



# Selecting Hymns and Music for Wedding Services

The process of choosing hymns often causes worry and anxiety when planning a wedding. They can also be disappointing on the day if the congregation doesn't find them easy and helpful to sing. This sheet is intended to help make it easier.

We will always do our best to accommodate requests for specific hymns. Most couples prepare at least a simple service leaflet, in which case it may be possible to include suitable songs or hymns that are not in one of our standard books, subject to licensing restrictions. Likewise, it may be possible to substitute a version with a more modern version of the words. However, if you decide not to produce your own order of service, the choice will be limited to hymns contained in the books available at the individual church and your selections will need to be confirmed.

When choosing hymns there are a number of things to bear in mind:

1. **Whether the words are understandable and appropriate:** there are many appropriate hymns, but some popular choices have words that people find difficult to grasp, while others (such as Jerusalem) are simply not very appropriate on closer inspection.
2. **What proportion of the congregation are likely to know them:** it is worth bearing in mind the age range of the congregation and their experience of 'church'. Some of the younger generation may only know what could be called 'school hymns'. It is embarrassing for everyone if the minister is the only one singing heartily.
3. **How easy the tune is to learn and sing:** there will always be some who don't know any hymn, so a good sing-able tune is essential – not too tricky and neither too high nor too low.
4. **How long the hymn is:** some popular choices are quite long and repetitive. The temptation is then to prune out one or more verses, but that often makes the hymn disjointed.
5. **The level of your faith and the likely congregation:** some popular hymns are only really appropriate at the marriage of a committed Christian couple, and perhaps even then only when a significant proportion of the congregation also have a strong faith. This is usually because the words express clear, firm beliefs which some people may find hard to affirm and sing with enthusiasm.
6. **Suitability for different points in the service:** there are normally two opportunities to sing in a wedding service, or occasionally three.
  - The first hymn normally comes just after the welcome. A hymn of praise is often suitable, which may have a particular focus on love.
  - The second hymn is normally just after the address and before the prayers. This is often a more reflective song or one which is prayer-like.
  - The final (optional) opportunity for a hymn is right at the end of the service, after the signing of the registers and before the bridal party leaves church. Again, a hymn of praise may be appropriate, but a traditional 'wedding hymn' is often good at this point.

The list on the following pages represents the most common choices of all. One or two of them are not at all strongly recommended, but I have included a few notes for guidance when choosing that perhaps explain which ones are more suitable and why. Please feel free to call or email me for further advice or if you would like to see the full words of a particular hymn or song before making a final decision.

Of course hymns are not the only form of music sometimes used at weddings. As mentioned on our general information sheet, if you want to include recorded music or other performances as part of the service – perhaps during the signing of the registers – we should discuss that as soon as possible to give the best chance of meeting your needs. Please also let me know if there is anything else I can do to help you plan for your special day.

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<b>A</b>	<i>A new commandment I give unto you</i>	A simple modern song strongly based on John 15 and could be coupled with the use of that reading. Suitable for use after the address and before the prayers.
	<i>All creatures of our God and King</i>	A great hymn of praise suitable for opening the service.
	<i>All people that on earth do dwell</i>	A great hymn of praise suitable for opening the service.
	<i>All things bright and beautiful</i>	Very well known and popular with all generations. On the other hand it is quite lengthy, somewhat repetitive and the tune is rather high for male voices. Not generally recommended.
	<i>Amazing grace, how sweet the sound</i>	The words are great, though not directly relevant to a wedding, and the tune very well known. However, it goes quite high and can be hard to sing. Only suitable for use before the prayers.
	<i>And did those feet in ancient times (Jerusalem)</i>	Not recommended. The words are poetic and moving but not especially helpful, and it is a hard hymn to sing.
<b>B</b>	<i>Bind us together, Lord</i>	A simple modern song which would be good to use after the address if one of the non-gospel readings about relationships is chosen as the main reading.
	<i>Blest be the tie that binds</i>	A more old-fashioned hymn that is basically interchangeable with <i>Bind us together</i> . One of the less common choices, but quite good.
	<i>Breathe on me, breath of God</i>	A lovely hymn asking for God's help by his Holy Spirit. Great before the prayers. There are several lovely tunes that are all easy to sing.
<b>C</b>	<i>Christ is made the sure foundation</i>	A great hymn for ending a marriage service where the couple have a real desire to give their relationship a Christian basis. Slightly tricky rhythms.
	<i>Christ triumphant, ever reigning</i>	Another good closing hymn for a couple intending to take the Christian basis of marriage seriously. Quite a modern hymn, with a rousing tune but quite a wide range.
	<i>Come down, O love divine</i>	A lovely, lovely hymn to have before the prayers. Rather like <i>Breathe on me, breath of God</i> in feel.
<b>D</b>	<i>Dear Lord and Father of mankind</i>	A good, well-known hymn that is suitable before the prayers, whatever the topic of the address.
<b>F</b>	<i>Father, hear the prayer we offer</i>	Another simple, well-known hymn that is ideal before the prayers, whatever the topic of the address.
	<i>Fill thou my life</i>	A more rousing hymn to use before the prayers. The tune is quite easy to catch, but uses a very wide range that may not be comfortable for all men.
	<i>For the beauty of the earth</i>	A good general praise hymn for the beginning of the service that is likely to be fairly well known, even though the tune is slightly tricky at first. Usually a much better choice than <i>All things bright and beautiful</i> , but with some of the same sentiments.

