

Everyone at a wedding is part of the service, whether you're doing something specific like a Bible reading or not – you are witnesses to the marriage and part of the couple's married life too.



Going to a wedding is an exciting and happy time for the whole family and all the invited guests. Everyone has a role in the service and in supporting the couple's marriage afterwards too, in whatever ways you can. Here's an outline of how a typical church wedding service will unfold and how guests take part.

First things first

If church is not familiar to you, you may feel unsure about what to expect. When you arrive, please just come straight in, have a look around, follow the ushers' directions about where to sit and feel free to chat until the vicar first addresses everyone.

If you have children, they will be welcomed too, whether or not they have a special role in the wedding. [Read more about children at weddings.](#)

Guests should all be in the church about 15 minutes before the service. If it's a church in the countryside, you might want to check out the facilities beforehand, particularly if you have children. Not every church has a toilet in the building, so understanding the arrangements will help you prepare.

Getting dressed up is all part of celebrating a wedding! It's a good idea to have an extra layer to take you through day to evening, especially if the weather is changeable.

The vicar of the church where the bride and groom are to marry will give a warm welcome and make sure everyone really enjoys the day.

Photos and social media

With the advancing technology of phones and tablets, taking photos and films on special occasions is second nature. Sharing those moments on social media is now a given – there are some wonderful church weddings shared all over the world!

Churches will expect photography at a wedding, but check whether the bride and groom are happy for you to share their special day ahead of them seeing any photographs.

The vicar may give a notice about photos at the start of the service. Churches, both inside and out, provide such a beautiful backdrop for photos, but they are also holy, special places and there will be moments when taking a photo wouldn't be appropriate, such as during the prayers. Set your phone to 'silent' or, if you're not using it for photos, turn it off for the service.

What you will do

There will usually be an Order of Service to follow what is happening. Most weddings will have hymns and there will be at least one reading.

During the marriage ceremony the vicar will ask everyone present if there is any reason in law why the couple should not marry. Hopefully there will be silence at this point!

Later in the service, you will be asked by the vicar:

“Will you, the families and friends of (bride's name) and (groom's name), support and uphold them in their marriage now and in the years to come?”

One of the reasons that marriage is a public service is because married people need the help and support of all those around them to grow and stay together. For the benefit of the couple and society as a whole, when we go to a wedding, we promise to do our part in supporting them. So everyone present then responds: **“We will”**.

After the service

As the service ends and everyone leaves the church, you’re welcome to take the Order of Service with you as a keepsake. There will be more photographs outside and a place to throw confetti – the vicar will quite often say where this is, so listen out either at the start or the end of the service.

Prayers and support

After the wedding, continuing to pray for the couple and their marriage is one way you can keep supporting them.

Sometimes being at a wedding can make you think more about your own marriage, whether that’s long-standing or recent, or about getting married yourself. Or, maybe there was something the vicar said that struck a chord and you want to explore this some more.

[You can find your own local church so you can get in touch with them.](#) Churches will offer a warm welcome if you decide to pop in to a service some time. It’s a great way to meet the vicar and get to know the people there.

Special roles

You might have a particular role at the wedding, such as [doing a Bible reading](#). If you’d like to see what happens during a marriage ceremony, take a walk through the service just here.

Also in this section

A man in a suit reading from the lectern at the front of a church

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Doing a reading

Five bridesmaids sitting in a pew

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Being a bridesmaid

Groomsmen and a best man laughing with the groom outside the church

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Being a "best man"

The groom greets the ushers outside church

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Being an usher

A bridesmaid signing the official paperwork at a wedding

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Being a witness

The bride and groom standing in front of the altar holding hands

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Praying for the happy couple

Children dressed for a wedding holding hands

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Welcoming children

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