

Ad Clerum

From the Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham

House of Bishops guidance and directions on the marriage of persons from outside the European Economic Area

Sisters and brothers in Christ

You will have seen and read in the media that new arrangements are being recommended concerning marriage when one or both parties are from outside the European Economic Area.

Following the guidelines of the House of Bishops and the UK Border Agency I have agreed with the Chancellor and Registrar that the following arrangements be followed:-

1. The proposed officiating minister meets with the couple, preferably on more than one occasion, and one meeting is at the place of residence of the party whose residence is relied upon for residential qualification. Through meeting the couple and asking the appropriate questions the minister decides whether they feel that that the application is with a genuine intention of a life long marriage and is prepared to take the service of marriage.
2. The proposed officiating minister advises the couple that the marriage must be by grant of a Common Licence and not after the calling of banns. If the parties object to this, the matter is referred immediately to the Diocesan Registrar for advice, and that a meeting with the Diocesan Registrar and not with one of the Surrogates for Marriages save as directed by the Registrar, will be required to process the application for a Common Licence.
3. The proposed officiating minister writes to the Diocesan Registrar advising of the number of meetings held with the couple, naming the couple, giving their address(es) and stating where the meetings have taken place. In this letter the minister advises the Diocesan Registrar whether they believe the parties to be genuine in their wish of a life long marriage to each other and whether they are willing to take the service.
4. The Diocesan Registrar then arranges to meet the couple to take full details of their application and personal information by requesting evidence of identity and residence and , where appropriate, evidence of right to be in the UK, copying the documentation containing such information and completing an application form with the couple who will both be required to sign the same. The Registrar then advises the couple that the information required and received would be made available by the Registrar for scrutiny by the UK Border Agency and the Police and that the application form will state this.
5. The Registrar considers the evidence given by the couple and decides in the light of this and the letter from the proposed officiating minister whether or not to allow the application to proceed. The Registrar then decides whether to issue the affidavit for the Common Licence which is then made before the Registrar and the Licence issued or whether the application requires scrutiny by the UK Border Agency or the Police for verification of genuineness of the documents supplied before a decision is made as to whether or not to grant the Licence.#

May I encourage you to read carefully the two documents on our website in the download area at:

<http://www.dioceseofsouthwell.couk.com/pdf/marrguidance.pdf>

<http://www.dioceseofsouthwell.couk.com/pdf/ukbaguidanceforclergydec2010.pdf>

The full texts and other links can be found on...

<http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/guidance>

I would like to strongly emphasise the following from the guidelines urging you to take very precaution:

“If clergy have concerns about their safety in making such visits, they should consider going accompanied.”

Finally may I thank you for all the sensitive work some of you are having to put into this; and how you and your lay leaders are working hard in that vast majority of cases where there is such an opportunity to reveal the love of God at a very special time for couples and their families. I also take the opportunity to continue to encourage you all to offer ongoing support and follow up to all couples that you marry recognising our ongoing opportunity to share the love of Christ with these couples.

In fellowship
+Paul

Visit our website at www.southwell.anglican.org

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