

# **Old Brampton and Great Barlow Marriage Preparation**

**Congratulations!** A wedding is one of life's great moments.

**Why are you getting married in church?** *Be honest: I've heard it all before!*

Holy place? Sacred space? Sense of 'otherness'? Family insists? Tradition? All these, but something else as well: including the Divine in your marriage doesn't mean you'll avoid problems, but there is an acknowledgment that you can rely on the Church for support and encouragement. *BUT, please remember that this is a religious service in the house of the Lord, and ask your guests to respect this.*

## **Legal necessities**

- *Banns* are a remnant of mediaeval ways of doing things. If you're being married *by banns* (most people are), you must have *banns of marriage* read out in church for three Sundays during the three months before the wedding. They need to be read in the church of the parish where each of you lives, as well as at the church in which you are to be married, so that could amount to three churches in all.
- *Passport*. Ladies, if you need your passport in your married name, collect a form PD2 from the post office and bring it to the minister to sign. This allows you to apply for a passport in your married name.

## **Orders of service**

- Some couples like to have their own service leaflets printed. These can be a single A4 double-sided sheet with only the service outline and the words of the hymns and the *Lord's Prayer* included. Or it could be a more elaborate affair with declarations, vows and prayers included. Please discuss this with the priest to ensure accuracy.
- The church has a copyright licence that covers the reproduction of most (but not all) popular wedding hymns. *Morning has broken* is not covered, so if you are having this hymn, do not have the words printed on leaflets, but use Church hymn books.
- Give your service leaflets to a reliable person to make sure they arrive early at church, and that they aren't forgotten or locked in a car.

## **Flowers**

- For *Old Brampton*, talk to Brenda Stenton (01246 567651). If there's another wedding that day, talk to the other couple: you may be able to share costs. You may wish to use the services of an external florist, but they need to know when the church is available for them to get things ready. If it's a Sunday wedding, Old Brampton church is not available for preparation that morning until 11 am.
- For *Barlow*, one of the church members will be able to advise you. If the wedding is on a Sunday, the church is not available that morning until 12.30.

## **Rehearsal**

- This is a time to walk through the service and put you at ease, and make known your chosen options about the service.
- Please contact the priest at least a month in advance to arrange the rehearsal for the fortnight before the wedding. *It's up to you to contact the priest, not the priest to contact you.* I'm quite prepared to have several couples at the same rehearsal.
- *Who and what should come?*
  - *essential*: bride; groom; full fees in cash (*no fees, no wedding*); banns certificate(s) if any (*no certificate(s), no wedding*).
  - *desirable*: bride's giver-away (if there is one), best man, at least one bridesmaid, readers.

### **Punctuality**

- It may be traditional for the bride to be late, but it's *bad manners*. In any case, there may be another ceremony following yours, and your guests may find themselves blocked in the car park. If you are late, the service may be shortened, or even cancelled.

### **Best Man**

The best man, not essential, is there to assist the groom. It's possible to have more than one. The best man is responsible for the ring(s). Be careful of the grilles in the floor: you don't want the ring(s) to disappear down there. Neither do I.

### **Rings**

One or two? It's up to you.

### **Ushers and Seating**

It's helpful to have at least two ushers to welcome your guests. Ushers should arrive at least half an hour before the wedding to give out service booklets, and to show people to their seats. It's traditional for the groom's supporters to sit on the right side of church, behind the groom, and the bride's supporters to be on the left, with a space saved for the person 'giving away' the bride. You don't have to follow this tradition.

### **Signing of the registers**

This happens in the middle of the service, or at the end: the choice is yours, in consultation with the priest. The documents are signed only by bride, groom and two witnesses of your choice, who must be over 18.

### **Photographs and video**

- The wedding is a religious ceremony, there must be no distractions or intrusions.
- *Photography* is allowed during the ceremony only:
  - as the bride enters church;
  - at the signing of the registers; and
  - as the couple leave.
- *Video-recording* the ceremony is allowed, but discuss this with the priest. The video camera is to remain in the same place all the time.
- Photographers are asked not to move around during the service, nor to use flash, except at the signing of the registers.

### **Confetti**

Not in the graveyard, please: it gets in the graves. Please use biodegradable confetti.

### **Readings**

There will be at least one reading from Holy Scripture. You can leave this to me, or you can help me choose it. If you want other readings (poetry, prose), talk to me. Make sure the readers practise reading out loud: in short, slower and louder than they think. By all means, ask friends or family members to read. Talk to me about this.

### **Bells**

- *Old Brampton*. Bells can *usually* be arranged for a Saturday wedding, and possibly for Sunday. Contact Sue Hall (01246 620630).
- *Barlow*. There are no bells.

## **Fees**

- see separate sheet.
- Pay in cash at the rehearsal.

