



Bybrook Team Ministry

The Bybrook Office, The Bell Inn,
The Street, Yatton Keynell, Chippenham,
Wiltshire. SN14 7BG

08 April 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Coronavirus Covid-19 and your weddings plans

Following our letter to you of 18th March 2020, we wanted to share with you some further guidance and advice from the Church of England and Bristol Diocese.

Suspended Worship – No worship services with immediate effect

Worship services remain suspended in churches across the Church of England. We are still meeting, using online resources, sharing worship through <https://www.facebook.com/BybrookTeamMinistry/> and <https://bybrook.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/>

Qualifying Connections

The suspension of service of public worship in church prevented or interrupted many couples from establishing their qualifying connection to marry.

The Archbishop's Faculty Office has now issued the following guidance on establishing a Qualifying Connection through habitual attendance at public worship which cannot continue as there are no services taking place:

“Now that services have been suspended for a season, many couples who have not been able to attend for six months already will be concerned that they are unable to complete their ‘qualifying attendance’. However, where they have already started to attend and are only prevented from maintaining attendance due to the suspension of services, provided that couples resume as soon as services are able to resume, the ‘gap’ will still be capable of counting towards their ‘habitual attendance at public worship for six months or more’.

Where couples have been prevented from starting their attendance period due to the suspension of services, the situation is quite different as the six month period can only start from the date of the first actual attendance at public worship. If there is then insufficient time for couples to create the qualifying connection between services resuming and their intended wedding date, an Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Marriage Licence is likely to be required.

Whilst every application for a Special Licence is considered on its own merits, the Faculty Office will be very sympathetic where couples have shown a willingness and commitment to create a qualifying connection with their chosen church and have been prevented from doing so solely due to the suspension of public worship. Although ‘attendance’ at any virtual or live streamed acts of worship cannot be said to be attending public worship sufficient to count towards a qualifying connection, couples are encouraged to participate in such services as are available in the parish through social media or other channels”

To summarise: If you had begun your qualifying connection with even a single attendance, each interrupted month will count toward your required 6 months for a qualifying connection. If your habitual worship attendance had not yet begun and there could be insufficient time between the resuming of services and your wedding day to establish a connection, a Special Marriage License is likely to be required. Currently the waiting time for these is around 70 days.

Telephone/Fax: (01249) 782704 email: bybrook.office@gmail.com
www.bybrook.org.uk

Common License

If you have qualified for your wedding already, then the next step would ordinarily be the publication of banns. At the moment, this process has been suspended due to the suspension of services and there is a requirement for a common license to replace them.

Obtaining a common license requires meeting a Marriage Surrogate within the diocese of Bristol. The standard fee of £200, has in the circumstances been much reduced. You will need to speak with your marriage surrogate, who we will put you in touch with, to confirm the reduced fee.

A common license is only valid for 3 months and we cannot therefore begin the process until three months before your wedding date

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.

So, what do we do now?

All of these provisions are being made for a world which can mix freely and at large, free from coronavirus or in a world where social distancing is much relaxed.

As you know, all services are currently suspended *until further notice* across all faith groups. This means we cannot, regardless of qualifying connections and common licenses carry out a wedding for anyone today. When we might be able to is no clearer.

We are receiving advice from within our diocese that if your wedding is **before 31st July 2020 that you should postpone your wedding**. The date needs to be arranged with us and the advice we have received is that we should not reschedule a wedding for you this year.

It is unlikely wedding services will be allowed until social distancing is much more relaxed (even entirely removed) to avoid a back and forth confusion with plans.

We realise, for all of you the uncertainty around your wedding plans amidst all that is going on is very upsetting. Please do get in touch and we will work with you to find another date.

If your wedding is later than 31st July 2020, please do keep this information somewhere safe, note the dates and steps and will be in touch again as more news becomes available, we will be praying for you all.

Yours sincerely,

Revd Marc Terry

Priest in Charge (Rector Designate)

Mrs Claire Campbell

Office Manager