

getting married at tabs

The Registrar's Office has recently confirmed to us that it is a requirement for us to conduct a marriage at Tabernacle Baptist Church that at least one of the parties to the wedding is a regular worshipper at Tabernacle and this is their habitual place of worship. This means you must be attending here regularly for a significant period before the date of the marriage. We regret that for legal reasons we cannot conduct marriages of people who do not worship at Tabernacle regularly.

We are delighted that you are considering getting married at Tabernacle and we want to do everything we can to make your day a happy and memorable one. This leaflet is designed to give you information about the way weddings are conducted at Tabernacle and to help you in your planning.

Legal Preliminaries

Tabernacle Baptist Church is an approved building licensed to conduct weddings. This means that before you can get married you need to give notice of your intention at your local registry office and obtain either a licence or a certificate. Without the correct documentation from the superintendent registrar **we cannot conduct your wedding**. A fee is payable at the Register Office when you give notice of your intention to marry.

You may apply to the superintendent registrar for a licence or certificate in the district where you live up to twelve months before the date of the wedding. If the bride and groom live in different districts then you must obtain two licences or certificates, one for each of the districts where you live. The certificate(s) or licence(s) must name Tabernacle Baptist Chapel as the building where the wedding will take place.

After giving notice you must wait a further 15 clear days before the marriage can take place (for example, if notice is given on 1st July the marriage may take place on or after the 17th July). The marriage must be solemnised within twelve months of the date when notice is given at the location specified in the Superintendent Registrar's certificate.

When you go to the Register Office to give notice of marriage you will need documents that give evidence of your name, age, marital status, nationality and residency.

A current valid full passport is the best document. If you can't show this, take along your birth certificate (not recently issued) together with a driving licence, medical card or any other evidence of date of birth. You also need proof of address; you can use a utility bill, bank details, council tax documents, etc.

If you have been married before you will need to show documents to confirm that you now

free to marry – either a decree absolute bearing the court's original stamp, or the death certificate of your former spouse.

Depending on your individual circumstances, other documents may be required. Your local Superintendent Registrar will be able to advise you. However, you should be aware that photocopies are not acceptable and your marriage cannot go ahead unless the legal formalities have been completed.

If Tabernacle is not your habitual place of regular worship, we are not able to conduct the service. This is a change to previous rules. Under the new legislation we must also satisfy ourselves that you are entering into the marriage freely and that it is a genuine relationship and not a marriage of convenience. This is to comply with the law on sham and forced marriages.

Before attending to give notice of your intention to marry, you will need to make an appointment to see the superintendent registrar. For the Vale of Glamorgan district the local superintendent registrar can be contacted at:

Mrs Tania Carter
The Register Office
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
CF63 4RU

Tel: 01446 709490

The opening hours are Monday - Friday 0900 - 1300 and 1400 - 1600.

Marriage Policy at Tabernacle

God created man and woman and from the beginning intended that they should be joined together "as one flesh". Since God designed the marriage relationship, it makes sense that He knows best how to build a happy marriage. As we read the Bible, we are able to discern basic principles which must be understood and applied if we hope to experience joy and fulfilment in marriage. We believe that ignoring these principles could result in failure and frustration in the marriage relationship.

1. Marriage Preparation. In order for our church to better prepare couples for a life-long marriage all couples who wish to be married at Tabernacle Baptist Church will be invited to undertake a period of marital preparation. This preparation will be conducted by either the minister and his wife, or a designated couple in the Church. The course normally lasts for 3 sessions.

2. Faith Commitment. The vows that you will take on your wedding day are made in the presence of God, and the rings are exchanged in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You must be able to make these vows with integrity. Where one party to the wedding is an atheist or an agnostic, or practices a non-Christian faith, it will be left to the discretion of the senior minister and elders (in discussion with the couple) to decide whether the wedding should go ahead in the Church. When a couple is subsequently unable to make their vows in the name of God, they will be encouraged to seek a civil wedding. This may be followed by a service of blessing at the Church.

3. Divorce and Re-marriage. To help ensure the time needed for healing and possible reconciliation, re-marriages after a divorce of a spouse will not normally be performed until at least one year has passed from the time the divorce is finalised. However, we understand that every situation is unique, and each case will be dealt with individually. Our desire is to help your new marriage in every possible way, whilst at the same time remaining true to our Biblical faith. Therefore, divorced persons will be considered for re-marriage after a divorce but they should normally meet one of the following Biblical criteria:

- Divorce occurred prior to Christian conversion (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Divorce occurred because of sexual unfaithfulness by spouse (Matthew 18:9)
- Desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- Former divorced spouse is deceased (Romans 7:3)

Even if you do not meet one of the above criteria, we would love to talk with you and discuss your personal circumstances.

