

2026

Capel United Church
(Local Ecumenical Partnership – Church of England and United Reformed Church)

Guide to Weddings

Marriage is not a human invention, but God's original design for life. Although we think about just two people, what you are doing affects the whole of society – good marriages make life better for everyone.

This pamphlet is designed to help you with some of the practical details involved in the process of applying to be married in this parish, but it should not detract from the joy and purpose of your marriage and the desire you have to enter into a lifelong and exclusive commitment to one another.

Are we eligible to be married in this Parish?

According to the law applicable to the Church of England, you can marry in this parish 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**
- has regularly gone to normal church services 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**

That 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 gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months

That one of your parents or grandparents:

- was married in the parish

To establish a connection through attendance, you would need to attend regular church services in the chosen parish for at least six consecutive months. This means attending at least once a month, preferably more, for half a year. The minimum frequency of

attendance is once a month, but attending more frequently demonstrates a deeper commitment to the community. While getting onto the electoral roll is not a requirement for establishing a connection through attendance, it can be a helpful indicator of your involvement in the church community. However, it's not essential and shouldn't be seen as a barrier if you haven't registered yet.

If there are technical difficulties in this regard, it may be possible to have a service of Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage (for an example see:

<http://justus.anglican.org/~ss/commonworship/marriage/civilmarriage.html>), Unlike the case with church weddings, the Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage may take place entirely at the discretion of the Vicar, without any need for a formal qualifying connection.

If either of you had been divorced, you need to mention this to the Vicar, and he will need go through a process with you both according to the Bishop's guidelines in order to determine whether it is appropriate that you have a church wedding. You will be asked to fill in a form which will be the basis of the following interview, as well as bring with you all the relevant documents (including both the decree nisi and the decree absolute) provided that there are no reasons why this too may not be appropriate. The process is searching and sensitive and dealt with in utmost confidentiality.

Although same-sex marriage legislation has changed, it remains the case that it is not legally possible for same-sex couples to marry in the Church of England.

Proof of nationality

Currently, nationals of UK, countries within the EEA, and Switzerland, and who live in the UK, may be married by banns and will not usually require a licence. Coming into effect on 1 July 2021, those eligible for marriage after banns and common licence, EEA nationals will need to use the Superintendent Registrar's Certificate (SRC) route not banns or common licence unless they are either Irish citizens or have Settled Status

EEA countries (see <https://www.gov.uk/eu-eea>) are the EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia,

Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom), plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Proof of UK, EEA or Swiss nationality will need to be provided when making an application for the publication of banns, or for a common licence, to establish that they are both relevant nationals. Otherwise, special registration procedures will need to be undertaken (all non-UK, EEA or Swiss nationals need to bring this to the minister's attention right away).

The normal proof of nationality is a passport, a valid EEA identity card, or, alternatively, a Certificate of Registration or a Certificate of Naturalisation as a UK Citizen. Nothing further needs to be produced. These documents need to be up to date – otherwise the alternative documentation as described below needs to be provided.

If a party cannot produce a current passport or identity card, there are various other documents that can be used instead. Where the party was born in the UK before 1 January 1983, he or she will be able to rely on a UK birth certificate plus another document such as a recent utility bill, bank statement, driving licence etc. to provide evidence of the party's current use of the name on the birth certificate (or provide evidence of the change of name).

If a party was born on or after 1 January 1983 and cannot provide a passport or identity card things will be rather more complicated because a person born in the UK after that date is not automatically a British citizen. The party will therefore have to provide a UK birth certificate showing his or her parents' details, a bank statement or utility bill etc. to show current use of name (or evidence of change of name), plus, evidence of his or her parents British citizenship or settled status at the time of his or her birth and their marriage certificate, if applicable. In the case of a person born on or after 1st January 1983 who does not have a passport, it may be more convenient for that person simply to obtain one.

The law regarding marriages of nationals from outside the EEA changed in 2015. All such marriages which take place in England must have a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate (SRC) to go ahead. The only exception to this is if a Special Licence has already been granted.

To apply for an SRC, the bride and groom must have been resident for

seven days within a registration district in England or Wales before applying.

After receiving your application, the Registrar enters the details in a book which is open to public inspection and displays a notice for 28 days at the Register Office. If no legal reasons to delay or prevent the marriage going ahead are shown within that time, a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate can be issued.

