

Getting married in the Benefice of Mere and West Knoyle

We are delighted that you are thinking about getting married at one of the churches in the Benefice of Mere with West Knoyle.

The Church of England's 'Your Church Wedding' website is an excellent resource to guide you through understanding how church weddings are organised and planned. It covers all aspects of church weddings and you will find it an invaluable reference point as you organise your own wedding.

[Your Church Wedding | The Church of England](#)

This guide gives you additional information about having your wedding specifically in our benefice.

Booking a date for your wedding

If you would like to be married in Mere or West Knoyle your first step is to contact Paula, our wedding administrator, with a proposed date.

Her contact details are administrator@stmichaelsmere.org.uk or 07942 291266

The church calendars are kept up to date, so if you wish you can check on the calendars to see which dates are available using the following links.

Mere - [Church Calendar – Church of St Michael in Mere \(stmichaelsmere.org.uk\)](#)

West Knoyle - [Events - West Knoyle: St Mary the Virgin - A Church Near You](#)

As we are small parishes we usually only have one wedding on any given day so the church can be completely yours for your wedding day.

Before the first meeting

Once you have made contact and given some idea of when you would like your wedding, we will arrange a date to meet and send you information about the documents needed to carry out the ID checks and the list of qualifying connections you can have to the parish to enable you to marry by banns. If you or your partner is divorced we will need to send you an extra form to complete.

The first meeting

At this meeting we will carry out ID checks and complete the application form to ascertain if you can marry by banns or will need a licence. If one or both of you are divorced, the vicar will also need to talk to you about marrying after divorce and we will need to see your decree absolute.

The following links have more information:

ID checks - <https://stmichaelsmere.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Banns-ID-check-form-for-couples.pdf>

Banns - <https://stmichaelsmere.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Ways-to-say-yes.pdf>

There is also further information about banns here. [Reading of banns | The Church of England](#)

Marriage after divorce [Marriage after divorce | The Church of England](#)

The 'Just Engaged' section of Your Church Wedding website has lots more information that should answer most of your questions.

[Just engaged | The Church of England](#)

Key wishes for your wedding ceremony

At the first meeting we will also talk about your key wishes for your wedding ceremony such as music, bells and flowers and explain the fees and time scales for organisation.

Fees

We will raise a £100 deposit invoice after the initial meeting and once the wedding date is confirmed and the ID checks have been completed.

The fees for Church of England weddings are revised each year in January. You will pay the fees that apply to the year of you marry, not the year you book your wedding.

Below is the fee list for 2024 to give you a broad idea.

2024	Mere	West Knoyle
Legal fee	£531.00	£531.00
Reading of banns	£36.00	£36.00
Additional fees for other services:		
Organist	£90.00	£90.00
Verger's fee (setting out, tidying up etc.) If there are to be significantly more than 100 guests there will be an additional fee of £25 for an additional verger.	£50.00	£35.00
Bells	£140.00	Small donation
Total for the above	£847.00	£692.00
Reading of banns and certificate in home parish if different to Mere – paid directly to that church.	£54.00	£54.00

There is an additional fee (usually double) for the organist if you video your wedding due to copyright permissions. The balance owing to the church after you have paid the £100 deposit is due at least 6 weeks before the wedding day and we will send an invoice at the appropriate time. If it is easier to pay in instalments, this can also be arranged for you.

Church capacities

Mere church can hold about 140 guests comfortably; there are some chairs available for extra seating if needed. West Knoyle church can hold about 70 guests.

Music

There is always music at a church wedding. Usually there is music playing while guests arrive, for the entry of the bride, accompanying the hymns, during the signing of the registers and at the exit of the bride and groom at the end of the ceremony. Often couples like the music to be played on the organ. The administrator will be able to help arrange an organist for you. If you prefer to not have an organist there are options for recorded music which can be discussed at the meeting.

This page has lots of information about music for your wedding:

[Other music for your wedding | The Church of England](#)

And you can hear extracts of some suitable music using the link below:

[The Wedding Music Company - Church Ceremony - Helpful Tips](#)

Flowers and Decorations

There is always a pedestal of flowers in the church done by the church flower arrangers and this is 'free' for you. If you would like particular colours for this pedestal on your wedding day to complement your colour theme this can usually be arranged. We are very flexible about who decorates the church and how, and we will be able to put you in touch with our expert church florists to talk through options. They will also be able to advise you as to how to clear the church after your wedding. If your wedding is in Lent flowers will be at the discretion of the vicar.

