



Wedding Ceremonies



Welcome to South Downs Celebrants!

Amanda Millis and Corrine Samaras are in-house, experienced celebrants. Together with you, they create, write and conduct personalised services for weddings, renewal of vows and other family events, to create a day full of memories to last a lifetime.

They would love to get to know you, learn and hear all about you as a couple, helping you build and transpose your story within your service so that your celebrations start with real aplomb, with a service that everyone will enjoy and remember fondly.



What is a Celebrant and why would you choose a Celebrant for your wedding day?

In the most basic terms, professional Celebrants conduct ceremonies independently from any belief system but will happily incorporate religious and spiritual elements into the ceremony, so if you would like to sing, let's sing! If you would love to add a ritual, let's do it, let's embrace tradition and surround it with love.

The start of your wedding day begins with the union with both of you, in front of your family and friends. The service is so important to get right, we will discuss in depth the style of ceremony you would like and ensure it sets the scene for the day ahead and allows your celebrations to start with real style, with a ceremony that is exclusively written for both of you.

If you and your partner are from different cultures, or have different religious beliefs, then elements of both your cultures and beliefs can also be included in the ceremony itself.

As a Celebrant we would get to know you as a couple. How you met, who you are, and what you want in life together, your hopes and dreams. We will ensure this resonates through to your

wedding day, where we will guide you through your ceremony. We'll find ways to include and involve all your favourite people and ultimately, we'll craft a ceremony which does your love justice.

Within your ceremony we really don't have any rules. We can include any reading you like,

something classical, biblical, a poem or a piece of prose that makes everyone laugh. If you would like everyone to sing – we can! If you have a friend who would like to play music – they can! Why settle for a Registrar



ceremony that lasts 6 minutes? As Celebrants we offer a bespoke, personalised service which is unique to you, that celebrates your love story, involves your loved ones, and allows your creativity to encompass a service that will be fondly remembered forever by your guests. You as a couple are not like any other, because your love story belongs to you, and to explain that to your guests can be a magical experience. Weddings, after all, are about creating memories and moments that you will treasure forever.

The Legal bit

So, let's start logically with the obvious question – Can a professional Celebrant legally marry couples? By law, the marriage must be conducted by a person, or in the presence of a person, authorised to register marriages in the district. The marriage must be entered in the marriage register and signed by both parties, two witnesses, the person who conducts the ceremony and, if that person is not authorised to register marriages, the person who is registering the marriage.

West Sussex Registration service

Before you can marry or enter into a civil partnership, both you and your partner are legally required to give notice of your intention to marry at your local Register Office. To request a date you would need to call the Ceremonies Team to discuss this on 01243 642122. Here is the website link: **West Sussex Register Office - West Sussex County Council**

In West Sussex all standard legal declarations are conducted in Crawley Registry Office, which is in Crawley Library. It has its own separate entrance, and a small room where you and your two witnesses go to partake in the legal declaration. Within this service you are permitted to have minimal vows and promises, and you sign your declaration of marriage. This takes 15 minutes.

Service costs:

- ✿ Standard Legal Declaration £68 per couple
- ✿ Printed Marriage Certificate £11 each

Giving notice

Both partners must 'give notice of marriage' in your local Register Office, whether or not you wish to marry in the district. The Superintendent Registrar will then issue authority for the marriage and you may marry in any Register Office or local authority premises in any district.

You must sign a legal statement at your local Register Office to say you intend to get married or form a civil partnership. This is known as 'giving notice'. The charge for this is £35 per person

- ✿ You must give notice at least 29 days before your ceremony.
- ✿ For example, if you give notice on 1 May, the earliest date you can get married or form a civil partnership is 30 May.
- ✿ You must hold your ceremony within 12 months of 'giving notice'.
- ✿ Both partners must be resident for seven days in England or Wales before notice is given.

Where to give notice

You usually need to make an appointment to give notice at your local Register Office. You must have lived in that registration district for the past 7 days.

You and your partner will need to give notice separately if you live in different registration districts. You do not have to do this on the same day.

Then you are legally married

What are the benefits of choosing a Celebrant over a Civil Ceremony with a Registrar?

Registrars in West Sussex work in pairs. They conduct ceremonies on the hour every hour. Often conducting two or three a day. For example, if your ceremony were at 2pm they would arrive at 1:15pm, briefly and individually meet the couple and then legally marry you. As soon as the ceremony is over, they depart. If one of you are late the Registrars may not be able to wait, as they often have another service to go to. With Registrars there are rules and regulations. They will offer a choice of three sets of vows which you would preselect on the ceremony form and submit back to them. They call you the night before your wedding to say hello, introduce themselves and check in with you.

