



Guidelines for Weddings and Marriage Paperwork During the Pandemic

1. MARRIAGE PAPERS ALREADY SUBMITTED TO THE CHANCERY OFFICE:

- 1.1. As per our previous guidance, couples should have been advised by you that they must contact the celebrant immediately to discuss any postponement due to the Coronavirus;
- 1.2. For those parishes who have notified us of postponed weddings, the marriage papers have been (or will be) returned to them;
- 1.3. For the remaining marriage papers - we will be processing them but, instead of forwarding them to the relevant Diocese, the original marriage papers will be sent direct to the couple, and an authenticated set sent to the Diocese. We will send a confirmation email to the relevant Diocese as well.

2. NEW MARRIAGE PAPERS:

- 2.1. Due to social distancing and civil restrictions, access to Cathedral House remains limited. The Chancery team are continuing to home-work for the most part and collect post from Cathedral House once or twice a week. New marriage papers can therefore be sent to the Chancery Office, and we will send you an acknowledgement email when they have been collected. Before you submit any marriage papers, please ensure that the couple have contacted the Celebrant priest and the wedding is currently scheduled to go ahead as planned; please include written confirmation of this in your covering letter to us.
- 2.2. We are aware that some couples who have postponed their weddings are having problems obtaining refunds from reception venues, or claiming on the insurance, which is further adding to their disappointment and stress levels.
- 2.3. At this time of uncertainty, we can but reassure couples that we are doing our best to help them with arrangements, in line with the latest Church and Government guidance, for the health and safety of all concerned.

3. ALL WEDDINGS:

- 3.1. If the wedding is currently going ahead as planned: the couple can let the Celebrant priest know that the marriage papers have been processed, and that they will be bringing the original documents with them (or arrange to send them by post/DHL);
- 3.2. If the wedding is postponed:
 - 3.2.1. The couple will be advised to return the marriage papers to you, so that they can be amended or re-done as needed, when possible to do so.
 - 3.2.2. New forms will have to be submitted, including the Pre-Nuptial Enquiry Form and Supplementary Application Form. It will not be necessary to get



new baptismal certificates (unless required by another Diocese) or get new Statutory Declaration forms signed.

3.2.3. Whilst it remains the responsibility of the couple to ensure the civil requirements for marriage are fulfilled, we would suggest that parish clergy remind the couple that if the wedding is postponed (or the location changed) they should contact their local Register Office.

4. WEDDINGS DUE TO TAKE PLACE IN YOUR PARISH THIS YEAR:

Areas in Tier 2 or 3

Weddings can take place with up to 15 people in attendance, not counting the officiating cleric, registrar and other people working at the wedding.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-2-high-alert>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-3-very-high-alert>

Areas in Tier 4

Weddings can only take place in “exceptional circumstances, for example where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover (‘deathbed wedding’) or due to undergo debilitating treatment or life-changing surgery. These weddings are limited to 6 people.”

Unless there is imminent danger of death please contact the Chancery before arranging any such weddings.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tier-4-stay-at-home>

This guidance is correct as of 21st December 2020.

4.1. Please read the relevant advice and guidelines from the Bishops’ Conference and Government in full.

Bishops’ Conference guidelines can be found here: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/07/Guidance-Acts-of-Worship-Mass-Marriage-v2-060720.pdf>

Government guidelines can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

4.2. With social distancing likely to be in place for some time, our current advice is for you to discuss with the couple the option of postponing their wedding for six to nine months when Coronavirus restrictions may have eased.



- 4.3. However, if the couple wish to continue their plans for a wedding in the next few months, in accordance with the social distancing rules, and you are happy to proceed, the wedding may take place. Please complete the marriage papers, and send them to the Chancery Office should any permissions/dispensations be required.
- 4.4. As it may not possible to get solicitors to sign the Statutory Declarations of Freedom at the moment we will accept marriage papers without these on the understanding that they will be submitted before the wedding takes place.
- 4.5. A social distancing statement has been prepared by the Chancery and is available on the Chancery Resources page (<https://www.dioceseofbrentwood.net/departments/chancery/resources/>) for your convenience. It is not compulsory, and does not have to be returned to us, but it is provided so that all parties have on record their knowledge of the requirements.
- 4.6. Please make sure that the couple are fully aware that:**
- 4.6.1. Any weddings due to take place in the foreseeable future may be subject to the risk of cancellation, for legal and/or health reasons;**
- 4.6.2. The rules of social distancing must be strictly adhered to.**

As the situation is rapidly changing these guidelines will be updated and changed as necessary. Please contact the Chancery Office (tribunal@dioceseofbrentwood.org), or contact me directly, if we can be of any assistance.

Rev Pius Collins o.praem., STB, MA, JCL,
Vice-Chancellor
frpius@dioceseofbrentwood.org