

# THE BENEFICE OF BRIZE NORTON WITH CARTERTON AND BLACK BOURTON



HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR  
PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

## FROM THE TEAM RECTOR

I am of course happy that you are considering getting married in one of our churches, in the Benefice of Brize Norton, with Carterton and Black Bourton. This guide is to help you organise your wedding. Do feel free to contact me should you have any questions at all. A very useful website that accompanies this booklet is <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding>. Read this as it will help you prepare for our meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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## THE BENEFICE

There are three parishes and churches in the benefice:

St Britius, Brize Norton

St John the Evangelist, Carterton

St Mary the Virgin, Black Bourton

Even though the churches are in a group, they operate semi-independently of each other. That means that you may not get married in any one of the churches you might like. If you are unsure which is your local parish church, please do visit [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com). Enter in your address and it will show you which is your church.

## MAKING AN ENQUIRY AND BOOKING

If you want to get married in one of our churches, do seek out Rev Barry Hanson, the Rector, either via our parish website ([www.bncbb.org.uk](http://www.bncbb.org.uk)), or by getting in touch with a parish contact person. The parish contact can email you a copy of this booklet and an application form. You should then quickly get in touch with Rev Barry, with whom you will need to discuss next steps. He will check availability for your intended date. When you return a copy of the application form to Rev Barry, he will “hand you back over” to the contact person to make further arrangements, receive the non-refundable deposit, and liaise with you about your requirements for your wedding, such as flowers, bells, music and any other things.

## THE INITIAL MEETING

Rev Barry, the Rector, will speak to you both soon after your enquiry and set up an initial meeting. He will need to ensure the information on the application form is accurate and we can proceed with the wedding. You will also need to bring along some ID such as your passport that proves you are a British Citizen and that you have a right to get married in the church you would like. This will be the opportunity for you to ask lots of questions, so do bring a list!

## THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

The marriage service will be conducted according to the Rites of the Church of England, and as such it is a fully Christian ceremony. Many folks have seen weddings on movies and TV and may have preconceived ideas, but they are somewhat different to the reality of what happens in a Church of England service! If you have been to a church wedding before, you will have some idea of what to expect. You will be asked to make religious vows during the wedding. Of course you may like to have additional readings, songs and things included that help to make the day extra special. Do speak to Rev Barry to find out what is possible. Any church wedding is beautiful!

## QUALIFYING CONNECTION TO BE MARRIED IN THE BENEFICE

The Church of England has rules on who may be married within a parish church, otherwise it would be rather an uncontrolled “free-for-all”. If you have a connection to a particular church in the benefice, you can elect to get married there.

Here is a list of some “qualifying connections” that may allow a person to get married in a particular church in the benefice.

- Both of the people must be United Kingdom Nationals.
- One was baptised in that church.
- One was confirmed in that church.
- A parent or grandparent was married in the church.
- One of you has ever lived in the parish for six months.
- That a parent had lived in the parish for six months.
- A parent or grandparent is buried in the churchyard. (Note: At St Mary’s Church, the Carterton Town Cemetery is behind the gate and fence at the back of the church, so any burial here does not qualify.)
- The applicant has habitually attended worship for at least six months in the parish church. Habitual means “out of habit” and is taken to mean more than once a month and excludes just attending the principal times such as Christmas or Easter.

Couples may be required to show evidence of any of the above qualifying connections. Further information can be found from the *Church of England Marriage Measure 2008, Guidance from the House of Bishops Document* which can be found on the Church of England website.

## FEES

The national church sets the fees for marriages within the Church of England. They increase slightly each year, and you will be informed of any increase that is payable; if for instance you may be intending to get married in a couple of years' time. The local churches only receive a portion of the overall fees. The priest who is marrying you does not receive any of the fees (it is part of the job!).

Here are the fees for 2025:

<i>Fee</i>	<i>St Britius Brize Norton</i>	<i>St John's Carterton</i>	<i>St Mary's Black Bourton</i>
Non-refundable deposit	100	100	100
Fee to Oxford Diocese and the local church	544	544	544
Reading of banns of marriage	37	37	37
If a certificate of banns is required	19	19	19
Organist	100	100	100
Verger	80	80	55
Audio visual provision with streaming	--	100	--
Heating (in winter months)	60	20	60
Bells	10	--	150
Church heritage fund	150	--	150

### Notes:

The non-refundable deposit fixes the date in the church diary. It is payable to the local parish church once the couple have agreed the date with the Rector. It is deducted from the remainder of the fees. The date cannot be guaranteed until the deposit has been paid.

The fees to the diocese and the church, alongside the banns fees are mandatory, as are those for the vergers. If additional things are not required, do not add them to the cost. Things may be added later, but not at the last moment!

There are six bells at St Mary's church, that are hand rung by six energetic bell ringers.

