

CAMELOT PARISHES
Preparing to hold small weddings
July 2020

How many can attend weddings as permitted from the beginning of July?

The maximum number is 30.

This includes everyone meaning couples, witnesses, officiant and guests and photographers. However, the number does NOT include vergers or churchwardens and indeed the guidance encourages the presence of a verger/churchwarden in order to control access to the church.

How long can the service be?

We are advised that we should keep the service concise. Nevertheless it has to include all the legal requirements as these are set out in our standard Common Worship service.

Can there be music?

Hymns and singing are not advised. However, an organist may play and the congregation may quietly listen. If an organist is present then he/she will be counted within the maximum number of 30.

What about social distancing?

The standard rule of 2 metres applies for everyone although people from the same household can sit together. The capacity of the church will need to be carefully assessed and seating for the congregation allocated in the light of this.

Social distancing does not apply between the bride and the groom.

What about the bride's procession in?

The bride should only be accompanied by a member of her household as she walks down the aisle. If there are bridesmaids these should follow at a 2 metres distance unless they also are from the same household.

What about the sound system?

If there is a sound system then it should be used and operated by the verger or churchwarden. The reason for this is that even though the numbers at the wedding will be small they will in most cases be spread out across the body of the church. Officiants are discouraged from projecting their voice as this may give rise to an infection risk.

Exchanging rings

The advice is that the rings should be touched by as few people as possible other than the couple themselves. If the rings are touched by, say, the best man then hand hygiene measures (e.g. washing or sanitising) should be observed before and after touching the rings.

It is noted that there is no need for the minister to touch the rings or the couple's hands in the course of prayers or blessings.

What about the signing of the registers?

The registers, Marriage Certificate and Marriage Return need to be signed by the bride, groom, two witness and minister. They should all sanitise their hands before and after the signing. Apart from bride and groom everyone should maintain social distancing. This may well mean that the registers should not be signed in the enclosed space of the Vestry but rather in the open space on and around the altar. Signatories may wish to use their own pens but if so they need to remember that signatures need to be made in indelible black ink.

Orders of Service

If special Orders of Service are produced for the wedding these should so far as possible only be handled by the person who uses the Order of Service in question and should then be taken away after the wedding.

Communal hymn books, Bibles and prayer books should not be used. It might be helpful to print out any readings on individual sheets to be used only by the reader.

Donations

Cash donations should be discouraged and where possible online giving resources suggested as an alternative.

Handling of items by vergers

Given that vergers are involved in setting up and clearing up the church before and after the wedding it would be sensible for them to wear disposable gloves in any necessary handling of items.

Wedding rehearsals

The social distancing and hygiene requirements set out for the wedding itself apply also to wedding rehearsals. It would be helpful for the numbers at the wedding rehearsal to be kept to a bare minimum. If people sit during the wedding rehearsal they should be encouraged to do so in the place that is allocated to them for the wedding itself. Surfaces touched during the wedding rehearsal should be wiped down with appropriate anti-viral cleaner given that there will not usually be an interval of 72 hours between the rehearsal and the wedding itself.

Risk Assessment, hygiene, cleaning, notices

A Risk Assessment needs to be made. However, if a Risk Assessment has already been made when reopening the church for public worship, the one for the wedding can very largely be based on this.

This means, however, that all the 'new normal' precautions that are or will be in place in respect of public worship services will apply equally to the wedding. This includes the provision of hand sanitisers at the door and elsewhere together with notices encouraging social distancing and hand hygiene. If the church is to be used for any other purpose within 72 hours before or after the wedding then full cleaning will be needed.

Test and Trace

The government has asked for our assistance in the operation of their Test and Trace system. This is an essential tool in managing the re-emergence of coronavirus. For this reason we have been asked to keep a record of those attending the wedding together with contact telephone numbers. This information will only be used for the purposes of the Test and Trace system and will be destroyed after 21 days.

The giving of this information is purely optional and if anyone does not feel comfortable in doing this no pressure should be placed upon them and their attendance at the wedding should in all respects be welcomed.

A template of a form that guests at the wedding could be asked to sign for these purposes appears in the Appendix below.

Appendix: Template of Consent form for Test and Trace

In order to support the NHS Test and Trace programme, we are taking contact details (name and telephone number) for all visitors, as well as recording times entering and leaving [name of place of worship].

In line with guidance issued by the Department for Health and Social Care, we will keep your details safely and in compliance with GDPR legislation for 21 days before securely disposing of or deleting them. We will only share your details with NHS Test and Trace, if asked, in the event that it is needed to help stop the spread of coronavirus. We will not use your details for any other purposes or pass them on to anyone else.

Thank you for your understanding.

If you agree to providing your information for this reason, please complete the following form:

Name

Tel. No

Signature

Date
