during the months before the wedding
- the wedding rehearsal
- the calling of your banns
- your marriage certificate
- all administration

Any items additional to this, whilst they may appear fairly essential elements to a wedding, are counted as 'optional extras' – organ, choir, bells, vergers, flowers and heating - which you must request according to your requirements. We are not allowed, by law, to include these fees in a basic package, but we are allowed to determine our own fees for these items – and these costs must be reasonable.

Of these extras, we strongly recommend these two to all wedding couples:

- **Vergers.** This is a member of the local congregation who makes sure that the church is prepared for the service. He or she assists your ushers and your guests on the day, and undertakes a number of other tasks to support the clergy. They are paid by us for

performing this essential role, and we hope you will recognise their value in making your day run smoothly.

- **Heating.** If your wedding is between October and April and we have to turn the heating on when we would not normally do so, we ask you to cover the costs of this. Unfortunately the heating has to be on for several hours to make our ancient energy-inefficient buildings warm enough to use.

We hope that you agree that the overall cost of the church service and the extras that we offer is reasonable, especially compared to other alternatives and to the possible cost of the rest of the day!

We do need a deposit of £50 which is payable at the time of submitting your Wedding Details form. This needs to be paid at the time of booking, and will be banked and deducted from your final invoice. If, for any reason, your wedding is cancelled this deposit will be returned to you.

All cheques to be made payable to “Greater Corsham Parish Fees Account”

Marriage Blessings

If you are having a marriage blessing ceremony following a civil marriage (which to all intents and purposes can look and feel like a full wedding) the charges are similar, as we are available to spend the same amount of time with you preparing you for marriage. As this ceremony lacks the legal elements of the marriage itself we don't charge you the various legal fees. The basic fee for a wedding blessing is given in Appendix D and is reviewed annually.

The Wedding Service

Here's an outline of the wedding ceremony. We'll talk more about this when we meet, but you can start thinking about your music and readings and other ways of making your service unique to you. See www.yourchurchwedding.org for some ideas on this.

The Procession

The service usually begins with some processional music when the bride and her attendants arrive and she goes down the aisle to join the bridegroom at the front of the church. The music used may be the traditional, 'Here comes the bride' but there are other choices of music which can be equally suitable. We strongly suggest you contact the organist, or other musician, who will provide this as they will be able to advise on the available music and suitability at your venue.

The Welcome and Introduction

The priest will welcome the bride, the bridegroom, friends and family and a hymn is then usually sung. *(There will also be a hymn or hymns at other points in the service as well)*. The priest will introduce the service and remind everyone that they have come together in the presence of God to witness your marriage and to ask God's blessing on your future life together.

There follows a short explanation about how the Bible and the Church understand Christian Marriage as a gift from God. Everyone is reminded that you are about to start a new life as a married couple in the community and are asked to pray that you will receive strength and guidance for this new commitment that you are about to make.

The Vows

Firstly, the congregation, and then you, are asked whether there is any reason in law why you cannot be married. This is the final check that you can lawfully marry. You are also reminded that you are making your vows before God.

In your vows you are both promising to give your whole lives to each other, just as we believe Jesus gave his life for us. Your marriage will then lay claim to be the most important thing for both of you for the rest of your lives. You will promise to be faithful to each other, to love one another totally, to honour and respect each other and be committed to one another whatever life may bring you both.

These vows are the most solemn part of the service, as in taking them you are joining yourselves for life before God and before your family and friends.

The Rings

Your rings are blessed by the priest and you exchange them. This is a symbol of the promises that you have made each other on your wedding day.

The Blessing, Bible Reading and Prayers

The marriage formalities are now complete *(except for the signing of the Registers which come later)*. The focus then moves towards God— the priest will ask you to kneel for a prayer of blessing. We will pray that God, through his Holy Spirit, will be with you throughout your life together and that by your lives you will show to others God's love, joy and peace.

A passage from the Bible will be read (*which you can choose beforehand*) to highlight one of the many aspects of God's love for us. You may also like an additional reading, such as a poem, at this point. The priest will then give a short address to help everyone focus on the meaning of Christian Marriage. There will follow some prayers for yourselves and your future life together. These prayers are something that the entire congregation can share in together, and you may have a friend or relative who would like to lead the prayers.

The Signing of the Register

This is the last formality of the service when you are both required to sign the Wedding Registers to confirm that your marriage has taken place. Your signatures will need to be witnessed by two other adults. If you have chosen to have the choir an anthem may be performed during the signing.

The service ends

You will now leave the church as a newly married couple, to share the joy of the day with your friends and family and again music choice is important. But really it is only the beginning...

