

# The Promises

When you marry, you are no longer two people, but one. You don't own anything individually, you own everything as a couple, jointly. You are no longer on your own in the ups and downs of life, you are with someone else who will support you as you support them.

In your marriage you will promise that you will "live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony" that you will love, comfort, honour and keep the one you marry "in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto [them], so long as ye both shall live." You promise that you will do this no matter what happens:

"to have and to hold  
from this day forward,  
for better for worse,  
for richer for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us do part."

And so there is an expectation on the part of the Church that once married you will live together and be there for each other for the whole of the rest of your lives. These promises are solemn, important and binding and you make them knowing that they can never be undone.

**Planning a marriage takes a long time and can be very involved.**

**That's because it's a very important step for anyone to take.**

**This leaflet gives some guidance for those thinking about getting married at St Mary the Virgin, Swanley.**

**It's not an official statement of the law, but a guide to how we approach marriage.**

**If it all looks a bit scary, don't worry: there's plenty of advice and help on hand. Don't be afraid to ask questions if something isn't clear or you don't understand it. Fr Dane will be glad to help you.**



## Marriage at St Mary's Swanley



## **If you are thinking about getting married, it's never too early to begin planning!**

Marriage is an important and solemn commitment to be together for the whole of the rest of your lives, supporting each other and growing in love.

The traditional understanding of marriage is that it is the union of a man and a woman, excluding all others, for the whole of their lives, until they are parted by death. We teach and hold firm to this and in all that we do with regard to marriage, we put this understanding into practice. We recognize that other churches have a different approach and will put you in touch with them should you so wish.

At St Mary's, we know this can be hard work as well as wonderfully rewarding. We will help you prepare for your marriage, and we also promise that we'll provide you with support after the service itself. A key part of this support is knowing that planning for marriage is a bit stressful, when there's so much to think about and get ready!

## **The Law**

To marry, you must be over 16. You can only marry when you are 16 or 17 if you have parental permission.

To marry at S Mary's, you must live in the parish, **or** you must have attended regularly for at least six months and be on the electoral roll **or** there must have been a close relationship between S Mary's and your parents or grandparents.

You cannot marry if you are closely related, or if you don't have the mental capacity to understand the promises of that you will make in the marriage service.

If either party has been married before, but their former partner has died, you will need to produce documents which prove this.

If either party has been married before, and has a former partner still living, then we will provide a service of prayer and dedication after a civil registrar's service. This applies even in cases of tribal or traditional marriages which are valid in this country though they were performed abroad.

In order to marry at St Mary's you will need to show evidence of your identity and Fr Dane will want to visit you at the address you put on your form. Before you get married, you must either obtain a licence or have your banns called. Banns must be called in church on 3 Sundays, no more than three months before the date of the marriage. Banns of marriage are

normally only appropriate for UK passport holders because some other countries don't recognize marriages performed after banns.

If you are not a UK passport holder, you will need a licence. There are two types: the first issued by the Bishop of Rochester's registrar for which you will need to have permanent leave to remain in the UK, or else a Superintendent Registrar's Certificate, available from the civil registrar.

It is expected that you will give around six month's notice of your wish to marry so that proper preparation can be given and all the processes completed in good time. We will co-operate at all times with the government to prevent "sham" marriages. It is important to note that marriage does not give you the right to remain in the UK after the end of any visa you hold, nor does it entitle you to have a visa renewed.

St Mary's cannot provide legal advice on recognition of our marriages in other countries and if you are a non-UK passport holder, you are advised to check with your embassy or consulate in this country if you have any queries, or to contact the authorities in the country concerned.

You can download an application for a wedding by banns from our website, [www.swanleyparish.org.uk](http://www.swanleyparish.org.uk) or you can pick up a copy from church after our Sunday Mass.