



BRIEFING NOTE

CORONAVIRUS - COVID-19 AND MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

TO ALL DIOCESAN CLERGY

You will all be aware that in their joint letter Archbishops Justin Welby and John Sentamu have said that it is now necessary to put public services on hold until further notice. The exceptions to that rule are weddings and funerals.

Until the suspension of public worship is lifted, it will not be possible for banns to be used as the legal preliminary for marriage (unless the publication of the banns has already been completed). In their place, a Common Licence will normally suffice. There could be cases where a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury needs to be sought. Superintendent Registrar's Certificates can be used in certain circumstances. Further information is available on the Faculty Office website - www.facultyoffice.org.uk/special-licences/marriage-law-news

I should also add that the national advice is that whilst marriage services can take place, they must be on a very small scale. As only five people legally need to be present social distancing can be managed and the necessary precautions taken. The Church of England website recommends social distancing of at least two metres - <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

It is for the minister, in consultation with the couple, to make a decision about how the marriage can take place during this period. It would also be for the minister to prescribe any conditions, such as limit the number of guests to ensure social distancing. Unless the government change the law the common law right of parishioners and those with a qualifying connection to be married in a parish church remains.

If you need specific advice on this matter, please contact the Diocesan Registry either by emailing me - anna.spriggs@hcsolicitors.co.uk or telephoning the following number - (01733) 882831. Further advice can also be found on the Registry website - www.peterboroughdiocesanregistry.co.uk

Anna Spriggs
Diocesan Registrar
19 March 2020

Surrogates for issuing Marriage Licences

Brackley	Nicholas Leggett	07925 419068
Brixworth		
Daventry	Stephen Burrow	01327 344436
Greater Northampton	Nicholas Setterfield	01604 604412
Towcester	Carolyn Oley	01327 860507
Wellingborough	Jackie Buck	01933 631232
Corby	Anthony Searle	01536 262449
Higham	Rachel Hawkins	01933 312674
Kettering	Eleanor Jeans	01536 512931
Oundle	Nolan Robson	01832 734614
Peterborough	Mark Bridgen	01733 579778
Peterborough	Anna Spriggs (Registrar)	01733 882800
Rutland	Jane Baxter	01572 822717