



# Marriages in Hertford College Chapel

Thank you for your interest in marriage in the College Chapel. This document seeks to explain the legal requirements and the circumstances under which a couple may be married in Hertford College Chapel. The Chaplain administers the Chapel and, in considering applications for marriage, will always seek to be consistent and fair within the requirements of the law while responding to the individual practical and pastoral circumstances of each couple.

If you are in doubt about any aspect of this document, or wish to discuss any matter relating to marriage in the College Chapel, you are welcome to contact the Chaplain, The Reverend Mia Smith, Hertford College, Catte Street Oxford, OX1 3BW

T: 01865 279455 E: [mia.smith@hertford.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mia.smith@hertford.ox.ac.uk)

For further information on marriages in the Church of England, please visit:  
<https://www.yourchurchwedding.org/>

**Before making any further arrangements for a wedding, please read this document with care and, if necessary, contact the Chaplain.**

## 1. Introduction

It is the usual practice of the Church of England for marriage to take place in the Parish Church where one or other party, or both, is resident. Alternatively, a couple may marry in the parish Church where they regularly worship and on whose electoral roll they appear, even when they are not resident in the parish. The Marriage Measure (2008) expanded this to include any parish Church with which either party, their parents or grandparents have a significant association. All parish Churches in England and Wales are licensed for the conduct of marriage under these circumstances. The parish priest in question should be approached to confirm eligibility.

Unlike parish Churches, and in common with nearly all college and school chapels, Hertford College Chapel is not licensed for the conduct of marriage. However, under certain circumstances it is possible to obtain a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury for the conduct of a marriage in the Chapel. Therefore, it is not within the gift of the College to grant permission for couples to marry in the Chapel.

As well as couples seeking marriage conducted by the Chaplain in the Chapel, there may also be couples who wish to be married in the Chapel by a minister or priest of another Christian denomination (see section 7 below), or couples who desire to have a service of prayers and thanksgiving for a civil marriage in the College Chapel (see section 5 below).

## 2. Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Licence

In order to be married in the Chapel, a couple must obtain a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury. This is a privilege, not an automatic right. Applicants for a Special Licence should have a genuine and longstanding demonstrable link to the church building (and its congregation/worshipping community) where they wish to be married, which is sufficiently strong to justify the issue of a Licence. This will usually need to show a worshipping connection, over a period of time, with the church where they hope to marry.

It is the College's policy to consider such applications under the following circumstances:

*At least one party should normally be a member of staff (teaching or non-teaching) of the College, or a member of the immediate family of a member of staff.*

*Or: At least one party should be a current student of the College.*

*Or: At least one party is a former student of the College, or a former member of staff (teaching or non-teaching), and has maintained an active and substantial link with the life of the College and Chapel since leaving. This usually means that one or both parties continue to worship at least occasionally in the Chapel, or support College or their department in other ways.*

There are a number of other conditions which have to be satisfied before an application for a Special Licence can be approved:

- i. The couple's families should approve of the marriage.*
- ii. The incumbent(s) or minister(s) in charge of the parish(es) where the couple reside should have been consulted; or, if a couple are resident overseas, an Anglican minister local to their residence should be consulted.*
- iii. The minister in charge of the church where the service is to be held must have been consulted and given his or her agreement.*
- iv. The minister who is to solemnize the wedding must be fully in support of this couple's application for a Special Licence.*

Although these criteria for the issuing of a Special Licence are followed consistently by the Archbishop's Registrar, if a couple do not fall within their bounds, there may yet be strong pastoral or practical reasons why they should marry in the College Chapel rather than their parish church. For example, if two former students have been living abroad and plan to marry on return to the UK such that they have no connections with a parish church in this country, a Special Licence may be granted. Other pastoral circumstances may also provide grounds for the granting of a Special Licence.

If you do not fall under the immediate criteria for the granting of a Special Licence but believe that there are strong pastoral or practical grounds for being married in the College Chapel, please contact the Chaplain.

Further information on the issuing of a Special License can be found here:

<http://www.facultyoffice.org.uk/special-licences/would-i-eligible-to-get-a-special-licence/>

Meeting the eligibility requirements for marriage in the College Chapel does not constitute a legal right to be so married. The Chaplain, the Principal or the College's Governing Body may withhold consent for the use of the Chapel for the conduct of marriage.

