



Bybrook Team Ministry

The Bybrook Office, The Bell Inn,
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19 March 2020

Re: Coronavirus Covid-19 and your weddings plans

We wanted to update you about the potential impact of your wedding plans with us in the face of Covid-19 Coronavirus.

Suspended Worship – No worship services with immediate effect

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have [suspended public worship](#) in churches *until further notice*. Along with guidelines about social distancing and proximity to one another from central government, it all effects how your wedding can happen.

Qualifying Connections

If you are establishing a qualifying connection through habitual worship with your parish in which you intend to marry, you need to be able to establish 6 months regular attendance *before* we can call banns (or whichever alternative to banns applies) and proceed with a wedding.

We are currently prohibited from meeting for worship and cannot *until further notice*, so there are no known opportunities for couples to continue building their connection. Without a qualifying connection we cannot proceed with your wedding as arranged. There are alternatives below ('If we can't marry, what next?'). If you are concerned about your number of attendances to meeting requirements please contact us as soon as possible

Banns of Marriage

If you qualify for marriage or have established your connection already the usual process is to proceed with the publishing (calling) of banns in your local parish church and the church in which you are to marry. Banns are published in the principal Sunday service – which are all currently suspended. The advice, if you qualify for banns is to arrange for a 'common license'.

Common License

To obtain a common license requires seeing a marriage surrogate within Bristol Diocese and swearing an affidavit and confirming your identity. The current fee for a common license is £200.00. The license replaces the need for banns.

Some weddings will be hoping, all will be well and back to normal by the time of their wedding day. If we return to public worship and gathering, we can return to the calling of banns. Since we have no date by which we might

return we are to plan for a common license. A common license is only valid for 3 months and we cannot therefore begin the process until three months before your wedding date. You will need to be available to see a marriage surrogate face to face, in Bristol at this time.

If you have been previously married, your minister marrying you will need to have spoken with you and confirmed with the Bishop that we can proceed with your wedding. This needs to happen before you pay to proceed with a common license.

If your wedding is some time away, we will keep you updated as the situation develops. If your wedding is in the next 4 months, please do get in touch and we can help you arrange your meeting for your common license.

Restrictions to Wedding Guests and Wedding Party

The advice of the Church of England is to follow the social distancing principles and limit the number of guests to a *very small number*. A wedding can take place with 5 people: the bride and groom, 2 witnesses and a minister. Guidance is still being updated for other gatherings, including baptisms. Early indications are that a small gathering is limited to 10 people.

For many this will seriously limit their wedding day, and cause complications with commercial reception venues who may still be planning to continue with your reception – do please check with other providers, including cars, photographers and receptions as to their current policy.

If we can't marry, what next? – Rearranging

Much of this is far more complicated and upsetting than you hoped your wedding day would be. You are emotionally and financially invested in your special day and in your lives together. Please consider how your wedding day would and could affect those gathering from around the country to be with you.

If you cannot proceed with your wedding (see Qualifying Connections) or your wedding is so close as to make it difficult to apply for a common license (see Common License), we can rearrange your wedding service – though we cannot guarantee yet when that future date might be.

If this concerns you - that you cannot now proceed with a wedding in time, we can issue you with a letter on request that we cannot proceed with the wedding as arranged – which may be of some help with your wedding insurers.

If we can't marry, what next? – Wedding Blessing

Your wedding may be so far away that all could be well, it could be worth watching and waiting, though if your wedding is before 1st August 2020 please consider everything carefully.

If your wedding is in the next 2 months you should give careful consideration to rearranging and contact us for further help as soon as possible.

If you're caught halfway and think it is a gamble to rely on calling banns or difficult to time a common license you could think of alternative arrangements. Your wedding reception venue or a local registry office may be able to facilitate a small quick, private wedding for you (how a registry office publishes banns is simpler).

With sight of your marriage certificate we could then share in a marriage blessing for you at a later date, complete with all the suits, dresses, bridesmaids and bells you hoped for.

There is much to consider here, and so much of it emotionally tough. It will raise many questions, I'm sure so please do contact us and we will help you through.

Yours sincerely,

Rev'd Marc Terry

Priest in Charge (Rector Designate)

Mrs Claire Campbell

Office Manager