

HOW DO WE ARRANGE A CHURCH WEDDING?

If you would like to be married in St Peter's then you must speak to the Rector before doing anything else. Even if you would prefer another Minister to officiate, the Rector must give his permission for the church to be used. On a very practical level, he will need to check that there are no other events scheduled in the church on your chosen date.

You then need to fill in a Marriage Notice Application Form, available from the Registrar of Marriages. It is recommended that this be done not less than three months before the date you have chosen for the wedding.

The Rector will meet with you in St Peter's in order to go through the ceremony step-by-step. This will enable you to make decisions and recommendations about the practical arrangements, such as how many hymns there will be, how many readings, where the wedding party will sit and stand during the service, when the signing of the register will happen, etc. This initial meeting is not the wedding rehearsal, which will be held much closer to the date of the wedding and will include all of the people who have an active role in the ceremony.

Normally the Registrar will issue you with a *Marriage Schedule* about two weeks before the wedding. This should be given to the Rector (or whoever the Officiant may be). Please note that the wedding ceremony cannot take place without it.

You, your two witnesses (normally the Best Man and the Chief Bridesmaid), and the Officiant will sign the Marriage Schedule during the ceremony. Following this, you will have three days to return the signed form to the Registrar for the marriage to be valid.

To enquire about getting married in St Peter's, please contact the Rector, the Rev'd Brian Lacey. It would be best to do this following a service of worship, but if this is not possible then email him at stpeters@connor.anglican.org or telephone 02890 777053.

WEDDINGS IN ST PETER'S CHURCH OF IRELAND, BELFAST

WHAT IS A CHURCH WEDDING?

The Church of Ireland defines marriage as "*a union permanent and lifelong, for better or worse, till death do them part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.*"

Whilst that might sound very formal, it does at least serve to show that although a wedding is a joyful occasion, it is also to be taken very seriously as the beginning of a life-long commitment. Outwardly, a Christian wedding is different from a civil ceremony in that it usually takes place within a church, and there is a distinctly religious overtone.

WHO CAN GET MARRIED IN ST PETER'S?

It was customary in the past for weddings to be held in the bride's church. Nowadays many couples choose a location based on aesthetic reasons rather than family connection. Even if you have never been to St Peter's before, the Rector will be very pleased to meet you and discuss if it would be an appropriate location for your wedding.

Before approaching the Rector, please ensure that you may lawfully marry. According to the law in Northern Ireland, these are the reasons why you may not marry: (1) One of you is younger than 16 years of age on the day of the wedding and you do not have the consent of your parents. (2) You are too closely related to each other. (3) You are already married to someone else. (4) You are of the same sex as the person you wish to marry. (5) You are not capable of understanding the nature of marriage ceremony.

If you are divorced you may still apply to the Rector to be married in St Peter's, although he will need the permission of the Bishop.

WHY CHOOSE ST PETER'S FOR A WEDDING?

St Peter's Church is a beautiful and atmospheric building, with seats for 175 people, providing the perfect setting for an intimate and romantic wedding ceremony. It is located on a main arterial road which stretches from Belfast city centre out to Antrim, and it is close to a motorway junction that facilitates travel in all directions. It is in a good location for travel from the International Airport, the City Airport, and Belfast Harbour. The Church is also close to Belfast Castle and right beside the Lansdowne Hotel, both of which host wedding receptions.

HOW MUCH DOES A WEDDING IN ST PETER'S COST?

The maximum cost of a wedding ceremony in St Peter's is £500. This cost includes £60 for the Officiant (increased to £100 for Saturday/Sunday), another £100 for the Organist, and a further £340 (maximum) towards heating, lighting and the maintenance of the church. This last fee may be reduced (or waived entirely) according to the *Free Will Offering* contribution to the parish by the bride or groom or their parents over the course of the year prior to the date of the wedding. The Rector will outline and explain these costs to you which should be paid in advance of the wedding, usually at the rehearsal.

In order to count towards a reduction in cost, any financial subscription must have been made to the parish in such a way that it was recorded either through *Standing Order* or *Free Will Offering Envelopes*. Any loose money placed on the collection plate during a service cannot be included.

WHAT IS AN OFFICIANT?

An *Officiant* is an ordained minister who has been authorised to conduct church weddings. He will need to sign your *Marriage Notice Application Form* at least three months before the wedding. He will also oversee the practical aspects of the wedding rehearsal and the ceremony itself. Please ensure that everyone who has an active role during the ceremony consults the Officiant. This includes musicians, readers, photographers, videographers, and ushers. As a general rule, nothing should happen during the ceremony without the Officiant's knowledge and permission.

In former times it was expected that the Officiant would be invited to the Reception. This is no longer the case, and it is entirely your decision as to whether or not to invite him. Please note that if you do intend to invite him, please send an invitation in the same way that you would invite any other guest.

WHO CAN OFFICIATE AT THE WEDDING?

Normally the Rector will be the Officiant at weddings in St Peter's, but you may ask him for permission to allow another ordained minister to officiate. If they are a minister of the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church, or any church in communion with the Church of England, then they may officiate alone, otherwise the Rector may prefer to invite the other Minister to assist him.

CAN WE PROVIDE OUR OWN MUSICIAN AND/OR SINGERS?

You may include musicians and singers at various parts of the service, such as during the signing of the register. The music should be appropriate for a Christian service. Please note that the Organ in St Peter's may be played by a guest organist only with the permission of both the Rector and our own Organist.

CAN THE CHURCH BE DECORATED FOR THE WEDDING?

You may decorate the church with flowers for a wedding. Other decorations may be permitted at the discretion of the Rector, providing that they are in keeping with the historic beauty of St Peter's, are neither hazardous nor damaging, and are removed immediately following the ceremony.

In order to decorate St Peter's, the church may be opened on the morning of (or evening before) the wedding, by arrangement with the Rector. Please seek his permission before moving anything in the church.

CAN THE CEREMONY BE PHOTOGRAPHED AND/OR RECORDED?

All professional photography (including video) needs to be authorised by the Officiant in order to prevent any unwarranted distractions during the service. It is customary to take photos of the signing of the register, and the exchanging of vows and rings. It is not acceptable to take photos during the prayers.