



**The Ledbury
Team Ministry**

Your Wedding



**Initial Information and
Practicalities**

Welcome, and many congratulations on your decision to get married. We do hope that all your wedding preparations will go well, and that you will be able to build a strong marriage and to know God's richest blessing on your relationship.

We're delighted that you would like the marriage service to take place in one of the Churches of the Ledbury Team. Our aim is to serve you as best as we can, and to help you prepare smoothly for the day.

What happens next?

We've enclosed an application form. Please complete this, and return it to us with a cheque for £50 made payable to the Ledbury Team Ministry.

We'll then process your enquiry, and write to you confirming the date, time and venue of the marriage service. We'll also assign one of our Team Clergy to be the point of contact with you. In almost every case that person will then take the service as well. S/he will be in touch with you in due course, to arrange to meet with you to begin to plan the service and to help you prepare for it. For some couples this will be quite soon (the special cases outlined below), but in most cases it will be nearer the date of the service.



Completing the Application Form

This form should be fairly self-explanatory. We've gone into more detail for one of two of the sections, but if you have any questions then please don't hesitate to ring the Ledbury Team Office on 01531 631531 (10:30-1 and 2-3:30, Mondays to Fridays), or email ledbury.ministry@virgin.net.

One of us has been married before...

Please be honest about this on the application form. In the section marked 'condition', the traditional terms 'bachelor' and 'spinster' are no longer used. Instead, please choose:

- **Single** if you have never been married,
- **Widow** (or **widower**) if that applies, or
- **Previous Marriage dissolved** if you have been divorced, and your former spouse is still alive.
- (In the event that you've previously entered into a Civil Partnership that has now been dissolved, the correct words are **Previous Civil Partnership dissolved.**)

It used to be the case that we were unable to offer a marriage service to those who had sadly been divorced (and whose former spouse was still alive). This is no longer the case, but does not mean that a previous divorce does not matter. The Bishop of Hereford (our boss) requires his Clergy to meet with couples in this situation, and to talk through honestly and openly the previous relationship, and its effect on the new marriage. Why is this?

As a Church we believe wholeheartedly that marriage is God's wonderful idea for the world he made and loves, and that in God's plan marriage is intended to be faithful and lifelong. As Jesus himself said:

From the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.
(The Bible: Mark 10:6-9)



At the same time we recognise that in the reality of human relationships this unfortunately isn't always the case. The Lord Jesus Christ came and died for us on the Cross that all of us might know God's forgiveness and a new start in life through faith in him. We've discovered that new life, and want to offer the love of God and the possibility of that new start with him to everyone we can.

We also want to help couples to address the issues from the past that might hurt or damage the new marriage, and to do what we can to make it as strong as possible.

So, if this is your situation we will be in touch very soon after you return the form to arrange a special meeting to talk through these issues. Please be assured that you will receive a warm, non-judgmental welcome, and that you will be treated with the utmost respect, but that we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take the service in every case.

If it turns out to be impossible for us to take the service in your case, then we will gladly offer you a service of prayer and blessing (after a civil marriage ceremony). Such blessing services give us in fact much more freedom than with a marriage service to put a service together that really works for you, and many people find them a more than satisfactory alternative.



Where we live...

The form asks you to tell us your place of residence. We need this, as at weddings we're acting on behalf of the Government, and need to follow their rules. So please once again be completely honest with us about where you really do live (couples are sometimes told by reception venues that they can put down that venue, or a hotel or B&B, as their address. We're afraid that this is simply not the case.)

We need this information because the Government only allows us to conduct weddings in certain cases. ***But don't worry, we will be able to take your wedding.*** There is (apart from one or two hugely unusual situations) always a way through, and we virtually never have a wedding enquiry where we can't legally take the service. The member of the Team Clergy assigned to your wedding will discuss all this with you soon, when s/he gets in touch. You can ignore the following small print and jump to the next section, but if you'd like to know a little more, then please read on.



