

Weddings guidelines for services during Covid-19 restrictions

Our intention is to ensure that your wedding is as joyful and fulfilling an experience as possible while continuing to follow best public health practice and government guidance. Although this may not be in every respect the Wedding Service you first had in mind, our experience is that once people have overcome their sadness that not everyone they would have liked to invite will be able to present, that it still will be a wonderful celebration of the start of your Marriage – and what a story it will be to tell your grandchildren!

BEFORE THE WEDDING

Banns and Common Licence.

At present, Avon Valley Churches are looking to re-start regular services in their churches. Until such time, it means that banns cannot be read for the three times required; this means that you will need to apply for a Common Licence. The Common Licence can be organised through Canon Gary Philbrick (more details available from the Church Office).

Contact information.

In order to abide by government guidelines, you will be sent a Contact Form before the wedding service. We will ask you to provide the name and contact details of all your guests for Track and Trace purposes. The information will be destroyed 21 days after the wedding service.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

Who can attend the service?

In keeping with current government guidelines to ensure public health, a maximum of 30 people will be permitted at the service. This number includes all those at the ceremony, including the couple, witnesses and guests. It also includes any workers who are not employed by the church such as photographers.

It does not include staff or volunteers employed by the church such as the minister, vergers or churchwardens.

Extra guests will not be permitted to wait outside the church within the churchyard or church grounds, nor can the service be broadcast outside the church. However, the Service could be streamed live – please discuss this with us if you think it might be helpful to increase the number of people who can take part.

What about the length of the service?

In keeping with government guidance, we advise that the service should be kept concise while still consistent with the nature of the occasion, focusing on those parts of the marriage that are required in order to be legally binding under the law of England and Wales.

Seating arrangements

People from the same household or “bubble” may sit together. Everyone else will need to observe appropriate social distancing at all times.

What special provisions should be made for the service?

Our churches have been risk assessed and appropriate physical distancing and Public Health hygiene practices have been put in place so that the ceremony is conducted in a safe way.

Apart from the bride and groom, who join hands as an essential part of the marriage ceremony, a physical distance of 2 metres should be observed between individuals as far as is possible.

If the bride is to be 'walked down the aisle' she should only be accompanied by a member of her household, while bridesmaids should be careful to observe physical distancing unless also from the same household.

Where possible, the rings should only be touched by the bride and groom in the days prior to the wedding. They should be in an easily accessible container, such as a box, which can be passed to the Officiating Minister, who will offer the box to the bride and groom to take the ring out.

During the service, those participating should not project their voices **more than is necessary** to minimise risk of droplet spread.

Legally, if anyone wishes to lodge an objection to the wedding, they are entitled to do so, and provision will be made to enable them to make their point while observing physical distancing.

Good public health hygiene should be observed throughout (hand sanitiser will be available at the door).

Hymns and organist.

Hymns and singing are not permitted as this may encourage droplet and aerosol spread. However, the organist may play music during the ceremony.

Bellringing.

The Central Council of Church Bellringers have issued guidance regarding the ringing of bells. At present we are risk assessing our bellringing against these guidelines.

Signing the register.

All those signing the register should sanitise their hands before signing, complete all the signatures necessary for them and then sanitise them again. Apart from the bride and groom, all those signing should maintain physical distancing if practicable. Hand-wipes will be provided for all those signing the register.

What about face-coverings?

The wearing of face-coverings is voluntary.

Can confetti be thrown?

If confetti is to be thrown, the appropriate distancing still needs to be maintained.

WHAT IF GOVERNMENT OR PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE CHANGES BEFORE THE WEDDING?

Given the on-going uncertainties around Covid-19, we will keep up-to-date with the latest government guidance and advice if any of the above details change. We will do our utmost to make sure your day goes as planned, but we are not in control of the circumstances.

If you wish to discuss any of the above advice, please either contact the Church Office on 01425 653163 or email church.office@fordingbridge.com

Canon Gary Philbrick
Rector