

# Oxford Diocesan Registry



## **Establishing a Worshipping Qualifying Connection for Marriage: Coronavirus (Covid 19) – 9 April 2020**

At the current time, public worship has been suspended and restrictions have been imposed upon our movements outside of our homes. This means that couples who were in the process of establishing worshipping qualifying connections with particular churches to enable them to get married there are facing uncertainty. Those intending obtain a qualifying connection in this way will fall into one of the following categories:-

### **(A) *Where couples have not yet started to establish their worshipping qualifying connection or have only managed to attend for a couple for months and will not be able to attend again before the proposed date of their wedding:-***

The following options open are available to these couple if they would like to be married as soon as restrictions are lifted:

1. They could be married in a civil service in a registry office, or other licensed venue. There would need to be sufficient time to serve Notice at their local Superintendent Registrar's Office and wait for 28 days before Certificates are issued to enable them to be married (unless the law is changed to allow for a shorter notice period). They could then have a service of *Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Service* in the church where they were hoping to establish a worshipping qualifying connection (the service can be found [here](#)).
2. They could be married in a church where they already have a qualifying connection (for example, where they are resident or where they were baptised or confirmed or where their parents or grandparents were married, amongst others). These marriages would need to take place after Banns or Common Licence, depending upon how quickly they wished to be married and the availability of the church and minister. If these services are small and intimate, and they would still like a service in the church where they were hoping to establish a worshipping qualifying connection, a service such as a *Thanksgiving for Marriage* could be offered to them (also found at the link above).
3. The most recent guidance from the Faculty Office (found [here](#)) states that it may be possible to obtain an Archbishop's Special Licence where couples have "shown a willingness and commitment to create a qualifying connection with their chosen church" but have been prevented from doing so because of the present restrictions. While the Faculty Office say they will be "very sympathetic" to these situations, applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and will not automatically be granted but it may be an option available to couples.

If none of these options is desirable to the couple, they could postpone their wedding until a later date which will allow time to establish a worshipping qualifying connection with the church of their choice once restrictions have been lifted.

### **(B) *Where couples have attended public worship for a few months before restrictions were imposed and are able to return to worship after the restrictions are lifted but before their wedding date:-***

The position is slightly different for these couples. Under the statutory guidance, and due to the present national circumstances, the gap in public worship can be bridged where the couple attend public worship again once restrictions are lifted. By way of example only, if a couple worshipped in January, February and March, with restrictions then in place for April, May and June only (for example), they could worship again in July and August before their wedding in September, and will have established the necessary period of worship even though there was an enforced gap. This is merely an example scenario and each couple's circumstances will need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. Much will still depend on when public worship is able to resume.

In any event, although participation in virtual church services should certainly be encouraged, it is not possible to establish a worshipping qualifying connection because of that.