

Arranging a Wedding at St Barnabas' Church



**St Barnabas: the Parish church for
Emmer Green and Caversham Park**



Welcome to St Barnabas

First of all, congratulations on your engagement. Whether you have recently got engaged or are actively planning your special day, we are delighted that you're thinking about getting married at Saint Barnabas.

This church has been serving the people here for over 100 years. For some families, several generations have been married here; for others who have moved to the area, St. Barnabas has become the family church.

We believe a church wedding is the best way to begin your married life. Whether you come to church or not, the vows you will make can only be made in a church. It is a special place to consecrate your love, to ask for God's blessing and take this important step in your life together.

We hope this booklet is of help. We look forward to celebrating your wedding with you and send our warmest good wishes as you prepare for the big day.



Start here!

The first thing to do is contact the Vicar to find a suitable date. The next step will be to arrange an initial meeting with the Vicar, chiefly to talk through the legal requirements but also for you to ask any burning questions. At this point you will need to pay a non-refundable £50 deposit to secure your wedding date.

If you are planning your wedding a year or more in advance, things may then go quiet for a while, before picking up again in the 6-8 months before the wedding.

Typically you'll have three meetings with the Vicar. At the first meeting, we'll begin to discuss the service with you: to outline some of the choices and decisions you can make about the structure and content of the service. We'll talk through the legal process by which couples get married in church. At the second and third meetings we will help you finalise the order of service, also talk in more depth about the service itself.

One of us isn't a British national, does that change things?

We need to confirm the citizenship of everyone whom we marry and will ask for evidence of identity and address (e.g. passport, driving licence, etc.). Please let us know at the outset if you are not a British citizen: we shall need to carry out additional steps to ensure your marriage is legally recognised both here and in your home country.

What about a Wedding Blessing?

Sometimes couples will have a civil ceremony followed by a wedding blessing. There are lots of reasons for this, and it is often a good solution when people from different cultures or countries get married. A wedding blessing doesn't contain the legal elements of a wedding, but it does contain all the spiritual elements of vows and rings, and is very much like a church wedding.

The legal stuff

Getting married by the reading of banns

The simplest way to get married in church is by what is called 'the reading of banns'. This means that notice of your marriage is announced at the main Sunday service, three times in the months leading up to your wedding. This has to happen in both St. Barnabas church and (if either of you live elsewhere) in the Church of England parish where you live. To find out which parish you live in, type your postcode into the website acny.org.uk.

Who can get married by banns?

Being married by banns is the best legal preparation, if you are both British nationals living in England.

Qualifying connections

At least one of you will also need a 'qualifying connection' with St. Barnabas, Emmer Green and Caversham Park. There are many of these, including:

1. One of you lives in Emmer Green and Caversham Park parish
2. One of you is on the St Barnabas' Electoral Roll
3. One of you was baptised in the parish
4. One of you was prepared for confirmation in the parish
5. One of you has, at any time, lived in the parish for at least six months
6. One of you has, at any time, habitually attended normal church services at St Barnabas for at least six months
7. One of your parents has lived in the parish for six months
8. One of your parents has habitually attended normal church services at St Barnabas for at least six months
9. One of your parents or grandparents was married at St Barnabas

If you are married by the reading of banns, the banns are usually read in the 6-8 weeks before your wedding date: we will let you know which dates this will happen.

What other legal paths are there?

There are other legal paths to a church wedding. If one of you is a foreign national, or resides abroad or for good reasons cannot make a qualifying connection, then you must talk to the vicar early on. We will help you to find the most appropriate route.



Things to think about

Can we involve our children?

Many people getting married will have children and want to involve them in the wedding. There are lots of different ways to do this. The main thing is to make sure everybody is comfortable and happy with what is happening. Tell the Vicar early on that you'd like to involve your children in the ceremony, and then you can think through the best way to do that for your wedding.

Getting married after a divorce.

It has been possible for people to get married in church after a divorce for some time. If you have been divorced, the Vicar will need to see your original decree absolute. As with every couple, the Vicar will want to get a sense from you both of your journey to where you are now.

Church Building

St Barnabas' church is a beautiful, light and accessible building, capable of seating 180 people comfortably. We have an audio system with hearing loop.

Flowers

Flowers are often an important part of the wedding day. There is a lot of scope to decorate the church. You can bring in outside florists or do the flowers yourself. It is important that you tell us what flowers you will be having (see 'People' section later).

Readings

A wedding service typically has two or more readings. At least one should be a Bible reading, and the others can be chosen from literature or written specially for the occasion. As with all the choices you make about your wedding day, think about what is important to you as a couple, so it reflects what you want to say about each other on this special day.

Music

There is a lot of choice over the music you choose for your wedding. Generally couples will have an organist and many have other music as well. This may be traditional or modern (or both). The church has a pipe organ, a piano and the facility to amplify other instruments through our sound system. Some couples have friends and family who are musicians/singers and take part in the service: we will work with you to find the right blend of music and songs to sing.

Photography and Video

Photography and video can be an important part of the day. Both are allowed in the service. If you were thinking of having a professional video made of your wedding, please tell us early on. Remember that having a professionally recorded video will generally increase musicians' fees by 50%.

Confetti

Please feel free for your guests to throw rose petals or biodegradable confetti outside the church after the ceremony.

Rehearsal

We hold a rehearsal a few days before your wedding (typically the Wednesday or Thursday before). The rehearsal is a 'dry run' of the wedding: it allows everyone who is involved in the service to familiarise themselves with the order. It greatly reduces anxiety about the service itself, as well as ironing out any last-minute hitches.



People

If you have any questions or problems, don't hesitate to contact the vicar who will be taking your wedding. There is also a good team of people who will help make your wedding at St Barnabas a special and meaningful day, giving you the best start to your married life:

- **Vergers.** The vergers are very important people! A member of the church, they will get everything ready on the day, arrange access for florists, help with car parking arrangements, ensure everyone gets in and out of church safely, and clear up afterwards.
- **Ushers.** We recommend you appoint at least two people to be your ushers. They will be on hand to assist your guests before your wedding. They need to arrive an hour before your wedding starts. Your head usher should also come to your rehearsal, to familiarise themselves with our church, car parking, and to meet the Vergers who will assist them on the day.
- **Flowers.** Please contact Wendy Howell (0118 946 1365) with your plans for flowers. Wendy will also be able to give you good advice as to what will work well in the church.

Fees and Charges

There is a [statutory fee](#) that applies to weddings in the church of England: currently this is £531 (in 2024). We also ask couples to cover certain costs, where incurred:

Vergers	£70
Organist	£150
Choir	£120
Heating (October to March)	£100

No one is excluded from the life and ministry of our Church for financial reasons. Weddings can quickly become costly affairs. In any case of financial need, please speak to the Vicar.

Donations

Operating costs for our parish are around £90k per year. We are entirely self-funding, reliant on voluntary donations to continue our work. We are thankful for any donations received and invite families, if they are able, to make a donation. £250 can make a significant difference to our ability to continue our work.

Contact details

St Barnabas church and hall

The Parish Centre, Grove Road, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8RA

Vicar: The Revd Kevin Lovell

Tel: 01189 475214

Email: vicar@saintbarnabas.org.uk

Online:

Website: www.saintbarnabas.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/StBarnabasEmmerGreen

Payments can be made online, direct to our account:

Account Name: St Barnabas Church

Sort code: 20-71-03

Account no: 10089206

Please add a suitable reference so we can identify your payment.

Donations can also be made online (including Gift Aid if appropriate) via our secure Parish Giving site: either scan this QR code or go to www.parishgiving.org.uk and search for Emmer Green.