### **3. How to proceed with an application**

If you believe you fall within the criteria in section two, and are interested in being married in the College Chapel, please contact the Chaplain. It is strongly advised that couples consult the Chaplain before making any further arrangements for their wedding.

Following consultation with the Chaplain, an application for a Special Licence must be made to the Archbishop's Faculty Office. An application form may be obtained from the Chaplain. This should be completed and signed by the couple and the Chaplain. Please note that the current fee for a Special Licence (payable to the Faculty Office upon submission of the application form) is £360 (this fee is subject to annual adjustment). An application for a Special Licence may be made at any time up to months before the proposed date for the wedding.

Once it is clear that a Special Licence will be granted, appointments will be made to meet with the Chaplain to prepare for marriage and make arrangements for the service (see below).

## **4. Marriage of divorcees in the College Chapel**

The Chaplain welcomes enquiries from couples where one or both parties are divorced. Formerly, the Archbishop's Special Licence was not usually granted to couples where either party had a spouse still living. It is now possible for divorcees to obtain a Special Licence, but there are strict guidelines that have to be followed, and couples are urged to consider whether it might be more appropriate to seek a Service of Prayer and Dedication following a civil marriage instead (see section 5 below).

Where one or both parties have been divorced, the application for an Archbishop's Special Licence can be a difficult process. The Chaplain will have to interview the applicant couple and discuss the former marriage with them, and then write to the Bishop of Oxford to obtain his formal approval to proceed with the application. Also, an original or court-issued copy of the Decree Absolute (not the Decree Nisi) has to be sent to the Faculty Office along with the usual application form for the Special Licence (see sections 2 & 3 above), and along with an additional form giving details of the divorce.

*To think through the questions that will be asked in the interview and the form, couples should discuss the following issues together:*

- What does marriage mean to you?
- What have you learned from your previous marriage?
- Has there been healing of past hurts?
- If you have children, how are they being looked after?
- What do others think of your marriage plans?
- When did your new relationship begin?
- Have either of you been divorced more than once?
- Are

you wanting to grow in the Christian faith?

## **5. Service of Prayer and Dedication following a civil marriage**

The Chaplain is happy to discuss the celebration of a Service of Prayer and Dedication following a Civil Marriage (commonly known as a “blessing”) in the Chapel. This option is appropriate where a Special Licence may be difficult to obtain, particularly where one or both parties have a former spouse still alive. For a blessing, the couple will usually have a civil marriage ceremony in a local register office earlier in the day, or on the day before, and then come into the Chapel for the service. All the legalities are dealt with by the register office.

This service differs from a full marriage ceremony in that it has no declarations, vows, giving of rings or proclamation of marriage, as these will have all occurred at the register office. Instead, the blessing ceremony has the couple affirm their declarations and vows, dedicate themselves each to the other, have their rings blessed on their fingers and kneel together for a nuptial prayer.

For the sake of consistency and fairness, the same conditions as those detailed above for application for a Special Licence will be applied (see section 2 above). Should a couple not find themselves so eligible, any strong practical or pastoral reasons for their civil marriage being blessed in the Chapel will be considered.

## **6. Marriage of a foreign national or domicile**

If either party is not a British citizen or is normally resident outside of the UK (that is having foreign domicile), it is important that they investigate whether a marriage conducted under English law would be considered valid in their country of nationality or domicile. This is not normally a problem if this other country is a member of the European Union or European Free Trade Association, or Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa or the United States of America. Problems are known to have occurred where a party to the marriage is a national or domiciled in a Muslim country or a country of the former Soviet Union.

The couple are responsible for enquiring about whether their marriage would be valid under the law of another country, and should approach that country’s consulate to do

so.

Any applicant for the Archbishop's Special Licence who is not a citizen of a member country of the European Union or the European Free Trade Association will have to provide a copy of their UK visa on application.

## **7. Marriage not conducted by the College Chaplain**

The Chaplain welcomes enquiries concerning marriage conducted by another Christian minister in the College Chapel. In the case of a marriage conducted by an Anglican priest, an Archbishop's Special Licence is required. In the case of clergy of other denominations, the proposed officiating minister should investigate the ecclesiastical and civil constraints regarding their conduct of a marriage in an unlicensed building.

