

parties to the marriage, is delivered to the Registrar by the priest for registration. The couple may then approach the Registrar, at a timely later date, for issue of the Marriage Certificate. The Church may additionally issue its own Marriage Document, but this is not something recognised in UK law and will only be issued by the Church once the couple have shown the state Marriage Certificate to the priest.

Following the Process in Church

When approaching the Church for marriage, please note the following:-

- In all arrangements for marriage, these will only be accepted when made in person by BOTH parties and to the priest.
- On first appointment with the priest to discuss the proposed marriage, the couple must sign a document to the effect that they have clearly understood their responsibilities in the time between provisionally booking the marriage and the marriage taking place, and that the *marriage will not take place if those responsibilities have not been met.*
- The priest will make arrangements with the couple for them to attend the four marriage preparation sessions.
- It will be the usual expectation after Session 4, and as near to the date of the marriage as possible, for a 'rehearsal' to take place in church with the couple, the sponsor(s) and anyone else who wishes to attend.
- Please note that it is not blessed for the Betrothal part of the Marriage to be served on a different day before the Crowning.
- The sponsor to the marriage must be an Orthodox Christian.
- The couple can either use their own crowns or the Church's set.
- The removal of crowns take place at the end of the Marriage Service.

Getting Married at St Aidan's



What is Orthodox Christian Marriage? What do we need to know?

Fr Thomas Hopko writes this about Orthodox Christian Marriage ...

“Human marriage exists by the will of God on the earth as the created expression of God’s love for man and as man’s participation in the creative love of God. The union of man and woman in the community of marriage is used in the Bible as the image of God’s faithful love for Israel, and Christ’s sacrificial love for the Church. ...

[The] words of Saint Paul, read at the sacramental celebration of marriage in the Church, contain the whole program for spiritual life in the community of marriage. The husband must love his wife to the point of death, as Christ loves the Church. And the wife must be totally given to her husband in everything as the Church is given to Christ. The union in love must be perfect, total, complete, enduring and lasting forever. Within this union, the sexual act of love is the mystical seal of the total union in love; the act whereby the two are united in mind, heart, soul and body in the Lord.”

(The Orthodox Faith, Volume 4: Spirituality: Marriage SPCK London, 2016)

Getting Ready for Married Life

Preparing for marriage is not only about the practicalities of the day of the wedding: the service details, the reception and then the honeymoon. It is also, and most importantly, understanding that Orthodox Christian marriage is first and foremost a lifelong path of dedication to one another in Christ, the Lord who is the Bridegroom of the Church.

It is also about understanding how sex, money and free will may either become obstacles to mutual marital joy and a life in Christ or, as they should be, become glorious enhancers of that joy. How is this so? ... by the sacrificial self giving of the couple to one another, to the Lord and to those in various kinds of need in the community. We shall cover all these three aspects of marriage in your preparation.

That last reference might appear a little surprising! Consider, however, that an over romanticised view of marriage has led many to think that it is either an unstable love tryst between two individuals or a legal contract uneasily grafted onto that love. Neither is true for Orthodox Christian marriage, which is both a sacrament of the Church in terms of salvation and also a witness to the world of its hope for a social order, utterly transformed by a deeper self-giving love in family life. Orthodox Christian marriage looks both outwards to the world as well as inwards towards its own wellbeing.

For those not called to marriage, monastic and singles in the world, these transformations happen differently. However, all these callings are to be honoured equally.

How will Preparation for Marriage take place?

The 4 Sessions

The wedding cannot take place until four marriage preparation sessions have been attended on Sundays after the Liturgy. The couple will both need to attend the Liturgy as well as these sessions. This is a serious and necessary commitment, so please understand that even if you have made firm

arrangements with family, friends and the reception venue, no date will be confirmed for the marriage until you have met these Church requirements.

The four attended sessions are:-

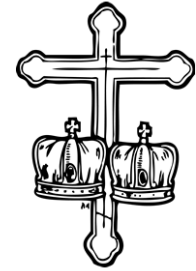
Marriage as a Church Sacrament.

Marriage - Relationships and Life.

Marriage and Holiness.

The Church Marriage Service.

PLUS one remote session for the technical aspect.



The Legal Requirements

For those used to other national systems, please understand that the law in the UK does not recognise unregistered marriages. There can be serious consequences for all if the marriage has no legality. As a matter of policy therefore, St Aidan's will only offer services of marriage if there has been a civil ceremony of marriage **first** OR if the marriage is to be registered by the Church itself after the wedding service (the preferred option). There are absolutely no exceptions to this parish policy.

In all cases of marriage in Church, the couple will need to make an appointment to attend their local Registrar and apply for notification to be made of their forthcoming marriage. After notification, the Registrar will deliver a Marriage Schedule document which must be promptly taken to the priest. This document alone enables the marriage to take place within a specified time period.

Under the current system for the registration of marriages, the state Marriage Certificate (which is necessarily to be acquired by the couple for legal reasons) is now issued by the Registrar alone. This is available after the marriage when the Marriage Schedule, completed at the service by all the