

Worship on the Web



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (marriage)

Please note this advice applies to getting in married in Scotland. For a wedding in a Church of Scotland church in England, the law may be different and the minister should be contacted early on to ensure legal requirements there can be met.

Questions about marriage in the Church of Scotland

1. Can anyone be married in a Church of Scotland church?
2. Can divorced people be remarried in the Church of Scotland?
3. Can people come from outwith Scotland to be married in a Church of Scotland church?
4. Can a minister of another Church conduct a wedding in Scotland?
5. Is it true that a minister can marry a couple anywhere?
6. What should I do next?
7. What if I am marrying a Roman Catholic?

Q. Can anyone be married in a Church of Scotland church?

A. The Church of Scotland is 'national', in that every district has its parish church. The parish minister is willing to discuss conducting marriage for any member of the parish. If you are not a church member, the minister will want to discuss with you whether a religious ceremony is what you are looking for, whether it will have meaning for you, and whether he or she agrees it is appropriate in your situation.

Q. Can divorced people be remarried in the Church of Scotland?

A. Marriage is not understood in the Church of Scotland to be a sacrament, and therefore binding for ever. A minister may therefore conduct the marriage of a divorced person whose former spouse is still alive. He or she, however, will wish to be certain that problems which gave rise to the first divorce are not likely to be repeated. The future well being of children from the first marriage is also taken into account. The final decision rests with the minister concerned.

Q. Can people come from outwith Scotland to be married in a Church of Scotland church?

A. Yes, this is possible. Marriage in Scotland takes place under Scots Law, and those people who satisfy its requirements may be married. However, the local minister also has to agree to conduct the wedding. In practice, some ministers are not able to marry everyone who comes from without their parish; some locations have a very high demand for weddings and it is not possible to fit these in as well as more immediate parish duties. In all cases, a minister will wish to interview a couple before agreeing to marry them, so that he or she is satisfied that a religious ceremony is appropriate. It is helpful if the couple have a reason for approaching a particular parish minister - family, knowledge of the place, etc. The minister may suggest that the couple arrange for their own minister to conduct the wedding.

Q. Can a minister of another Church conduct a wedding in Scotland?

A. Yes, if the Scottish Registrar is willing to accept him or her. For this, the registrar may need documentary evidence that the minister is in good standing with his or her home Church. The minister of the church in which the marriage is to be celebrated would also need to give approval.

Q. Is it true that a minister can marry a couple anywhere?

A. Yes, but not all are willing or able to do so. Some may feel, for example, that a particular location does not contribute as well as a church does to the meaning of the ceremony. However, it is now possible for civil weddings to be carried out by registrars outside Registry Offices in approved venues.

Q. What should I do next?

A. It is important to arrange a date with a minister before making other arrangements. The local registrar should be approached not more than three months and not later than a fortnight before the date of the wedding. The intention to be wed will be displayed at the Registrar's Office and, if no objections are lodged, a marriage schedule will be issued, which must be produced at the wedding for signing. This is then returned to the Registrar's Office who will then issue the marriage certificate.

Q. What if I am marrying a Roman Catholic?

A. This is not in itself a bar to marriage in a Church of Scotland church, provided that your fiancé(e) is happy with the marriage service used by the minister. It is probably wise to discuss your plans with your own priest, so that you will be aware of the implications of your decision.

Further information

You can visit the General Registrar Office for Scotland website www.gro-scotland.gov.uk for more information about legal requirements for all weddings and civil weddings.

Note: The Churches in Scotland

The Church of Scotland has a similar role in Scotland to the Church of England south of the Border, but it is most similar in style of worship and the way it is organised to the United Reformed Church.

Other Scottish churches are: the Scottish Episcopal Church, which is in communion with the Church of England; the United Free Church; the Methodist Church; the United Reformed Church; the Baptist Church; and the Roman Catholic Church. In the Highlands and Islands, mainly, there are other denominations which, like the Church of Scotland, are Presbyterian. Depending on your own background, one of those other churches may be more appropriate for you.