Please note that no arrangements should be made for such a marriage until permission has been obtained from the Chaplain. Permission for a marriage to be solemnised in the Chapel by other clergy is given on the understanding that the officiating minister undertakes full responsibility for the preparation of the couple, the conduct of the service and the registration of the marriage. Such assurance must be conveyed in writing to the Chaplain by the officiating minister prior to permission being granted and a provisional date booked for the marriage.

Once again, for the sake of consistency and fairness, the same criteria as those for Special Licences will be applied to all marriages conducted in the College Chapel (see sections 2 & 3 above).

## **8. Permissible dates and times of weddings**

Hertford College is a working community, and, therefore, must place limitations on the times and dates of weddings in the Chapel. Dates set apart for weddings in 2018 & 2019 are the final Saturdays of June and July, and the first Saturday in September. It may be possible to marry on other dates, but please bear in mind the following:

Marriages may not be conducted on weekdays in full term, nor on the first and last

weekend of each full term, and neither may they occur during Freshers' Week (the week before Michaelmas term) or Encaenia Week (the week after Trinity term). Because of exams, marriages are not usually conducted during Trinity term. These restrictions are to avoid disruption to the activity of the College. The dates of terms are published by the University of Oxford:

[http://www.ox.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_university/university\\_year/dates\\_of\\_term.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/university_year/dates_of_term.html)

It is traditional not to celebrate marriage during the season of Lent (that is the period from Ash Wednesday, in Hilary term, until Easter). The Chaplain is willing to consider celebrating marriage during Lent if a good reason is given for doing so. However, in such cases, neither flowers nor other decorations may be used, and the use of music may be limited.

The Chaplain does not permit more than one wedding to be celebrated in the Chapel on the same day. The marriage service may not begin earlier than 8 am, nor finish later than 6 pm. Effectively, the latest a service may be scheduled to commence is 5pm.

## 9. Preparation for marriage

The Special License is issued on the understanding that couples will be adequately prepared for marriage. The Chaplain encourages couples to sign up to a marriage preparation course, and recommends the following:

*The Marriage Preparation Course:* <http://themarriagecourses.org/try/the-marriage-preparation-course/>

*The Marriage Course:* <http://themarriagecourses.org/try/the-marriage-course/>

*The Marriage Book*, by Sila & Nicky Lee:

<https://shop.alpha.org/product/149/marriage-book-nicky-and-sila-lee>

The Chaplain is happy to advise on the choice of appropriate hymns, readings and prayers. When the Chaplain agrees to a request for marriage in the College Chapel, it is made on the understanding that the couple wish to have a Christian service according to authorised rites.

## 10. Fees, music and other arrangements

- A fee is payable to the Archbishop's Faculty Office for the issue of a Special Licence (**£360**, which is subject to annual change).
- A further fee (usually **£100**) will be payable to the parish church whose registers are used for the registration of the marriage, typically [St Mary's, the University Church](#). The Chaplain will advise on this matter.
- A fee of **£1000** is payable to the College.

Other Fees:

The College has organists who are pleased to play at weddings in the Chapel. A fee of **£150** is payable. It should be noted that if a couple provide their own organist the fee is still payable to the College. Singers or other musicians may be available for weddings at an additional fee. If the service is to be recorded or videoed, fees for the organist and other musicians may be increased to those suitable for a recorded performance.

The College does not provide flowers or other decorations for the Chapel, and these should be arranged by the couple in consultation with the Chaplain. Neither does the College provide printing for orders of service; even so, the Chaplain should be consulted regarding the content of any order of service.

## 11. Access

Please remember that parking near Hertford College is extremely limited. None is available on site except in exceptional circumstances and with the Dean's permission: [alison.woollard@hertford.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alison.woollard@hertford.ox.ac.uk). A ramp is available to allow easy wheelchair access into Chapel. Please inform the Chaplain if this will be required.

## 12. Reception

Couples may wish to hold their reception in the College. Please contact the catering manager for further information: [catering@hertford.ox.ac.uk](mailto:catering@hertford.ox.ac.uk)