Some notes applying to all our churches

Flowers

You are most welcome to enhance the beauty of our churches with extra flowers to co-ordinate with the colour scheme of your weddings and we always appreciate it when you are able to leave displays behind so that others can continue to enjoy them (except in Advent and Lent when it is traditional to leave the churches bare of decoration, and we ask you to take flowers away afterwards). However, our churches are usually decorated for Sunday services by local teams who you may wish to use to create extra displays, or you may wish your florist to work with them to co-ordinate colours. Please discuss your requirements with the local contact – if you are using their services they will enter into a private arrangement with you to cover the costs of flowers and equipment. If you are taking flowers away after the service, please leave any that belong to us!

On occasion there will be more than one wedding in the church on your day or over the weekend, so we may suggest that you co-ordinate with another wedding party – this could mean that you are able to share the cost of flowers if you are able to work together.

Confetti

Biodegradable confetti is most welcome as it disappears or disperses very quickly. Rose petals are particularly suitable and attractive. Please *do not* use plastic or metal items which are intended for table decorations. We ask your guests only throw confetti at or outside the church gates.

Organists and choirs

We have a mixture of professional and volunteer organists and choirs across our team, and the fees charged in the different places reflect this. During the signing of the wedding registers our organists will usually play accompanying music and if you are having a choir they may also sing some choral pieces. However, you also have the freedom to invite friends or relatives to play or sing for you, or you may wish for some recorded music to be played during the service, but please do make good use of the available musicians.

Sound

All of our churches (except St Anne's) have sound amplification, with hearing loops for the hard of hearing, and the ability to play recorded music if required.

Photos and Videos

Whether you are using professionals or not to keep a record of your special day, we ask them to be discreet so that they do not distract you or your guests from proceedings. If you are having a video recording made please draw their attention to the need for appropriate licencing (**Appendix C**) in order to be able to record this act of worship and the music included in it.

Children

If your guests will have children with them, they will start to feel that they are being a disturbance to others long before it's actually the case, and we often have people apologising for the noise when we didn't even notice anything! Where possible, we have created areas where children and their carers can go when little ones start to get restless or hungry. All of our churches (except St Anne's) have toilets, and some have baby changing facilities. Bags of toys and books are available to take back to your seat in some places.

If you have children of your own already, please ensure that somebody else can be responsible for them during the service, and talk to us about finding ways that your children can be included in the service itself to make it special for them.

Keeping the churches clean and tidy

We want you to enjoy your wedding day as much as possible, but there are occasions when the churches are not left in a very good state, either with litter left or confetti which can take a long time to clear up. To avoid any problems, please ask your ushers to check the church at the end of the service to ensure there is no litter or lost property left, and all orders of service are taken with you.

Retiring collections

All of our churches are kept open, cleaned and maintained by volunteers. We are pleased to welcome people to use them, and it would be appreciated if you could mention in your order of service that a retiring collection plate will be available near the exit door if people are willing to support the work of the church here, helping us to serve the community for special days just like yours.

Specific details about each of our churches can be found in Appendices G-K.

Contacting Us

Please contact the office for administrative enquiries (e.g. your booking, payments and paperwork) and the relevant minister to discuss the details of your wedding service.



Team Rector

Revd Dr. Andrew Johnson

The Rectory, Newlands Road, Corsham, SN13 OBS

Tel: (01249) 713232

e-mail: rector@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

Andrew has been married to Natalie since 2003 and they have one daughter who is at primary school. He used to live in Wales and enjoys mountain walking.



Team Vicar & Deanery Missioner for Schools, Children and Families

Revd Adam Beaumont

The Vicarage, Folly Lane, Lacock, Chippenham SN15 2LL

Tel: 01249 730984

e-mail: vicar@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

Adam has been married to Shona for nearly a decade and they have 2 young children. Adam has motorcycled around France (with Sheona riding pillion), climbed mountains out of season (and in a blizzard over a glacier) in Spain, been chauffeured by the chief of the Gambian Fire Service, played drums at all the famous venues in Bristol, worked in one of Nairobi's giant slums, run a half marathon, and is the proud holder of grade 4 piano and a Blue Peter badge. When he grows up he wants to climb Everest, but Sheona won't let him.

Team Office

Church House, 3 Church Street, Corsham, SN13 0BY

Tel. (01249) 701720

e-mail: office@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

Fiona Draper is our administrator, The Team Office in Church House is normally open on Wednesday between 10.45am and 12.30pm, Saturday mornings between 10am and 11am, However, these times do vary sometimes due to other church commitments so you may like to telephone before visiting. If you wish to visit the Office and none of these times are convenient, please email or phone and we can arrange an alternative time.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Wedding Details Form

Appendix B: Your Connection with the Parish

Appendix C: Video Recording Permit

Appendix D: Fees

Appendix E: Marriage Identity Checklist

Appendix F: Attendance Form

Appendix G: Details for St Bartholomew, Corsham

Appendix H: Details for St John the Baptist, Gastard

Appendix I: Details for St Cyriac, Lacock

Appendix J: Details for St Anne, Bowden Hill

Appendix K: Details for St Philip and St James, Neston