

Seven heavenly ways to welcome wedding guests

The Weddings Project team attended 50 weddings in 2009 to learn more about the experiences of guests at church weddings. Here we share Vicars' best practice tips for making guests feel welcome.

1. Introduce yourself with a smile - some people are surprised to find how relaxed and friendly Vicars really are.
2. Make those practical 'housekeeping' notices about confetti and phones before the bride comes in - so the theatre of her arrival starts the service with style.
3. Make them in a permissive, friendly fashion - how about: "make sure you turn your mobile back on after the service"?
4. Encourage everyone to make themselves at home - let people know they are feel free to move about, let children come forward or stand on a pew for a good view.
5. Practice the promise the guests will make - some people think they have to whisper in church, but when you rehearse the guests 'we will' before the bride arrives, it really breaks the ice.
6. Have a paparazzi moment - make sure everyone gets a good angle for photos or video, even if you have to restage the big moment at the end of the service.
7. Help guests keep their promise with prayer - give a promise + prayer card to every guest. They can keep it by the bed or the kitchen sink and pray every day for the happy couple.

The prayer on the guest card reads:

*"Dear God, pour out the abundance of your blessing on them.
Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts
and a crown upon their heads.
Bless them in their work and in their companionship;
awake and asleep, in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death.
Amen."*

Preview the Weddings Project guest card here. Clergy from participant dioceses may order this from their diocesan Church House.

See the Church of England's press release: Make it a service with a smile and have a 'paparazzi moment' – new guidance for giving wedding guests a day to remember, too.