## **Music**

- The Old Brampton Organist and Choirmaster is Mr Andrew Hall (01246 620630).
- The Barlow Organist is Mr Brian Drury (01246 239154). There is no church choir.

It's usual to have music as the bride enters, during the signing of the register, and as the couple leaves. Our organists will advise you: see below. If you want the church choir, talk to me. If you want to bring your own musicians, talk to me.

- *Hymns.* It's appropriate to have one, two or three hymns. Choose well known hymns your guests will know. Here are some possibilities.

All things bright and beautiful  
Amazing grace  
And did those feet in ancient time  
Be thou my vision  
Bind us together  
Come down, O love divine  
Father hear the prayer we offer  
Give me joy in my heart  
Guide me, O thou great redeemer  
I danced in the morning  
Immortal invisible God only wise  
*Make sure you get the tune you want.*

Lead us heavenly Father  
Lord of all hopefulness  
Love divine all loves excelling  
Make me a channel of your peace  
Morning has broken (*use hymn book*)  
Now thank we all our God  
O perfect love  
One more step along the world  
Praise my soul the king of heaven  
The king of love my shepherd is  
The Lord's my shepherd

- *Suggestions: entrance of bride*  
Bridal March – Wagner  
Trumpet Voluntary – Clarke  
Trumpet Tune and Air – Purcell  
Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring – Bach  
Queen of Sheba – Handel
- *Suggestions: at the end*  
Wedding March – Mendelssohn  
Trumpet Voluntary – Clarke  
Trumpet Tune and Air – Purcell
- *Suggestions: signing of the registers*  
Sheep may safely graze – Bach  
Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring – Bach  
Morning – Grieg  
Largo – Handel  
*or have a hymn: this gives people something to do other than chatter*

## ¶ **What do Christians believe about marriage?**

God (the Divine) is love, and love is God (the Divine), so the mutual love of woman and man is a sign of 'god-ness' or 'divine-ness'. The church holds that marriage is a sacrament: that is, a sign of Divine love. In the ceremony, you make a public declaration of lifelong commitment to love each other, come what may.

In Holy Scripture, Jesus shows love in all sorts of ways: caring, cherishing, warning, enjoying .... and giving his life (his 'self') for the sake of others. In marriage, you can try to follow this model by putting the needs of your partner before your own, or at least level with your own. Love has no conditions. Also, the church teaches that marriage provides the best place for the enjoyment of sexuality, and a stable and secure environment for bringing up children. And of course as man and wife you have a new legal status.

### **Marriage is different for everyone**

- No one can tell anyone else how to be married. They can say how it was or is for them, but only you know how it is for you.
- Marriages develop. You both grow and change, so the marriage must adapt.
- In the marriage service you say, 'All that I am, I give to you'. The trouble is, we don't know ourselves fully—there is more to discover, more to fall in love with, more to marry as the years go by. And more to irritate each other too.
- Continuing to love one another is a *choice*. Whatever the future holds—and it's unpredictable—in promising to love one another for better or for worse, you *choose* to think your partner's needs are at least as important as your own, no matter what.
- A marriage needs to be worked at like a plant needs to be watered. Otherwise it is at risk of not surviving. Like fine china, it's too precious to throw away because of a small crack. Don't take each other for granted.

**You need to find out about each other: likes, dislikes, hopes and fears.**

## ¶ **Love One Another**

What does it mean to say, 'I'm in love with you'? It's difficult to put an intense feeling into words. Holy Scripture uses three words: *affection*, *lust* and *love*. Each can grow healthily into another, or can be negative and harmful.

### *The marriage vow*

- 'I, *N* take you, *N*, 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'.
- *Another way of saying this is:* I *choose* to love you whatever happens, however I feel, whomever I meet, whenever we have problems, whether or not I *feel* in love, with all my will and with God's help, everyday.
- Which part of this do you find most challenging? Why? Discuss this with your fiancé(e).
- Why did you decide to get married?

### *Some ways of loving*

- Words and the way you use them.
- Physical touch.
- Time together and time apart.
- Thoughtful acts and giving and receiving gifts.
- Nurturing new things in each other.
- Tough love: warning, obstructing harm. Love is by no means all sweetness and light.

*A pledge: no matter how busy we are, how stressed sometimes we may feel with work or other demands on us, how tired I feel, or the commitments I have made to others – we will always try to have time for each other and time to do the things together that have so far allowed our love and feelings for one another to deepen and grow.*

## ¶ **Conflict**

- 'Happily ever after' is the stuff of fairy tales. If a couple says they've never had a cross word, they've probably never got through to each other.
- Conflict is inevitable: no two people can always agree. Anyway, arguing with someone usually means that you're taking him or her seriously. The problem comes when arguing is the only way you communicate.
- It's important to recognise that it is not so much whether you have differences, but how you differ, and how you deal with differences.
- Jesus encouraged people to deal with conflicts head-on, but with compassion and sensitivity, and not to leave things unresolved and festering.
- Our personal history of conflicts and whether, or how, we resolved them will colour how we face future disagreements or difficulties.
- It's very important to learn *forgiveness* and never to allow *pride* or *self-righteousness* to hinder resolution of a situation.