They are always lovely people, but you are unable to choose your Registrar. They will be assigned to your wedding ceremony to maximise how many ceremonies they can conduct in one day.

When you sign your documents in the middle of the ceremony, Registrars do not allow any

photography, so when you see pictures of the couple signing it is always on a commemorative certificate rather than a legal document. This is for data protection.

There are many benefits to choosing a Celebrant. A Celebrant brings individuality; we are lucky, we get to know our couples and invest time into writing a bespoke service just for them – so we would never rush off as Registrars often have to. Each ceremony is personal to the couple, it's not an 'insert name here' template of a ceremony. We get to know you, understand your vision and values, and we want to give you a unique, personal experience. During your service you will sign a commemorative certificate that you can be photographed with as you complete it, so your service flows.

Most couples consider the day they host their celebrant ceremony and reception to be their "official" wedding day, not the day of the formal registration, which is a legality.

If you were to compare the birth of a baby and going to the registry office, you would then register the birth of the baby's name. You wouldn't however take with you your family and friends; you would hold a baby naming ceremony or a christening on a separate date in a location of your choosing.

It is the same with a wedding, why not register your marriage and then celebrate your wedding day how and when you would like it to be, with complete freedom of choice.



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The process - getting to know all about you

We begin the process by setting up a WhatsApp group so that we three can contact each other as often as we like. Communication is key, and we are here to help you.

We start by sending you a wedding questionnaire for you to have a think about. This will help you work out who will be completing each role for your wedding, from who your bridesmaid/man will be, to the best man/woman, to guests that might like to conduct a reading.

It also helps us build your back story, the start of your love story. We would ask you to complete as much as you can at the beginning of your booking so that we can start working on your ceremony from the off, we can then build the ceremony together over time. We would never expect you to have all the answers at the start, but hopefully it will help you plan and prioritise.

Discovering your love story

Your Celebrant will write a script for you; this tells your love story - how you met, fell in love, your shared values, your hopes and dreams for the future. We will then ask about your family, your friends, people that mean the world to you that we could involve in the ceremony.

Along with our WhatsApp group we will have as many face-to-face meetings with couples as you would like, which also includes phone calls, Zoom calls, Microsoft Teams meetings or email conversations. We will then immerse ourselves into researching the finer details of your love, finding music, poems and readings that reflect you.

What happens next?

Once the script is under way we will share our thoughts of your love story with you, so that every detail is checked over together. We will guide you through writing vows and promises that bring out how you feel about each other and reflect your personality.

On the day

On your wedding day we will arrive a good hour before your service. We will check in with you and ensure that you are all okay. We meet the guests that have significant roles within the service or will be conducting readings. We will take them to where the ceremony will be so they are familiar with the space and can be as confident as possible. We will have a chat with your photographer and meet any musicians you have booked to play.



The Personal Touch

Have you ever thought about adding something unique to your ceremony? There are a variety of ways we can make the ceremony all about you whilst giving people you love significant roles. Unity rituals are a wonderful way to add an extra layer of meaning to your wedding ceremony, before or after rings and vows. From lighting candles to the layering colours of sand, there is a wedding ceremony ritual to fit everyone's style.

Ring warming

Why not start the ceremony with warming of the rings. A ring warming ceremony is a tradition that involves passing around the wedding bands to guests. Upon receiving the rings, guests "warm" them up with a prayer, good wishes, or positive vibes for the couple's future

together. Your wedding rings are a symbol of your commitment to each other, they have no beginning or end, so last forever.

We place your rings in an organza bag on a small pillow or tray and hand them around to all your guests. By doing this it shows your guests that your ceremony is more personal from the start, not a normal impersonal service that is quick, but a ceremony they can all be involved in.



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Handfasting

Handfasting is a Celtic ritual that symbolises unity. The tradition involves a couple's hands being tied together with cords or ribbons. The Celebrant then ties them all together around your hands – hence the phrase 'Tying the knot'. Handfasting is an ancient ritual in which the hands are tied together to symbolise the binding of two lives. This Celtic tradition dates as far back as 7000 B.C. In ancient Ireland, when two people chose to be married, they were brought together to have a braided cord or ribbon tied around their hands in the presence of a priest. Each of the colours of the ribbons is explained as each one is laid over your hands. We often invite your chosen family members to lay the ribbons over your hands, the more personal

you make it the more bespoke it becomes to you. During wedding ceremonies, we always tie the ribbons in a knot three times. Once for the past, one for the present and one for the future. We, your Celebrants, explain why the knots are tied, but often we ask people you love to tie the knots directly. It makes for the most wonderful pictures!





