

Banns of Marriage and how to avoid an emergency Common Licence

As wedding season is rapidly approaching, I thought it may be helpful to send an updated reminder about the calling of Banns for British and EEA nationals.

Last year we continued to receive a number of emergency applications throughout the year for couples whose Banns had either been forgotten or where a couple had moved but not told the minister until the wedding rehearsal.

Of course, these things happen, but in a bid to try to help couples and/or parishes so that they do not find themselves with the additional expense (the current fee for a Common Licence is £200) and stress of having to arrange an emergency Common Licence, here are some suggestions.

As Banns can be read at any stage during the three months before a wedding, it may be sensible to contact couples ahead of the three month period. This will enable you to check:

- (i) whether they are still living at the same address they were when they applied to get married

If they have moved, you will need to make sure (a) that they know where their Banns should be read, and (b) that they still have a 'qualifying connection' to your church. The website 'A Church Near You' (www.achurchnearyou.com) can be helpful in identifying the church in their new parish where the Banns should be read. But if they have lost their qualifying connection with your church, I suggest you contact me immediately for further advice.

- (ii) whether they plan to move at any stage before they get married.

If, however, they are planning to move during the month before their wedding (lots of couples move into their marital home at that stage), it would be in order for you to read their Banns at the start of the three month period before the wedding. You should also ask them to ensure the Banns where they are resident (if they do not reside in your parish) are also read at that stage. The Banns will be valid for the wedding because the couple were resident in the parish at the time of reading.

- (iii) whether the couple have actually applied to have their Banns read in their parish of residence, assuming they are not resident in your parish.

Some couples are so completely caught up in the excitement of their marriage that they overlook this vital stage. An enquiry to make sure they have made the necessary arrangements in their parish of residence will save a great deal of anguish later.

Even with the best laid plans, a Common Licence may still be necessary. If this proves to be the case, please do contact the Registry or a Surrogate as soon as possible to ensure the marriage can proceed.

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