Bells

Many couples like the bells to be rung for their wedding day. At Mere there are 6 bells and we are able to organise the bell ringers for you. At West Knoyle we are able to organise for the bells to be chimed.

Planning your wedding ceremony

Order of Service

Planning your service can be a bit daunting but your vicar will contact you after your initial meeting with the administrator and support you with this. They will be able to explain the elements and basic pattern of the Church of England wedding service. The actual words of many parts of it, are compulsory but there are opportunities within these limits to exercise thought and choice over the content and your vicar will help you choose your hymns, music and reading to personalise the service and make it 'yours'.

There is a wealth of information about planning your wedding ceremony on the Your Church Wedding website [Planning your ceremony | The Church of England](#)

Below is some information about the main elements.

Hymns

There are many hymns that are suitable. We usually suggest you include three hymns in your ceremony, but this is not set in stone and we can discuss this with you. The following link has lots of suggestions and you can listen to some of the most popular hymn choices.

[Hymns for your wedding | The Church of England](#)

Bible readings

You must include at least one Bible reading in the service, but you can have two, or you may wish the second reading to be a non-Biblical one.

You should choose readings which truly express your beliefs and feelings about marriage, and which are in accordance with the Christian understanding of marriage.

[Bible readings for your wedding | The Church of England](#)

The following are links that may be of help you plan and create your wedding order of service.

[CeremonyPlannerBooklet.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)

[Walk through the wedding service | The Church of England](#)

[Sample order of service](#)

<https://stmichaelsmere.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Sample-Order-of-Service.pdf>

Once your service is agreed and you have produced your order of service sheet, it is important to let your vicar check your draft before it goes to print to ensure it is compliant with the Church of England service.

Wedding Banns

We will contact you about reading the banns for your wedding 5- 6 months before your wedding date. The banns must be announced three times in the church where you are to be married (usually on successive Sundays) in the three months preceding the date of the ceremony. We will agree the dates so hopefully you will be able to attend the calling of your banns at least once.

If one or both of you are resident in another parish, you will need to have the banns read there too. This will also have to be within three months of the ceremony, but not necessarily on the same three Sundays. After they have been read, you will need to obtain a certificate from the parish vicar (there is a fee of £54 (2024 cost) to be paid directly to the parish for this). The certificate must be sent or given to our administrator before the wedding can take place and it is your responsibility to ensure all this is done.

Marriage Document and Certificate

The traditional marriage certificate couples signed at their wedding has now been replaced with a 'Marriage Document' to enable marriages to be registered electronically.

The first step to obtaining your marriage certificate is to contact the Wiltshire Register Office in advance of your wedding. You can either email - ceremonies@wiltshire.gov.uk or phone - 0300 003 4570. We recommend you do this about 6 months before your wedding and no later than 6 weeks before. You will need to tell them the time, date and place of your wedding. You can either pre-pay for a certificate at this time or wait until after your wedding to do so. The current cost of the certificate is £11.

About 6 weeks before your wedding we will produce a draft marriage document which we will send to you to check for accuracy of spellings etc. The vicar will also check that it is compliant. Then we will print a copy for you and your witnesses to sign in the marriage ceremony. After the ceremony, we will send your marriage document to Wiltshire Register Office so that your marriage can be registered on the electronic register and a wedding certificate can be produced. If you haven't pre-paid for a certificate you will need to contact the Register Office after your wedding and to do so. If you have pre-paid for a certificate it will be automatically sent to you after your wedding.

Wedding rehearsal

To make sure the ceremony goes to plan, there will be a rehearsal for key participants close to the wedding day. Your officiating vicar will lead this and key people involved in the ceremony should try and attend – best man, bridesmaids, parents and ushers. At the rehearsal the vicar will run through what will happen on the day and the roles of people involved. The vergers also attend the rehearsal and will want to talk to the ushers to explain their duties on the day.

Your Wedding Day

Your vergers will arrive early and be at hand to support with the organisation on the day. Your ushers should also arrive early to welcome guests, followed by the groom and best man who should be in their places before the bride arrives. And finally, although it is often thought customary for the bride to arrive late she is actually expected to arrive pretty much on time.