



**THE PARISH  
OF HESWALL**

**A Church for the whole community**



## Congratulations!

In the first instance may I congratulate you on your decision to marry. Christians reading the Bible find right at the beginning of the Bible, almost on page one, that God invented marriage and offers marriage as a gift to men and women as part of his creation. We therefore firmly believe that marriage is good for you and for society. Although it takes hard work on both sides, there's plenty of evidence to show that marriage boosts health and happiness, helps keep you together, protects you legally and financially, and is the best environment in which to raise children.

## A Church Wedding

I also believe there are also some things about a church wedding that you just can't get anywhere else. A church wedding will add a spiritual dimension to your marriage. It's a ceremony that bonds you together, not just in front of your family and friends, but in the eyes of God as well. The vows you make are just too big to make anywhere else. It's not simply the beauty of St. Peter's church building or the experience of the Minister, but the fact that God Himself would want to welcome you and see you draw closer to Him.

## St. Peter's will help if we can

So if we at St. Peter's are able to help you, then we would love to do so. Our clergy and staff team are committed to doing the best we can for couples getting married here. We try and make every wedding service special, involving each bride and groom in making choices about their service. But a church wedding is not just about the big day itself - a wedding day is just Day 1 of the life-long adventure that is marriage. So, in preparation for marriage, we offer time and space to couples to reflect on marriage and the marriage vows. We also invite couples to share in our regular worship and explore what it means to live as a Christian today, seeking to honour God in all things, including marriage. And if you live in or around Heswall, St. Peter's and the Church of the Good Shepherd aim to be here for you, not just on your wedding day but in the months and years to come.

## Getting married at St. Peter's (or the Church of Good Shepherd)?

Thanks to changes in the law you now have more choice about which church you can marry in. Most people are married in the Church of England by a process that involves reading Banns. We would be able to read your Banns at St. Peter's for you to be married here if at least ONE of you has ONE of the following connections:-

1. you currently live within the Parish of Heswall, or
2. you were baptised and/or confirmed at St. Peter's or the Good Shepherd, or
3. you have previously lived in the Parish for 6 months or more, at any time during your lives, or
4. you have attended worship at St. Peter's or the Good Shepherd for at least 6 months, or
5. you have a parent who has lived or worshipped in the Parish (during your lifetime), or
6. you have a parent or grandparent who was married at St. Peter's.

## If you do have one of these connections

If you already have one of these special connections and wish to be married here then we would be delighted to book your wedding. We will do our very best to help you prepare for married life together and plan a memorable wedding to establish your marriage. Since marriage is something governed by the Law of the Land we will need to ask for documentation to confirm your connection with the Parish. If you have one of the above connections but one partner is from abroad (including Scotland) then special arrangements may need to be made to ensure the legality of your marriage.

## If you don't have one of these connections

If you do not have any of the above connections you may still be able to marry at St. Peter's if you are willing to commit to worshipping with us regularly (at least twice a month) for a period of 6 months, thus fulfilling connection 4. Prior to this we can pencil in a date for your wedding. At the end of the 6 months we can make this a firm booking, providing you've fulfilled your commitment to attend regularly. Alternatively we can help you find another church with which you do have one of these 6 connections. In exceptional circumstances it is possible to conduct a wedding not by Banns but using a Special Licence. Please feel free to contact me or the Parish Office.

## Marriage in Church after Divorce

If either of you has been married before and has a spouse who is still alive, then it may be possible to conduct your marriage at St. Peter's Church. However in line with the Church of England's national policy on marriage in church after divorce we ask you, in the first instance, to make an appointment to see the Rector. There is also an additional information sheet that explains the process used to consider your request.

## To Book your Wedding Date

If we are able to marry you at St. Peter's then we will ask you to fill in a "Congratulations and Welcome" form. Please contact our Parish (0151-342-3471 or [office@heswallparish.co.uk](mailto:office@heswallparish.co.uk)) and arrange an appointment to book your wedding. You will need to have some evidence of your identity and the connection you have with the Parish that enables us to read your Banns of Marriage. If you no longer live in Heswall this can be done over the phone and by post, although we would much prefer to do it face-to-face if at all possible. Once booked we will give you a small booklet "Getting Married in the Parish of Heswall." This will tell you a bit more about the legal process of reading Banns, the fees we charge, and the help you can expect from the Parish clergy and staff to prepare for your marriage.

## What happens next?

You will receive an invitation from the clergy team to an event we run every year one Saturday in January or February. The event is entirely free and is likely to run from 10.00am – 4.00pm, including lunch. We offer it to you to provide time and space to think about the marriage vows you will be making and the difference they will make to you. We also provide lots of information to help you plan your marriage service and make it a truly memorable start to your married life together. You will also receive an invitation to St. Peter's to come and hear your Banns read in church.

The booklet "Getting Married in the Parish of Heswall" gives you more information about what happens once you have booked a wedding here. Please keep it safe as you will need it when you come to meet the Minister taking your wedding service to plan it together. I also strongly recommend you take a look at [www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org) which offers lots of resources to help you prepare for a church wedding and has an excellent ceremony planner to get you started.

Revd. Martin Cannam  
Rector of Heswall  
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