



The Parish Church of
St Peter Great Berkhamsted

St Peter's Berkhamsted Wedding Guide



Updated October 2024

We are delighted that you have decided to get married and to celebrate your wedding at St Peter's. A church wedding begins your married life with God's blessing: we recognize the wonder of human love in the context of God's love for us; we look forward to assisting at your wedding and to praying for you and with you.

1. Your Wedding

This booklet provides you with detailed information that should be useful in planning your wedding. The clergy are available to answer any further questions. You'll find some further information on our website: www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/lifeevents/weddings

The Church of England's wedding website is an excellent place to start when planning your wedding, and provides access to some appropriate readings and music. You can also listen to popular hymns and read lyrics online.

www.yourchurchwedding.org

2. Date and Time

Weddings can take place on any day, subject to arrangement with the clergy. They must take place between 8.00am and 6.00pm. The service itself is about 45 minutes. The last people will probably be leaving the car park about an hour after the time set for the wedding.

At St Peter's, we offer two kinds of wedding: either without or with Holy Communion. Most couples opt for the former, but those who are regular communicant members of a church may wish to make their first act as a couple participation in the Eucharist. The service is then called a 'Nuptial Mass,' and expresses very deeply that the couple's love for one another is bound up in Christ's love for the world. There is no difference in cost between the two.

3. Who to contact

You will need to meet one of the clergy as soon as you can. At the first meeting they will agree a date and time for the wedding and record the other details necessary for the legal preliminaries.

4. Space to think

Before your wedding, as you meet with one of the clergy, there will be space and time to think about the vows you will be taking and the difference they will make. The priest's role is to talk through with you what is distinctive about a Christian wedding as well as to help you with the practicalities of the service.

We also recommend at least one session with *Relate*. *Relate* offers advice, relationship counseling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support face-to-face or by phone and can be contacted through their website:-

www.relate.org.uk

5. Cost

Wedding fees are updated annually and the list of fees is published separately. There are Banns fees, legal fees as well as optional extra fees for the ceremony (e.g. choir, bells).

- We ask for a £100 deposit when you book your wedding date.
- The fees must be received six weeks before your wedding.

Download the current wedding fees list from:

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/weddings

6. Legal Requirements

You do not have to be a regular churchgoer to get married in the Church of England (though it is *usual* for at least one of you to be baptized). The Church welcomes the opportunity for you to make your solemn promises to each other, not just in front of your family and friends but also in the sight of God and with God's blessing.

Parish connection

There are some legal qualifications necessary to be married in a particular church, which are now quite flexible.

One of you will normally need to live within the Great Berkhamsted Parish Boundary. Not all addresses in Berkhamsted fall within this parish – you may live in the centre of town but discover that you are in Northchurch or Sunnyside Parish.

The easiest way to check your location is to go to www.achurchnearyou.com

and enter your postcode into the search box. This will show you which parish you reside in, and the contact details for your parish church.

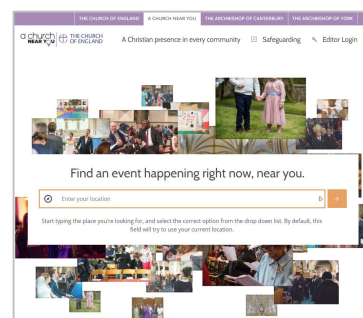
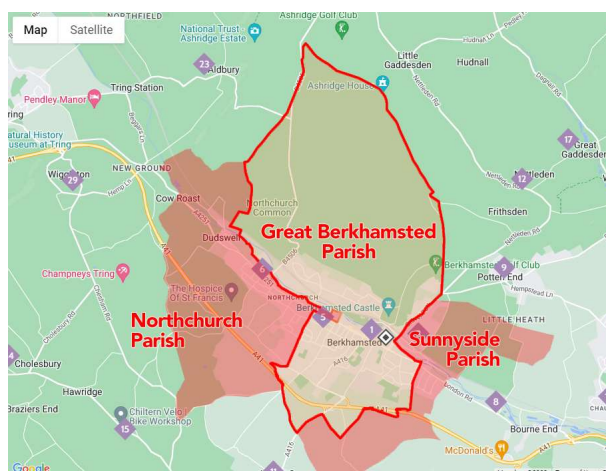
If neither of you lives in this parish:

You may still be able to get married in St Peter's

- if you are a regular worshipper here (which can qualify you via membership of the church electoral roll), or
- if you can establish a “qualifying connection” with St Peter's (basically a particular type of family link – ask the Rector).

Banns

There are various possible legal preliminaries to getting married in the Church of England: the publication of banns is the least complicated method for most couples. ‘Banns’ are an announcement in church of your intention to marry (and therefore an opportunity for anyone to indicate any reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place). Banns are usually read out in the parish church (or churches) on three consecutive Sundays during the three months prior to the marriage. They must also be read in any other parish where one or both of you is resident (if you don't both live in St Peter's parish).



