

# St. Michael, Smarden and All Saints, Biddenden

## Notes for couples completing a marriage application form.

August 2026.

### **Congratulations.**

*We are delighted you are considering getting married, and we look forward to helping you prepare for your wedding day. The Church of England website [www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org) is full of helpful advice and information and is well worth a visit as you plan.*

### **The Marriage application form**

If you are completing an application ahead of a meeting with the Rector, please send completed forms to:

The Rectory,  
36 High Street,  
Biddenden, Kent,  
TN27 8AH.

### **Have either of you been married before?**

We are keen to support couples who have been married before, but under the Bishop's guidance we are required to consider each application individually. Therefore, before any booking can be confirmed, you will need an interview with the Rector. It's helpful to bring your Decree Absolute to the interview.

### **The preliminary interview**

All couples are invited for a preliminary interview.

Clergy now have a legal duty to check the identity and nationality of all wedding couples. Therefore, at your preliminary interview you will need to bring the following forms of identification:

- ⬆ A valid UK passport
- ⬆ Proof of address: Bank statement, driving licence or utility bill proving the address of both parties.

If you are not able to provide these forms of identity, please speak to the Rector by phone ahead of the meeting.

At the preliminary interview we:

- ⬆ Check the details on your marriage application form e.g., spelling of names etc.
- ⬆ Discuss the costs of a church wedding, including cost of organist, choir, and bells. (See the details on our website)
- ⬆ Seek to get to know you both and talk about what is important to you about getting married in church.

### **Marriage Preparation**

Each year we organise at least one Marriage Preparation Morning, to which we invite all wedding couples. At this morning we go through the detail of the wedding service and give guidance on music, hymns, and readings. In a gentle light way, we also get couples to think about ways in which they can make strong long-term marriages.

## **Legalities: Banns of marriage**

There are four legal routes to follow to be married:

- ⬆ Banns: The simplest and most common route for getting married in church, where both parties are UK nationals.
- ⬆ Common License: For couples where either party is a non-UK, but EEA national, or either party is a UK national living or living temporarily abroad, or in Scotland.
- ⬆ Special License: For couples who have special connections with a place of worship that is not covered by the standard list of qualifying connections.
- ⬆ Superintendent Registrar's certificate: For couples where either party is non-UK or EEA national.

Most couples are married through the reading of Banns. Banns of marriage are the public declaration of your intention to be married and must be called three times both in the parish where you are to be married and, if different, where you live. It is **your** responsibility to arrange the calling of Banns in your local church if you live outside the parish where you will be married (ie Biddenden or Smarden). Banns are valid for up to 3 months before your wedding.

We find that many couples move homes before their wedding. It is vital you let us know in writing any change of address; failure to do so can invalidate your marriage.

To find out which parish you live in, use the following website: [www.acny.org.uk/parishmap.php](http://www.acny.org.uk/parishmap.php)

## **Make use of resources on our church website**

Information on music, readings, and the service sheet is available on the church website.

<http://www.sbcofe.org/special-services/weddings/> Look at the quick links at the bottom of our main Weddings page.

## **Music, Organist and Hymns**

Our resident organist is Mark Wilson  
Tel 01233 770528.

You are permitted to invite your own organist to play at your wedding; however, you will still be obliged to pay the 'Organist' fee which is put towards our organ fund.

Our organist is able play a large variety of the popular music often used at weddings. However, if you think you will choose music which is less familiar, he needs plenty of warning.

The Church can provide a choir which if available will be a minimum of 6 singers. They offer support with hymns and if requested can sing a blessing at the end of the service. They are generally only available on Saturdays.

Many of the words and tunes for hymns out of copyright can be obtained at: <https://hymnary.org/> or look at the Kent County Council website <http://www.akentishceremony.com/uk/a-kentish-wedding>. You can also find words and hear extracts of popular wedding hymns at [www.yourchurchwedding.org](http://www.yourchurchwedding.org).

## **Readings**

You will need to include a Bible reading in your marriage service. Please see the sheet of Bible readings we have prepared. You can download this from our website. You are also welcome to include additional readings, which don't need to be from the Bible, and can include a poem or an extract from a book.

## **Service leaflet**

We encourage you to create your own special service booklet/leaflet for your wedding - but please be sure to show us a draft before printing.

## **Photographs**

Photographs may only be taken without flash. Photographers need to be sensitive, and aware of the intrusion excessive number of photos during the ceremony can cause. Photographs can be taken during the signing of the registers. The congregation are requested not to take photographs. To help photographers prepare, a sheet of guidelines can be downloaded from our website.

## **Videos**

To video your wedding, you will need:

- A License from the church. The fee is £100, with £60, paid to the PCC, £40 to the organist.
- A general Video license. This is necessary if the music you have chosen is in copyright and applies both for your service and at your reception. A license can be obtained from [www.wvrl.co.uk](http://www.wvrl.co.uk), The cost is likely to be no more than £30.

## **Flowers**

St. Michael Smarden: Contact: Jocelyn Craig email: [jocelyncraig@btinternet.com](mailto:jocelyncraig@btinternet.com)

All Saints Biddenden: Contact: Jeanette Oatway 01580 291463

Even if you plan to use an 'outside' florist you should discuss your plans with the respective flower coordinator.

There are times of the year when there are restrictions on the use of flowers, namely Lent (the 6 weeks before Easter) and Advent (the 4 weeks before Christmas). In these periods there are normally no flowers in church. Also be aware that shortly before or after flower festivals, there are restrictions for use of flowers.

## **Hire of Halls**

Each Village has halls which you can hire for a reception:

Smarden Charter Hall: Jan Barnes, 01233 771947

Biddenden Village Hall: Flick Brookman 01580 291320

## **Mid-week weddings**

Mid-week weddings are possible to arrange, but please be aware that availability of bell ringers and choir is more difficult to arrange.

Additionally parking in Biddenden coinciding with school pick up time can be difficult.

## **Parking (Biddenden only)**

Parking around All Saints Church can be limited, additional parking can be organised by arrangement with our local village school. Please ask the Rector for further information. A donation to school funds will be appreciated.

It is important that cars should always be kept clear of exits and driveways of neighbouring houses. Your wedding could be delayed if guests are found to be blocking drives.

## **Payment for weddings**

The marriage fees are standard and are set by the Church of England centrally.

Please pay for your wedding at time of the calling of your Banns. Please make cheque's payable:

'All Saints Biddenden PCC' for weddings in All Saints, or

'St. Michael Smarden PCC' for weddings in St. Michaels.

If necessary, you can make payment by electronic bank transfer. Please ask for account details.

Additional fees (organist, choir, bells) are due at your wedding rehearsal, and it helps us if you arrange payment in cash, in separate marked envelopes. Further, it is helpful to provide the Bells fees in £10 notes, and Choir fees in £5 notes.

## **Clergy and Parish contact details**

*Parish Administrator:*

*Sarah Jay*

*(Available Tuesday 10.30am-2.30pm and Thursday 11.30am-3.30pm)*

The Rectory,

36 High Street,

Biddenden, Kent,

TN27 8AH. T: 01580 291454 E: [office@sbcofe.org](mailto:office@sbcofe.org)

*Rector: Rev'd Jayne Shillito. St. Michael Smarden, All Saints Biddenden.*

The Rectory,

36 High Street,

Biddenden, Kent,

TN27 8AH. T: 01580 291454 E: [rector@sbcofe.org](mailto:rector@sbcofe.org)

*You can leave messages on the answer phone.*

*Updated August 2026*