4. Same-sex Marriage

Tabernacle welcomes all people to worship with us at Tabernacle Baptist Church whatever their age, colour, race, gender or sexual orientation. However, at this time the Church Meeting has taken the decision not to conduct same-sex marriages. If you would like to discuss this further with the Pastor, he would be happy to do so.

5. Sexual Purity. When a couple asks to be married in Church, they are seeking God's blessing upon their marriage. It is inconsistent to seek God's blessing in one area, whilst ignoring God's instructions on sexual purity in another. For this reason we strongly urge a couple who are intending to marry in Church to remain celibate until their wedding day. If a couple is living at the same address when they book a Church wedding, the ideal situation is that they should move apart until their wedding day. If this is not possible, they should seek to exercise restraint in their sexual relations until they are married.

6. An act of worship. Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. The service will include readings from the Bible, worship songs and prayers. If you are not comfortable with Christian worship Tabernacle may not be the place for you to get married.

The service is an act of Christian worship, and will not contain words, music or other elements

which are contrary or offensive to the Christian faith. The service includes appropriate passages from the Bible, a brief exposition of the Bible and prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the minister shall declare publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage.

No one, including the bride and groom, under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicant shall be allowed to take part in the marriage service. This is a legal requirement. The minister has the prerogative of cancelling both rehearsal and wedding if this restriction is not observed.

The Law requires that the building be open and accessible during the wedding service, and for this reason no person may be prevented from attending the service. The service may take place in English or in Welsh and must take place between the hours of 9am and 6pm. Where other languages are to be used for the vows and declarations, the couple must provide an interpreter, and the vows and declarations must be made in the language of the couple's choice AND ENGLISH. This is also a legal requirement.

The Marriage Service

Normally you will be invited to have a wedding rehearsal prior to your wedding day. The purpose of this is to give you a rough idea of what happens when, and what is expected of you. However, do not get anxious if there seems to be a lot to remember! The minister conducting the wedding will guide you through the service on the day and tell you exactly what is required. As well as the bride and groom, it would be helpful to have the father of the bride, the best man and bridesmaids at the rehearsal. Please feel free to invite other family members or friends to the rehearsal, which usually lasts about 40 minutes.

During your initial interview to arrange the wedding you will be given a number of options regarding music, flowers and orders of service:

Music: We are able to provide an organist on your wedding day to play music for the entry of the bride, leaving church, and for any hymns during the service. Alternatively, you may choose to have music on a CD for part or all of the service. If you are a church member and a regular worshipper at Tabs you may like to ask for the music group to be involved and use contemporary worship songs. You may like to make arrangements for someone to perform a musical piece or sing during the signing of the registers.

Orders of Service: Orders of service may be printed, projected or from the church hymnbooks. Printed orders of service may either be arranged by you, or can be printed by the church (price on application). If you prefer the words of the hymns can be projected on the church data projection system which is visible on the big screen and ancillary screens throughout the chapel. We also have a large number of hymn books, and if the hymns you want to sing are in them they can be made available to you.

Flowers: Unfortunately, Tabernacle is unable to arrange flowers so you will need to arrange your own flowers or bring in a professional florist. We have a number of flower stands and containers which can be made available to you at no cost.

Video and Photography: The congregation will be asked to refrain from using flash photography during the service. There will be an opportunity for them to take photos during the signing of the register and at the end of the service. If you have a professional photographer, we would ask that they arrive a minimum of 15 minutes before the service to talk through what they would like to do. If you wish to video the service, we are required to pay a performing rights fee. We will pass this cost onto you.

Confetti: Please ask your guests not to throw confetti or rice inside the building or in the entrance way to the building. It has a tendency to blow back inside, and it is very difficult to get up off the carpet!

Witnesses: Two or more credible witnesses must be present at the marriage. There is no lower age limit for a witness, but they must be old enough to understand what is taking place, and testify to what they have seen and heard if necessary. If in doubt, it is advisable to have an additional adult witness to sign the register.

Consent: Both parties must be present at the ceremony, recognise each other (with veils removed if necessary) and enter into the marriage contract knowingly and voluntarily. The person conducting the wedding will ask both parties before the wedding service begins whether they still wish the service to go ahead and whether they are entering into it voluntarily of their own free will.

A person with speech or hearing impairment should bring along an interpreter, or write out and sign the words of declaration and contract.

Fees: When Tabernacle conducts a wedding we have certain costs that we would ask you to help us with. These are as follow:

Organist's fee	£35.00
Caretaker's fee	£35.00
Projection/sound desk fee	£20.00
Registrar's fee	£35.00
Church fee'	£40.00

Not all fees will be applicable to every wedding. So, for example, if you have printed Orders of Service you will not need the projection desk. All of these fees can be waived at the discretion of the minister. If the thing preventing you from having a church wedding is money, please do discuss it with the minister. He will be happy to help you. We want to encourage people to be married in church and will happily do it for free if this helps.