1. *If one or both of you live in the Ledbury Team Ministry area*, then it's straightforward and we'll be able to call your Banns as the necessary preliminary to the wedding.*

** The Ledbury Team Area comprises the town of Ledbury, and the Herefordshire villages of Eastnor, Wellington Heath, Bosbury, Canon Frome, Munsley, Canon Frome, Stretton Grandison, Ashperton, Yarkhill, Tarrington, Stoke Edith, Pixley, Aylton, Putley, Much Marcle and Yatton.*

2. *If neither of you live in our area, then a new law allows us to read banns for couples in where you (or your family) have a genuine link with our Team area, known as a 'qualifying connection'. These connections are outlined on the back of the form, and if you don't live in our Team area, but think that any of these qualifying connections apply, then you'll need to complete that as well.*
3. *If you don't yet have one of the new qualifying connections, then you can actually get that connection for yourself. One or both of you will simply need to attend our Church services regularly for six months, before we begin to call the banns. ('Regularly' means at least once per month.)*
4. *Even if you can't attend once a month for six months, for example because you live overseas, then there are still ways through - known as 'licences' - and we can let you know about these.*

Your Parish Church

Please put down in this section the full name of your Church of England Parish Church (which will be something like 'S^t John the Baptist, Eastnor'). We need the name of the Church of England Parish Church in order that Banns can be called, even if you attend a church of another denomination. If you're not certain which is your parish church, then simply check online at

www.achurchnearyou.com:
enter your postcode and click on the map that comes up to show where you live.



How much will our Marriage Service cost?

We're required by the Church nationally to charge a fee for each marriage or blessing service that we take. Fees in Ledbury are made up of several different components:

- An amount that goes to the Church nationally to support all clergy stipends (salaries)
- An amount that goes to the local Church for upkeep of the building
- A fee for the organist who plays at the wedding
- A fee for the vergers who prepare the building on the day and clear up afterwards

In 2013 the fee is £570 (for a wedding after Banns), which we believe represents very good value for money compared with other costs usually incurred in getting married. (The £50 deposit you pay with the application form is credited towards this amount.) If your wedding isn't until 2014 or later, then these fees will increase, probably in line with inflation.

Again, it's a legal requirement on us that these fees be paid before the marriage service, and our practice (to avoid any embarrassment) is to ask for payment by cheque or funds transfer to the Team Office a month before the due date of the service.

Please note that if you require extras such as a choir or bell-ringers (or need a special licence because we cannot read banns in your case), then these will incur



an extra charge, and the clergy person taking your service will discuss these with you when you meet.

Just occasionally a couple find it difficult to pay the Church fees. If you think that this might be the case for you, then don't panic. Talk as soon as possible to the minister who is taking your service. There are some 'extras' within the fees that we might be able to remove (e.g. the Church organist). We can also arrange payment by instalment over a longer period of time, or discuss with you ways in which you might save some expense in other parts of your wedding. (In very exceptional cases we also have the authority to lower fees for particular couples.)

Remember what's important...

There is a huge amount of planning and preparation for a marriage service. In all of this, it's very easy to lose sight of what it's all about. An important part of our role as a Church is to walk alongside you over the next weeks and months, helping practically where we can and giving you space to talk over those things that really matter.

As part of that, here are a few passages from the Bible that speak of marriage as God's idea, and of the blessing that God longs to pour out on all couples preparing for marriage.

Why not begin even now to explore this dimension of your marriage by talking to God about it, sharing your hopes, fears and dreams, and asking for his help and strength?

Genesis 1.26-28

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

Song of Solomon 2.10-13; 8.6-7

My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned

1 Corinthians 13.1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

If you need to contact us...

Please never hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions at all about any aspect of your marriage. The member of our Team Clergy taking your service will give you his or her contact details directly. Otherwise, we can be contacted at...

The Ledbury Team Ministry Office
The Rectory
Worcester Road
Ledbury
Herefordshire
HR8 1PL

Tel: 01531 631531

Email: ledbury.ministry@virgin.net

*01: Wedding Service - Initial and Practicalities,
10/12*