

DEACONS CAN TAKE WEDDINGS

Here's what canon law says:

Solemnization of marriage by deacons (see Canon B 35, [here](#))

Guidelines issued jointly by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

1. The minister officiating at a marriage service in the Church of England should **normally be a bishop or a priest**⁽¹⁾.
2. **A deacon may officiate at a marriage only if the consent of the incumbent and/or minister is first given**⁽²⁾.
3. The authorized services should be used without variation whether the officiating minister is bishop, priest or deacon.
4. **When a priest is present he may delegate to a deacon parts of the service including:**
 - (i) **the blessing of the ring(s);**
 - (ii) **the pronouncement of the blessing(s) on the couple.**

The priest should pronounce the blessing of the congregation at the end of the service.

Notes:

¹. Where the incumbent or minister has colleagues who are in holy orders (priests as well as deacons) **the decision as to who should solemnize the marriage of a particular couple belongs to the incumbent or minister. Consideration should be given to the wishes of the couple and there should be discussion at the parish staff meeting or other consultation between colleagues. In considering who should be the officiating minister, pastoral considerations are important. A significant factor may be that the person who is to solemnize the marriage should also have prepared the couple for the wedding;** in the case of a newly ordained deacon (man or woman) it needs to be noted that training to undertake marriage preparation is at present primarily a post-ordination task and colleges and courses do not require students to develop skills in this area before ordination. **In the first year following ordination as deacon therefore, a deacon should rarely, if ever, solemnize a marriage and should only do so for exceptional reasons.**

². Reference to the incumbent and minister mean the incumbent of the parish to which the deacon is licensed and minister means minister or priest-in-charge of the church in which the service is to take place.

* George Cantuar

* John Ebor

July 1992



To sum up: **yes, deacons can officiate at a marriage:**

1. If we have the consent of our incumbent
2. we can bless the rings and bless the couple
3. If there's a priest then he/she should bless the congregation (otherwise we use the form 'May the blessing of God ...')
4. the incumbent decides who officiates
5. **pastoral considerations must be noted**

Practice differs slightly from bishop to bishop, but for **distinctive deacons**, this final point is the most important. Deacons are called to the community outside the church walls and on the margins, and for that reason our freedom should not be compromised by taking lots of services inside the church. Instead, if we built relationships with a couple during the course of our ministry, they may well ask if we can officiate at their wedding.

"Although distinctive deacons need *initially* to learn the bread and butter of parish ministry, eg baptisms, sick visiting, funerals, etc., their ongoing participation in them should *always arise out of the diaconal focus* of their ministry. Deacons are not called to minister within the walls of the church. They are called to be out and about in the community, building bridges, creating relationships, identifying and meeting needs. This freedom of the deacon is a gift to the mission of the church.

Therefore, their participation in such aspects of ministry as occasional offices will be governed by whether these have come about through the community focus of their ministry. This principle gives clarity to the kind of involvement in general parish ministry which is appropriate for distinctive deacons."

<https://deaconstories.wordpress.com/guidelines-workinglearning-agreement-for-deacon-curates/>

The diaconal principle is:

"Therefore, their (deacons') participation in such aspects of ministry as occasional offices will be governed by whether these have come about through the community focus of their ministry."

NB: if you have solemnised the marriage then you should sign the registers.

(image of a deacon Dad conducting his daughter's wedding from Irish Examiner)