In summary:

- Fill in a Marriage application form for this parish (all names and addresses must be up to date)
- Try to attend church for the three Sundays when your Banns are being read (this will happen two months before your wedding and we will confirm the dates to you in good time)

If either person lives outside this parish:

- Contact the Rector or Vicar of your parish to read your Banns there.
- Pick up the Banns certificate (if the banns have been read elsewhere) and give it to us as soon as possible. The wedding cannot go ahead without it!

Planning the Service



7. Readings and prayers

You will need to choose at least 1 Bible reading. If you would like to write a short prayer of your own this can be read during the service. You may like friends or relations to take a special part in the service (e.g. to read the prayers or Bible reading). You also need to identify who will witness the signing of the register (two witnesses are needed; it is usual for bride and groom to choose one each).

8. Music

Hymns

You can find suggestions for wedding music on these websites:

www.yourchurchwedding.org

The Church of England provides a list of suggested hymns and audio samples

www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/guidance-information/church-weddings

The Royal School of Church Music's wedding music page offers detailed guidance

Some of the most popular hymns at weddings are:

- *All things bright and beautiful*
- *And did those feet in ancient time (Jerusalem)*
- *Be thou my vision*
- *Give me joy in my heart*
- *I danced in the morning (Lord of the dance)*
- *Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us*
- *Lord of all hopefulness*
- *Love divine, all loves excelling*
- *Morning has broken*
- *Praise, my soul, the King of heaven*

Organ

Our Organist is Chris Beauchamp and you will need to contact him via e-mail to talk about music at least 3 months before the wedding. You will need to choose up to 2 hymns, plus music for the entrance of the Bride, the signing of the Registers and the end of the service.



Chris Beauchamp
Organist
christopher.beauchamp@ig.com

Should you wish to arrange for your own organist please discuss this with us.

Recorded music and live bands are allowed by arrangement with the Rector.



Choir

You will need to indicate whether you wish the choir to participate and confirm that with the Rector when you make your booking. You will then need to contact our Director of Music, Adrian Davis, to choose an anthem for the signing of the Registers. We cannot guarantee exactly how many members of the choir will be available but we can usually gather up to 30 members if the wedding is on a Saturday. The choir are not available during the school summer holidays (mid July - end August).



Adrian Davis
Director of Music
adriandavis43@outlook.com
01296 632263



9. Flowers

There are usually two flower pedestal arrangements in St Peter's, except during Lent (the 40 days before Easter) and Advent (the four weeks before Christmas). One arrangement is in the porch and the other by the altar.

If you would like specific flowers or colours to suit your theme additional charges apply. Please contact Sarah Dawson to discuss your requirements, but you will need to do this at least 3 months before your wedding.



Sarah Dawson
01442 871614
sarahjanedaw65@gmail.com



A separate Flower Guidelines booklet is available to download on our website at:
<https://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/weddings>

10. Bells

Church bells ringing as the married couple leave the Church after their wedding ceremony is all part of a traditional English Church wedding. We can ring for your wedding and usually ring for up to 20 minutes for you.

Booking can be made via the church office, or please contact or further information.



Mike Below
Bell Ringers Captain
mcbelow@gmail.com



11. Order of Service

Orders of Service are arranged in consultation with the priest who is going to marry you. He or she will help you to draw up a draft document which will form the basis of the wedding service.

If you wish to print your own booklet, a draft of texts must be approved by the Rector before it is printed.

You will need to print 6 extra copies for the Rector, Organist etc and a further 30 if the choir is singing at your wedding. It will need to be finalized at least one month before the wedding.

12. Bridesmaids and Best Man

There is usually at least one bridesmaid who takes the bride's bouquet and looks after her dress. If you have small children in this role, another adult bridesmaid should be in charge of them, leaving the principal bridesmaid free to help the bride.

It is also traditional for the groom to have at least one supporter or Best Man, who looks after the rings.

13. Ushers and Seating

There should be two to four ushers, preferably at least one from each family to make sure people will be recognized.

A seating plan for the front rows is often useful, and a copy should be given to the ushers.

The capacity of St Peter's is around 450 people.

The two side chapels are occasionally used for small weddings.

14. Confetti

We do permit confetti but please ask your friends

- to use only rice paper confetti or rice
- only to throw it outside in the churchyard on the grass.

15. Parking

There is limited parking at St. Peters on a Saturday and NO parking mid-week. The main Wedding Car is allowed to park outside the church and remain there during the service.

There are various pay-and-display parking bays and public car parks in the town, all of which are within easy reach of the church. You can find a list of car parks on the Dacorum Council website:

<https://webapps.dacorum.gov.uk/carparks/>

The nearest car park is Water Lane – 1 minute walk to the church, but note it is max 2 hours.

Lower Kings Road is 5 minutes' walk, and allows longer parking times.

N.B. On Saturday mornings there is a High Street market, so parking can be more difficult.

16. Photographs and Videos

Please nominate someone as the official photographer (they need not be a professional); the same applies to video. The photographer (and video photographer if there is one) should talk to the Rector before the service about where to stand etc.

17. The Wedding Rehearsal

A rehearsal usually takes place one evening during the week before the wedding.

The bridal party, including the bride, groom, best man and chief bridesmaid attend the rehearsal, sometimes accompanied by the parents of the couple.