There are six bells at St Britius church, and they are rung via an electric carillon (hammers are programmed to strike the fixed bells).

There is only one bell at St John's.

St Britius church has a simple sound system for microphones only.

St John's church has a full AV system that allows for video projection and live broadcasting via Facebook and YouTube. The provision of audio-visual streaming is dependent on an AV operator being available on the day. Standard microphones are provided free of charge.

St Mary's does not have any sound system at all.

St Britius has a fine Victorian pipe organ.

St John's has an electronic organ, and a "Clavinova" digital piano and good space for a band.

St Mary's has a small pre-Victorian pipe organ, but it is very bright and impressive in sound.

There is a suggested additional donation of £150 for St Britius and St Mary's churches, due to them being originally built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They have extensive upkeep costs. Any donation would be gratefully received to help in maintaining these ancient heritage listed buildings.

## FURTHER MEETING PRIOR TO THE WEDDING

Rev Barry will likely meet with you again a few months before the wedding, to ensure all is going to plan. This is particularly important if some time has passed since the initial meeting and booking, which may have been a year previously. The Order of Service will be firmed up and approved. It is very important to do this before anything is printed and finalised. Many of the communications closer to the time of the wedding will be done by email and in good time before the "big day".

## WEDDING BANNES

In order to be married in a parish church, banns are called in both the parish church where the wedding will take place and also where the couple live. Banns are a legal requirement for Church of England marriages. They serve as a public announcement of the couple's intention to marry and provide an opportunity for anyone to object to the marriage. There is a fee for the reading of banns, and the issuing of a certificate stating that they have been read. The banns fees will be paid to the local church and information will be provided on how to do this. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange banns and inform the priests and relevant parishes of their intentions.

If you forget to arrange banns at any other parish church, this can be a real problem, and you will require a last-minute special licence which is expensive. You cannot be married without the appropriate banns having been read and providing the appropriate certificates before your wedding day.

This will be one set of banns if the couple live in the parish and the church is in the same parish.

There will be two sets of banns if the couple live in one parish but want to get married in another parish.

There would be three sets of banns, if the couple live in separate parishes and wish to get married in a different parish.

## MUSIC

Many folks like to sing some traditional hymns during the wedding. There is also generally entrance and recessional music. You may have your own music you wish to play or songs to sing. This is fine, provided the music is appropriate and not detrimental to the doctrine of the Church of England. Do check. There are pipe organs at St Britius Church and St Marys Church, and an electronic instrument at St John's. We have very talented organists who you may like to book to play for you.

## CAN I USE MY OWN PRIEST?

This is an option provided the clergy person is ordained within the Church of England and has current "permission to officiate", or is a currently serving priest in a Church of England parish. Do ask.

## CAN I BE MARRIED IN CHURCH IF I AM DIVORCED?

Yes, you can, under certain conditions. The church wishes you a lifetime of love that grows within God's protection. It recognises that some marriages do fail for all sorts of sad and painful reasons. Therefore, in certain circumstances, the Church of England accepts that a divorced person may marry again in church and this has been the case since 2002. First, you must have a conversation with Rev Barry and he will guide you through the process and may consult further before making a decision.

## CAN I HAVE A SAME SEX MARRIAGE?

The Church of England does not allow for same sex marriages. Neither the Rector, nor any priests under his authority, are obliged to give or allow for single sex blessings after any civil marriage in the benefice.

## THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal is usually held a few days before the wedding, in the evening. The key participants must be present – the couple, best man, person giving away the bride, bridesmaids/maid of honour - so they are familiar with what to do on the day. The rehearsal is an exciting moment too.

## THE MARRIAGE DOCUMENT

After the service, both of you and your witnesses sign a Marriage Document that declares you are legally married. This is then sent by us to the Witney Registrar. Around three weeks after your wedding you should contact the Witney Registration Office, in Woodgreen, Witney, who will inform you how to get a copy of your certificate. This will show that your marriage has been fully registered. There is a fee payable to them.

## DECLARE ALL THINGS

You will be married in good faith (in honesty with sincerity without any hidden motives). During your wedding preparations and meeting with the Rector, Rev Barry, you must disclose all relevant information, which adds to the loving transparency of the whole commitment. Not to do so may be a criminal or civil offence. The Rector reserves the right to consult further with the Archdeacons and Bishops in the Diocese of Oxford for further guidance.

## A PRAYER FOR YOU BOTH

Father God who is our creator, redeemer and sustainer:

We give thanks that you have bought us together in love, and that we want to commit their lives to each other through marriage. Please keep us joyful and calm as we prepare to enter into the oneness of marriage. We desire happiness and for our hopes be realised. In our growing love for each other, may we come to know you more as the source of all love. Amen.

This booklet was written in July 2025. Rules and guidelines may have changed since its publication, so do check!