

THE LAW OF ENGLAND

In October 2008 a new 'Marriage Law for England' was passed by Parliament making it easier for people to marry in the Church of their choice. Although not a completely open policy, it is now less problematic for individual who feel strongly that they want to have their marriage in a particular church. The new marriage regulations means that people are now eligible to marry in St Wilfrid's in Monk Fryston, or St Mary's Church in South Milford, according to the law of the land, if they fulfil one of the following requirements:

They live within the boundaries of the 'Ecclesiastical Parish' which for St Wilfrid's Church includes Monk Fryston, Hillam and Burton Salmon, and for St Mary's Church includes South Milford, Lumby and Newthorpe.

They, or their parents, have lived within the 'Ecclesiastical Parish' for a continuous period of six months, at any time in the past.

They attend worship regularly for a six-month period, and thereafter apply for inclusion on the Electoral Roll of the Parish (Note: this is the Church Electoral Roll and not the Local Authority Roll).

If one of the above legal requirements is fulfilled then it is legally possible to have your banns read in St Wilfrid's Church or St Mary's Church and for your wedding to take place there.

WHY A CHURCH WEDDING?

It is legally possible for couples to marry in a multitude of different settings today, from a hotel to a football pitch, from a parachute whilst flying through the air to the top of a waterfall. The choice of which setting is entirely in the hands of the couple (providing a license for the service is granted by the Registrar).

So why do people still desire to get married in a Church?

It is important to distinguish the difference between a secular wedding and a Church wedding. In a secular wedding the two people getting married are entering into a contractual agreement with one another; not only is the marriage a celebration of this contract and the step of commitment they are undertaking, but through the signing of registers (legal documents) it is also a means of protecting the interests of the individual if anything should go wrong in the future.

In a Church wedding this also happens as the Rector at St Wilfrid's and St Mary's is also a registrar and can therefore deal with the legal proceedings in the same way. But alongside the contractual obligations, in a church wedding there is also a clear understanding that the couple are entering into a 'covenant'. That is to say that they are entering into a commitment with one another in such a way as to seek the best interests of the other person, and not for their own sake. A church marriage acknowledges the sacrifice individuals are called to make in relation to one another in a marriage blessed by God.

CAN I GET MARRIED IF I AM DIVORCED?

Many people wrongly assume that a Church wedding is out of the question if a person (or persons) have been married before and their previous partner is still living. This is invariably due to their understanding of the part of the marriage vows that state 'till death us do part'.

There are many areas in life where we make mistakes as individuals, where things go wrong, and where we look for forgiveness and a way forward to something better. Marriage is sadly one of the areas we sometimes get wrong, and this can be for a multitude of different reasons in the high-pressure world in which we live.

The Church does not stand in 'condemnation of past mistakes' but rather seeks to 'celebrate new beginnings' and therefore is open to the possibility of marriage in church for someone who has been through the pain and agony of a divorce. In affirming the family as the basic Christian building block of our society, there are however, a number of factors that are taken into consideration:

Whether the present relationship was in anyway responsible for the breakdown of a marriage?

Are children from any previous marriage being suitably supported?

Has the party (or parties) involved in a previous marriage clearly learnt from their previous experience?

The Rector will do his utmost to ensure that your wedding is a marvellous celebration that can be enjoyed by all your family and friends held in a setting in which wedding ceremonies have taken place for centuries.