The priest will run through all the detail of the service including the words said by the couple.

This also often serves as an opportunity for members of the party who haven't met to be introduced. Couples sometimes use this as an opportunity to have a meal or similar gathering together, and celebrate the beginning of the wedding celebrations.

Bring to the rehearsal:

- Any prayer you have written
- **Orders of service**
- Banns certificate from other parish if required (last chance!)



The Big Day

18. What Happens on the day

What follows is only a suggestion about what usually happens: talk to the priest if you'd like to do anything differently, or less formally.

- The ushers are usually first to arrive at the church, at least 30 minutes before the ceremony. They should be informed in advance of how to seat the guests as they arrive. They also make sure that everyone has an order of service or hymn book.
- The front right-hand pew is reserved for the groom and the best man. Traditionally, the groom's close family sits in the second pew behind the groom. The front left-hand pew is reserved for the bride's parents and her attendants.
- The groom and best man arrive at the church at least 20 minutes before the ceremony. Guests usually arrive at the church 15 to 20 minutes before the ceremony begins, and are shown to their seats by the ushers.
- The next to arrive at the church are the bridesmaids and the mother of the bride. The bride's mother usually waits with the bridesmaids at the church door until the arrival of the bride. The bride's mother is the last to be shown to her seat by the ushers, before the ceremony begins. Her entrance traditionally serves as a cue to the groom that the bride has arrived, at which point the organist begins to play the processional music and the congregation stands. The choir leads the procession followed by the priest and any other clergy.
- The bridesmaids take their places behind the bride in pairs, usually with the youngest directly behind the bride.
- The bride processes with her father or other family member, followed by the bridesmaids, towards the altar. The groom takes a step forward to meet her as she reaches the chancel step.
- Once the bride is next to the groom, the bride's father moves to his left and the bride gives her flowers to her chief bridesmaid or matron of honour. If the bride has no attendants, then her father takes her flowers and either gives them to the bride's mother or places them on the front pew.
- After this the wedding service begins: at St Peter's the bride and groom usually stand throughout the service, while the bridesmaids and best man often sit for the first part of it.

We will do all that we can to make the wedding day a personal, meaningful and spiritual experience for you and your guests. Your meetings with the Rector or other clergy and the rehearsal are intended to make sure that you are well-prepared and relaxed on the day, and that the service is enjoyable as well as significant.

The image shows the interior of a church, looking up at a high, vaulted ceiling. The ceiling is constructed from dark wooden beams forming a grid, with the spaces between the beams filled with bright red wooden planks. The walls are light-colored and feature several arched windows. On the right side, there is a large, colorful stained glass window with intricate designs. The overall atmosphere is bright and architectural.

First Anniversary and beyond



Your local church will always be there for you throughout your marriage. Even if your local church is not the place where you married, the congregation would be delighted to mark your first anniversary by praying for you both. All you have to do is ask.

Visit our website:

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/prayer

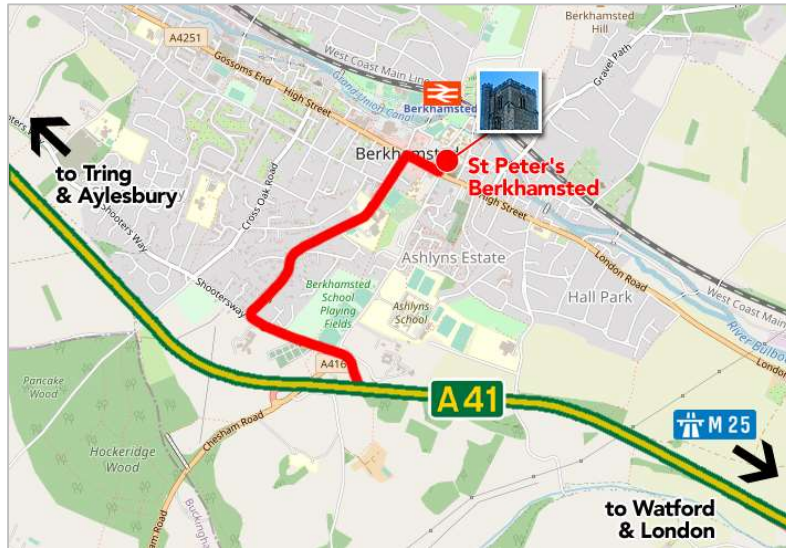
You will be invited back to St Peter's for Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday of Advent in mid-December) when we have drinks in church after the morning service.

Stay in touch

We hope you will keep in touch with parish life at St Peter's Berkhamsted. If you would like to hear about services in the church year and other parish events, you can sign up for the weekly news email on our website:

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/subscribe

How to find St Peter's



St Peter's Church is very easy to find – we are on the High Street in Berkhamsted, which is the A4251 between Tring and Hemel Hempstead. We are a short drive from the A41 – just follow the signs to Berkhamsted.

SatNav: use postcode HP2 2AX



St Peter's is a 5-minute walk from Berkhamsted Railway Station, with very frequent train services to Watford, London Euston and Milton Keynes.

Visit our website for an interactive map:

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/about/map



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Berkhamsted

www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/weddings