For couples where one or both of the parties has limited immigration status or not here legally, the civil registrars will be required to refer their marriage notice to the Home Office for potential investigation. To allow time for the investigation, the Home Office may extend the notice period to 70 days. Those with indefinite leave to remain, or a marriage visitor or fiancé(e) visa will be exempt from this referral and investigation process.

For more information about applying for an SRC, visit the Government's web page. Contact details for local (civil) register offices and designated register offices are given. Each register office will usually have its own website explaining the procedures in greater detail.

Which church can we be married in?

There are three places of worship in this parish: All Saints' Tudeley, St Thomas a Becket Chapel and the United Church, Five Oak Green. All Saints' Tudeley is the normal venue for weddings.

Weddings at St Thomas a Becket, Chapel, are not recommended. St Thomas a Becket is under the jurisdiction of the Churches Conservation Trust, and to be married there, the CCT requires evidence of substantial and continuing involvement in the care of that building. There is an additional fee of £550 to the Churches Conservation Trust for Weddings in conjunction with the fee to the Church and the cost of a Special Licence. It also requires the costly and difficult process of applying for a Special Licence, and the permission of the Diocesan Bishop is also required.

The process of getting permission for a Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage is at the discretion of the Vicar, but there is still a fee of £550 to the CCT in conjunction with the fee to the Church although there is no need for a Special Licence. Unlike Tudeley, there are no toilet facilities at Chapel.

Wedding preparation

The church takes its role in your wedding very seriously and as you have chosen a Christian wedding service, we like to help you as a couple think a little more deeply about what your vows mean in a practical sense. To this end, there is time for preparation, normally on a Saturday morning, which we try to arrange to be convenient for most couples who will be married during the year. Even though it is looking at serious topics we try to do so in a way which is not too 'heavy'. It is often useful for you to meet with other couples who are to be married during the year.

Fees

The fees for weddings are set at the beginning of each year at a national level and so are not available until January of each year. The fee for the wedding certificate is set by the Registrar's Office and can change at Easter each year. Nearer to the time of your wedding you will be issued with a letter which will give you an accurate account of the fees which you will need to pay at the rehearsal or, if by cheque, on a date indicated on the letter which you will receive. If you are paying by cheque, please make it payable to '*Capel United Church Ecumenical Church Council*'

Banns

Unless there are very special circumstances and you are being married by license, each couple will need to have their banns read in church. **If either of you lives in another parish you will have to contact the incumbent of that parish a few months before and arrange for banns to be read there also. This is a legal requirement and must not be overlooked.** The Vicar of this parish needs to see a banns certificate obtained from the other parish after the banns have been read there. Unless this is seen the wedding cannot take place. The other parish also has to charge a fee for the reading of banns and issue of a banns certificate.

The marriage service

In the parish we use the Church of England wedding service, either the traditional Book of Common Prayer, or the more recent Common Worship.

The Book of Common Prayer vows are follows:

I M. take thee N. to my wedded 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 ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

I *N*, take thee *M*, to my wedded 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, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

The Common Worship vows are as follows (same for bride and bridegroom):

I, *M*, take you, *N*, to be my wife/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.

Orders of service

These are **not absolutely necessary** but if you are having these printed professionally; you may need to have these some months ahead. Please do have them checked by the minister who is taking the service before they go to the printer or before you print them, so that they can check that everything is in order.

Music

We are responsible for making sure there is an organist for the service, but if you have your own organist, please let the minister know so that suitable arrangements can be made. We do need to know which pieces of music you would like.

The traditional piece for the entry of the bride is 'The Bridal Chorus' from Lohengrin by Wagner and the music as the Bride and Groom processes out is 'The Wedding March' from 'The Mid-Summer Night's Dream' by Mendelssohn.

If you want any other music than this you must first check that it is in the repertoire of the organist, so please contact the minister first especially if you are having service sheets printed. If you are thinking about recorded music, you must discuss this with the minister first.