Unity Sand Ceremony

The unity sand ceremony is a tradition in which a couple pours sand from separate vessels into a unified, central one. It represents two people coming together in marriage. The act represents the joining of two individuals and the creation of a new union and family. The joined vessel symbolises the marriage of both partners' hopes, dreams, and values.

Couples can also choose whatever vessels they want to use, and many of those can be family heirlooms or other meaningful objects.

The ceremony is an easy way to visualise the joining together of two people into one. The action of pouring their individual container into a larger vessel, making something new, and a

permanent transformation is something that children of all ages understand.

A sand ceremony is also wonderful if you would like to involve family members, it cements you all together. You can allow children to choose favourite colours to have as the sand goes into the bottom, making something beautiful as a forever keepsake.

The unity sand ceremony emerged in the late 1980's as an alternative to the unity candle ceremony. The latter was a popular tradition in the Catholic faith in which a couple would light two candles individually and then light a central candle together. "As people started moving their ceremonies and celebrations outdoors, they needed to find an alternative ritual," says life-

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cycle Celebrant and nondenominational minister Alisa Tongg. “The flame was going out from the wind.” People started using sand as a substitute for candles.

They also like that the new practice created a keepsake from their big day. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so too will your marriage and your family forever be intertwined.

Colours

For both Handfasting and Sand ceremonies colours are steeped with tradition and meaning. From deep jewel tones that reflect opulence and nobility to softer colours that evoke a sense of whimsy and romance.

If you choose to add a handfasting ritual into your ceremony, you choose colours that are meaningful to you.

Some people choose colours that match the theme of the wedding.

Some choose colours that match the interior of where the bottle will live forever.

Some choose their favourite team colours such of that of a football team or have a sporting theme.

The choice is yours, but the symbolism in the colours makes for wonderful photos.

Think of it as joining two families together with a bespoke ritual, where you keep the ribbons or the bottle of sand forever.

The perfect keepsake, from the beginning of a wonderful day.



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Order of service

No two ceremonies are ever the same, we work out the order together. Most couples choose something along these lines:

- ✿ Arrival of the couple
- ✿ Introduction and welcome
- ✿ Ring warming
- ✿ Reading or poem
- ✿ The couple's love story
- ✿ Reading, poem or song
- ✿ The couple's vows and promises.
- ✿ Exchange of rings
- ✿ Handfasting or Unity Sand ceremony
- ✿ Pronouncement of marriage
- ✿ Closing and departure



Our Celebrant Team

So, how do you choose? We are delighted to be able to offer you a choice of two professional Celebrants here:



Amanda Millis

I am Amanda and I have been looking after and managing weddings for over 30 years. My role as a celebrant brings me so much joy. It is wonderful to get to know my couples, really find out about them, how they found each other, who proposed to who, what makes them laugh, and who they are as people. Telling their story at the beginning of the wedding day and sharing it with their guests is an honour and a privilege for me to be part of the journey of their wedding day. I have won National Wedding Awards for customer service and have recently won the National Runner-Up prize for the AOIC for Couples & Family Celebrant. I'd love to hear your story and learn all about you!



Corrine Samaras

My name is Corrine Samaras and I've worked in Human Resources for over 35 years. I consider myself to be patient, personable and friendly. I am also a part qualified Counsellor and I have been told that I have good interpersonal communication skills and am a good listener. I love dealing with people of all ages, and have a great understanding of the fine nuances of working with people from different backgrounds because I come from a fusion of cultures that is free of prejudices and convention. My aim is to work with you to create your bespoke ceremony and help you plan a day full of memories to last a lifetime.

The beauty of having a choice of two Celebrants here is that you have options and a back-up. We always have a plan if one of us is unwell – it's never happened – but it's great to have a plan, after all that is how the best weddings start.

South Downs Celebrants only take one service booking per day, so we are here totally for you and have all the time in the world to look after you.

Pricing

If your wedding is at Field Place Manor House & Barns, we offer a special price for £595 inc VAT. If your wedding ceremony is elsewhere our ceremonies are from £750, with a travel allowance.



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