

GUIDANCE FOR MARRIAGE IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHURCHES

You can only be married in a church licensed for weddings, be it the parish church or one specifically designated by the Bishop, provided you fall into one of the following categories:

Marriage by Banns

Banns are read in the parish church where the wedding is to take place and also in your parish church and that of your partner (if different). They are a public announcement of your intended marriage.

To be able to marry by banns:

- (a) At least one of you has to have your normal place of residence in the parish in which you wish to marry for a reasonable period of time (generally considered to be in excess of 6 months for a UK citizen and in excess of 18 months for non-UK nationals).

OR

- (b) At least one of you should have been on the Electoral Roll of the church in which you wish to marry (ie you have formally declared your membership of it). To be on the Electoral Roll you need to have been attending the church regularly for at least 6 months. This means that you can be married in the church that you normally attend, even if it is not in the parish in which you live.

OR

- (c) You fall into one of the new qualifying categories as set out below.

Your banns need to be read on three Sundays prior to the wedding, the last one being within three months of the date of the wedding.

Marriage by Common Licence

A Common Licence is issued on behalf of the Bishop of Derby in place of banns being read. It is useful if you have not lived in a parish long enough for banns to be read, are marrying a non-UK national or you choose not to have banns read. Marriage by Common Licence is also recommended if you are marrying someone living in Scotland. You can apply for a Common Licence no more than 3 months before the date of the wedding.

To marry by Common Licence you must:

- (a) Have lived in the parish (or been on the Electoral Roll of the church) in which you want to marry for a minimum of 15 days, immediately before you apply for the Common Licence.

OR

- (b) Fall into one of the new qualifying categories as set out below.

AND

- (c) Satisfy various residency requirements (if you are not a UK national).

You must then make arrangements to meet a member of the clergy (known as a marriage surrogate) who has been specially appointed by the Bishop and swear a written statement under oath (known as an affidavit).

If all is in order a Common Licence can then be issued by the Diocesan Registry.

Marriage by Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Office

This is for a marriage to take place where there is no residence, Electoral Roll or qualifying condition as set out below. They tend to be granted sparingly and usually only if there is a particular connection with the church involved. The Archbishop can also authorise, in very special circumstances, marriage in a place other than a church, for example a hospital or a person's home.

Additional Qualifying Conditions

These came into effect on 1st October 2008. They extend the places where you can claim the right to be married, without the need to obtain an Archbishop's licence. The new rules are as follows and, in all these cases, marriage can be by banns or by common licence:

- (a) In the parish where you were baptised (but not if baptism took place at the same time as confirmation).
- (b) If you have been confirmed, in the parish which presented you for confirmation.
- (c) In the parish of the area in which you have had **at any time** your usual place of residence for at least six months.
- (d) In the parish where you have, **at any time**, habitually attended public worship for at least six months.
- (e) In the parish in which one of your parents has, **during your lifetime**, had their usual place of residence for at least six months or habitually been to church there for at least six months.
- (f) In the parish in which a parent or grandparent has been married.

There are certain other factors to take into account:

- (a) References to parents and grandparents includes adoptive parents and also anyone who was responsible for your care and upbringing.
- (b) You will need to supply evidence in support of one of the new “qualifying conditions”. This can be a certified copy of the entry of baptism or confirmation, the baptism or confirmation certificate itself or a written statement from a member of the clergy that you or your parent has habitually attended public worship in a particular church for at least six months.
- (c) If there is any doubt in the mind of the minister conducting the service whether a condition has been fulfilled then a legal, statutory declaration can be called for, asking for confirmation of whatever facts need to be verified.

Re-marriage of Divorcees

Many clergy are happy to marry divorced people. They do, however, have an absolute discretion to refuse to marry someone who is divorced and whose former spouse is still living. They can also refuse to permit their own church to be used for the marriage of a divorced person if the former spouse is still living. The Church of England website has more information on www.cofe.anglican.org.

The new regulations do not change this. The guidance to clergy on the marriage of divorced persons will still apply, just as it did before.

Conclusion

This leaflet is only a broad outline to marriage in the Church of England. Please contact your local Parish Priest if you are interested in finding out more about Christian marriage. To find out where your local parish church is go into <http://www.achurchnearyou.com>. You can ring the Diocesan office on 01332 388650 if you cannot trace the name and address of the minister at that church.

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