It is usual to have two hymns. Below is printed a list of hymns which are appropriate for weddings but of course it is not exhaustive. If there is a

hymn which you would prefer, please ask the minister who is conducting your wedding. In the church, we have a limited number of hymn books which contains mostly traditional hymns and some modern ones. All of those listed below are included in the hymn book:

- All Things Bright and Beautiful
- All Creatures of our God and King
- All people that on earth do dwell
- Worship the King
- Jesus, good above all other
- For the beauty of the earth
- Guide me O thou great Redeemer
- Lead us heavenly Father, lead us
- Give me Joy in my heart
- worship the Lord in the beauty of Holiness
- Now thank we all our God
- Holy, Holy, Holy.
- Love Divine
- The King of Love my Shepherd is
- The Lord's my Shepherd
- Lord of All Hopefulness
- Lord of the Dance
- Come Down O love divine
- Praise my Soul the King of Heaven
- O Jesus I have Promised

You will find further help on

<https://www.yourchurchwedding.org/article/hymns-for-your-wedding/>

If you would like to have other hymns printed in a service sheet that is possible, but you will be responsible for doing this (please remember that copyright law applies to this in the case of more modern hymns). If in doubt consult your printer or the minister. The church has a CCLI copyright number 305577 which needs to be put on your wedding order of service if you have one.

If you are not having a printed order of service, we must still know the music you require at least a month in advance.

Readings

It is necessary to have at least one biblical reading within the service, or

possibly two. Any other readings are at the discretion of the minister conducting the service. Obviously if you have another reading which you would like to use please ask the minister. If you have a friend or relative who you would like to read the lesson, please let the minister know.

From Genesis 1

God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth.' So, God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth.' So it was; and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

From Song of Solomon 2 and 8

My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.' Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.

From Ephesians 3

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

From Ephesians 5

Give way to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord, since as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy. He made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself, she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body - and we are its living parts. For this reason, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body. This mystery has many implications; but I am saying it applies to Christ and the Church. To sum up; you too, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.

From Matthew 5

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

From Matthew 7

Jesus said, 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did

not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.'

From 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

From 1 John 4.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Rehearsal

Together with the letter giving details of the fees payable there will be a

suggested time for your rehearsal. This will normally be one evening during the two weeks before the wedding.

If this is going to be difficult then a different time can be planned. It is only necessary for the bride and groom themselves as most important people for this occasion to be present so do not worry if others who will be participating will only be travelling the day before; but any others are welcome.

Flowers

You are normally responsible for flowers in the church. Please contact Mrs Patricia Gregory (01892 834296) at least a month before your service to let her know your plans or if you have any questions. If there are two weddings on one day you will be told and then will need to liaise with the other wedding party with regard to flowers.

Verger

The Verger is supplied by the church in order to unlock and help prepare the church for the service. They will be paid directly by the couple.

Ushers

It is advisable to select ushers from close friends or family, if necessary to help the Verger with putting out chairs (and helping put them away after to the service), greet guests and show them to their seats and to be aware of the fire exits to assist in the case of fire (which has not ever happened but for which we need to be prepared!) The Verger will indicate where the fire exits are prior to the service.

Photography

The photography needs to be done discreetly and without flash, except during the registration. The photographer is advised to speak to the minister before the service about suitable points from which photographs can be taken. The use of drones to take photographs is not allowed.

Videos

You are responsible to ensure that arrangements about copyright are made, since the recording of music will involve questions of copyright, both with respect to the pieces of music and with respect to the musicians.

Witnesses

As with civil ceremonies a church ceremony requires that two people act as witnesses, to the signing of the register. There is no requirement or expectation that the witnesses should be family members Please do put some thought to it and ask those whom you have chosen before the rehearsal. Often, it is the two mothers who witness, but that is entirely up to you. It is helpful for the minister to know who the witness will be.

Marriage Certificate

As of 2021, marriage certificates have been issued by the local registry office in Tunbridge Wells rather than directly after the service. This is be issued once the relevant information is produced. Details of both parents as well as step-parents can now be entered on the marriage document.

Confetti

Please ask your guests only to bring biodegradable confetti (either dissolveable paper, rose petals or birdseed). The use of foil or non-biodegradeable confettis is strictly forbidden. Confetti may be thrown only in the area next to the the gate not next to the church, please.

General Data Protection Regulation Disclaimer

All relevant personal information can be kept indefinitely (or until your giving further notice to the contrary) by the Vicar, the Parochial Church Council of Tudeley cum Capel with Five Oak Green, and Capel United Church, for the purposes of the provision of appropriate pastoral support and follow-up.

And finally, ...

Above all, the most important thing is the promise you will made to one another in the sight of God which your guests will witness.

May God bless you in the preparation for this happy occasion, but above all, in your love for one another as you prepare yourselves for your lifetime together.