



## What is Marriage?

Congratulations! You're thinking about getting married, how very exciting!

But now the big question is: what actually is marriage? I'm sure you've thought about the wedding - but what about life after the party, what about marriage itself, what *is* marriage?

The Bible tells us that marriage is not just a man-made idea or a good excuse for a party, it is God's idea and was first instituted right back in Genesis 2 when he said: *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* (Genesis 2:18). This teaches us that marriage, because it was created by God himself, is a very good thing, which should be celebrated, encouraged and supported, especially by churches. We believe marriage is good for three reasons:

### **1. Marriage is Good for the Couple:**

Today more and more people are choosing to forgo actually getting married in favour of simply cohabiting – maybe because of the cost of a wedding or the life-long commitment it involves.

However, both the Bible and recently scientific studies prove that getting married will be far more beneficial to them than simply living together. Studies show that married couples, even non-Christian ones, have much higher emotional well-being, less stress, less risk of debt and live longer than cohabiting couples and are far less likely to split up than a couple who are just living together.

Marriage is good because it allows a husband and a wife to love, help and support one another knowing that they will always be there, through riches or poverty, in sickness and in health, till death do they part.

### **2. Marriage is Good for the Children:**

This permanency and stability that marriage provides also affords the perfect environment in which to start a family and raise children.

Again recent scientific studies show that children from homes where there is no certainty regarding the future of the parents relationship are far more likely to face emotional and financial difficulties as they grow up.

Thus marriage is good because it allows a husband and a wife to love, help and support their children in the stable environment that only marriage can truly provide.

### **3. Marriage is Good for the Community:**

Finally, and this may not seem particularly important to you right now as you begin to plan your own wedding, but marriage is truly a blessing for the whole of society. It offers stability and assurance, reduces crime rates and actually helps to improve the economy.

Therefore marriage is good because it allows a husband and a wife to love, help and support their community, contributing to society as a whole in a more meaningful and productive way.

## **What Happens at a Wedding Ceremony?**

Below is a very rough guide to what a wedding ceremony in one of our churches will look like. There are certain elements of the service which are compulsory but we understand that this is your special day and therefore will endeavour to be as flexible as possible should you wish to change certain aspects of the service or include other features.

After the bride and her wedding party have entered the church, the wedding service will begin:

- **Part 1: Thanksgiving**

This will often include a hymn, readings from the Bible and/or selected poems, a prayer of thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer.

- **Part 2: The Marriage Covenant**

The couple are invited to come together before the minister and make their vows. The rings are exchanged. The congregation promises to encourage the support the couple in their new life together. The couple may then kiss and the minister may then pray for the couple or say a blessing for their marriage.

- **Part 3: The Signing of the Register**

The couple may then choose either to leave the room to sign the register whilst the guests are entertained or to stay and sign the register in the church. The couple and the wedding party often pose for photos at this point.

- **Part 4: The Blessing of the Marriage**

The newly married couple return to sit in the front pew/seats and the minister will introduce them to the congregation for the first time as a married couple. There may be further hymns, readings and prayers and a short encouraging sermon from the minister.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Marriage:

### What do we have to do in order to be married in the church?

As said above you do not need to be a Presbyterian, or even a Christian, to get married in one of our churches, but you will need to meet with the minister or an elder at least once – and likely two or three times – in order to discuss your plans for the day itself and to explore your thoughts and ideas about what marriage it and what it will involve. This is to help the minister get to know you better so that he can better help plan and organise the day for you and to help you to prepare emotionally and spiritually for married life. You will also need to go to the Registrar's Office and give your intention to get married at least 29 days before the wedding and you cannot legally get married without having done so. This costs £35 per person.

### How much will it cost to get married in the church?

That is decided by the elders on a case-by-case basis. If you are interested in getting married in the church but are concerned about the cost then please get in touch and we will try to help if we can.

### Will we need to have a rehearsal in the church before our wedding day?

Yes – usually a rehearsal is organised a week or so before the actual wedding day to run through where people should stand, what people have to say, etc. This doesn't need to be a formal event and doesn't usually last very long.

### Can we ask someone to take photos and videos during the service?

Of course! We want you to feel free to record this special occasion, although we would politely ask any photographer to please be sensitive towards the sacredness of the moment. Unfortunately any videos taken during the service can only be recorded by a licensed professional due to current licensing laws.

### I'm not a Christian, can I still get married in Church?

Yes, you can! Marriage isn't just for religious people, it was created by God for everyone to enjoy! The benefits of marriage, as seen above, don't just apply to Christians but to all people and so we'd encourage everyone to seriously consider getting married if possible. However, there are certain obligatory elements of the service which are designed to be clearly Christian in nature and taken directly from the Bible, if you are uncomfortable with this we suggest you speak to the minister for more a further discussion about what a church wedding would involve.

### What about same-sex marriage?

Neither the Presbyterian Church of Wales as a denomination nor any of our churches as individual local congregations are legally allowed to perform same-sex marriages at present.

### What about the blessing of a same-sex marriage performed elsewhere?

Denominational rules prevent our churches, ministers or elders from performing such a blessing as the Bible is clear that true marriage can only be between one man and one woman. In Matthew 19 Jesus said [“Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them \*male\* and \*female\*. For this reason a \*man\* will leave his father and mother and be united to his \*wife\*, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh.”](#)