### *Questions*

- What were your childhood experiences of conflict? What are your experiences of resolving problems?
- How good are you at forgiving? What is your experience of being forgiven, or forgiving?
- How would you try to resolve a serious problem? Would you seek professional help? When?

### *Suggestions*

- When you're wrong, admit it; when you're right, shut up.
- Have a 'business meeting' every few months when each tells the other, without interruptions, what has pleased you about your partner, and what has irritated you. Listen to each other.
- *The Golden Rule*: Don't let the sun go down on your anger: settle the problem before bed.

## ¶ **The Cs**

### **Commitment**

- There's a difference between living together in provisional commitment and living together in a relationship of commitment.
- The importance of trust and loyalty.
- The understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- The need for *compatibility*.
- The importance of liking one another and giving each other room. Allow each other some space for your own friends and activities.

### *Questions*

- What difference will being married mean to you as a couple, and individually?
- What do you value about each other?
- Can you imagine caring for your partner if s/he became dependent on you in some way? *Will you still need me when I'm 64?*

## **Communication**

- *'...that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy.'*
- Communication can be by speaking, listening, looking and touching.
- *We've been together twenty years today, and there is a moral. Since we've no conversation, we've never had a quarrel. We hardly see each other, so we never have a fight. For 'Silence is Golden' And we've certainly proved that right!*
- What's your experience of the different ways of communicating?
- What about when we find communication difficult?

### *Questions*

- What is my experience of communicating my feelings?
- Am I 'touchy-feely?' or am I more reserved? Neither is wrong or right: people are different; men and women are different. Accept yourself and each other.
- Can we sometimes agree to disagree?
- How good are we at listening to each other?
- How well can we communicate without words?

## **Companionship (literally, eating bread together)**

*May the hospitality of your home bring refreshment and joy to all who surround you.*

- Many marriages begin with friendship that develops into love.
- Once the three reasons for marriage were seen as *sex, children and companionship*. Whatever about the first two, companionship is vital.
- In marriage it's important not to lose sight of friendship in the fever of being lovers and the exhaustion of being parents.
- Companionship is about taking an interest in what each other does.
- Companionship enables opportunities to contribute as a couple to the community.

### *Questions*

- What things do you do together and separately?
- Have you got the balance right for both of you?
- Where are the tensions?
- Do you make time for your 'mates' as well as your mate?

## **Creativity, children and sexual intimacy**

- Marriage is creative, enabling husband and wife to love and support each other, and to share in the care and upbringing of children.
- Marriage is a partnership where the roles we play range from provider and homemaker to deciding whose turn it is to empty the bins.
- Marriage evolves. Often, roles and responsibilities are interchangeable and flexible. Talk to each other about expectations and frustrations.
- If you've been living together, you may have worked out who does what and who is good at what, but remember the other important roles: *of being a strength in need, a counsellor in anxiety, a comforter in sorrow and a companion in joy*. These are important if we are to support, love and complement each other.
- Changing circumstances often involve changing roles.

*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. from 1 Corinthians.*

## **Children**

- Many couples have already discussed their feelings about starting a family.
- We are the products of our parents and our upbringing. These shape our views on life, relationships, what is good and bad. Phillip Larkin's poem ...

## *Questions*

- When's the right time to have children? (biological clock, time to enjoy one another, financial considerations, careers, children from another relationship etc).
- What if one of you doesn't want children, is sterile, or is unable to conceive?
- How will you share the nurture and care of your children?
- What difficulties or fears do you have about conceiving, bearing a child, or being a parent?

## **Sexual intimacy**

- Humans are mammals—apes! Sex is natural. Christians believe that it is God-given.
- Sex is the language of touch, excitement, gentleness and passion, communicating in a way that words can not. Talk to each other.
- When your sex life is good, you may feel a wonderful sense of human closeness and intimacy. When it's not good, there can be feelings of disappointment, sadness, unfulfilment, rejection and uncertainty. Talk to each other.
- Sex involves a great deal of trust and mutual respect. You may have a sexual history that has coloured the way you think about sex, for better or for worse. Be honest about this. Talk to each other.
- Your sex life may change through the years. Talk to each other.
- Men and women often see sex differently. It's important to talk openly and honestly to each other. Talk to each other.

***Above all, be honest with yourself, talk to each other, and be honest with each other—all with consideration and sensitivity.***