<b>G</b>	<i>Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning (Give me joy in my heart)</i>	A popular 'school hymn' type song that nevertheless says something really good. It asks for God's help in various ways. Very easy to sing and very jolly. Some might see it as rather child-like, but it's simplicity is its virtue and it is a good song to go out to.
	<i>Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost</i>	Like <i>Breathe on me, breath of God</i> and <i>Come down, O love divine</i> , this is another lovely traditional hymn asking for God's help by his Holy Spirit. Suitable before the prayers.
	<i>Great is thy faithfulness</i>	A stirring hymn to open or close with, expressing confidence and trust in God in every season of life.
<b>I</b>	<i>Immortal, invisible, God only wise</i>	A good opening hymn of praise focusing on God.
	<i>In heavenly love abiding</i>	An excellent but slightly less well-known hymn based on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Good before the prayers.
<b>J</b>	<i>Jesus shall reign where'er the sun</i>	A good strong opening hymn of praise, but with slightly old-fashioned words. A short, easy-to-catch tune. Verse 3 should normally be omitted.
	<i>Jesus stand among us at the meeting of our lives</i>	A really appropriate and moving hymn to use before the prayers. Quite short but very simple.
<b>L</b>	<i>Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us</i>	Prayerful hymn with good words that is excellent before the prayers. Generally well known.
	<i>Let all the world in every corner sing</i>	Good praise hymn to begin the service but with slightly tricky rhythms. Better if it is a good 'churched' congregation that will sing heartily!
	<i>Lord of all hopefulness</i>	Excellent after the address and before the prayers, or even at the end of the service. Quite well known to all generations, and although it is still a hymn rather than a 'song' it is slightly more folkly/modern.
	<i>Lord, for the years</i>	A good 'going-out' hymn for a Christian couple.
	<i>Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us (Living Lord)</i>	A good opening hymn focusing on God. Verse 2 should be omitted except on rare occasions when the service includes communion.
	<i>Love divine, all loves excelling</i>	One of <b>the</b> wedding hymns of all time. Hard to beat, and with a couple of alternative tunes that are both fantastic and easy to sing. You're sure to please somebody by choosing this one!
<b>M</b>	<i>Make me a channel of your peace</i>	A more modern song that is well-known to all generations, and easy to sing. Very good words that make it extremely suitable before the prayers.
	<i>May the grace of Christ our saviour</i>	Another traditional alternative asking for the help of the Holy Spirit that can be used before the prayers. This one is very short.
	<i>Morning has broken</i>	Frequently chosen as an opening hymn, partly because it so well known to all generations. However, it goes quite high and is not always sung well by small congregations.
<b>N</b>	<i>Now thank we all our God</i>	Generally well known to people as a popular harvest hymn, but it is a great general-purpose hymn of thanksgiving also. Particularly good to go out to.

<b>O</b>	<i>O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace</i>	
	<i>O perfect love</i>	This hymn practically is a prayer, and is very much written with weddings in mind. A lovely hymn to use after the address almost as part of the prayers.
	<i>O praise ye the Lord</i>	A well known and uplifting hymn of praise to start the service with a bang.
	<i>O thou who camest from above</i>	A beautiful hymn of self-offering for use immediately before the prayers. A simple, beautiful tune.
	<i>O worship the King</i>	Very well known, and a good opening hymn.
	<i>One more step along the way I go</i>	Another popular 'school hymn' type of song that asks for God to be with us along the way, which is a good sentiment. Like <i>Give me oil</i> , it is easy and jolly to sing, though it doesn't work as well on the organ. Again, some might see it as rather child-like and cheesy, but it can be a good song to go out to.
<b>P</b>	<i>Praise my soul the King of heaven</i>	Very well known, and a good opening hymn.
<b>T</b>	<i>Take my life and let it be</i>	Another beautiful hymn of self-offering immediately before the prayers. Again, a simple, beautiful tune.
	<i>The King of love my shepherd is</i>	An alternative setting of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Psalm that is quite well known. See <i>The Lord's my shepherd</i> .
	<i>The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want</i>	The most popular and best-known setting of the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Psalm. For some people it is too closely associated with funerals, but it is a good choice before the prayers to express confidence that God will be with us through thick and thin in the years ahead.
	<i>Thine for ever! God of love</i>	A good traditional choice before the prayers, but less well known to younger generations. However, the tune is easy to catch if not known.
	<i>To God be the glory</i>	Very well known, and a good choice for an opening or closing hymn.