



St Lawrence's Church . Biddulph



## Marriage in Church after Divorce

(additional information for enquiring couples)

The Church of England teaches that marriage is for life. It also recognizes that some marriages sadly do fail and, if this should happen, it seeks to be available for all involved. The Church accepts that, in exceptional circumstances, a divorced person may marry again in church during the lifetime of a former spouse.

If you are thinking about asking to be married at St. Lawrence's Church, Biddulph, you should in the first instance arrange to discuss this with the Vicar, Revd. Martin Cannam. He and the Parish of St. Lawrence's are willing to marry a divorced person in some circumstances. This initial meeting will allow you to introduce yourself to the Vicar and will allow him to get to know you a little bit. Together you will be able to talk about the options available to you. Please note, that apart from your personal circumstances you still need to establish one of the 6 connections with St. Lawrence's that enable anyone to be married in this Parish.

If you wish to proceed, the Vicar will arrange to meet you again. He will ask you to complete a short form provided by the Church of England. At this second meeting he will want to talk to you more frankly about the past, your hopes for the future and your understanding of marriage. You and your intended spouse should therefore be prepared to consider some questions. You are advised to reflect beforehand on the issues they raise – and should be prepared to answer them honestly.

- What does marriage mean to you?
- What have you learned from your previous marriage?
- Has there been healing of past hurts?
- If you have children, how are they being looked after?
- What do others think of your marriage plans?
- When did your new relationship begin?
- Have either of you been divorced more than once?
- Are you wanting to grow in the Christian faith?

To this meeting you will also need to bring with you both your decree nisi, your decree absolute and any other documentation necessary to confirm your connection with the Parish.

Although the decision whether to conduct your marriage rests with the Vicar, it is the policy of the Lichfield Diocese to require clergy to consult with the Bishop before taking that decision. The Vicar will therefore ask you to write a short, joint letter to the Bishop of Stafford setting out your past experiences, your reasons for wanting to be married at St. Lawrence's and your hopes for married life together. Once you have written this letter the Vicar will ask you to talk it through with him. He will then send it along with a letter of his own to the Bishop.

The Vicar will arrange to meet you again to convey his decision to you, once the Bishop's reply has been received. It is always our hope that we can come to mutual agreement about how to proceed. It is our intention to reach this decision within 2 – 3 months of your first enquiry. During this time we would encourage you to attend Sunday worship at St. Lawrence's as we pray and talk together.

If it is not possible for your proposed marriage to take place in church, then St. Lawrence's may be able to offer a Service of Prayer and Dedication following a civil marriage, or the Vicar may agree to attend a civil marriage ceremony.

If the Vicar does agree to conduct your marriage service at St. Lawrence's then you will also receive an invitation from him to an event we run every year in National Marriage Week on the Saturday closest to Valentine's Day. We offer it to all couples getting married at St. Lawrence's to provide time and space to think about marriage and the vows made in a marriage service.

### **Our commitment to you**

The process this leaflet describes reflects the Church's commitment both to lifelong marriage, and to taking seriously your wish to marry in church. You may be certain that your request will be received and considered with dignity, care and loving concern. Whether or not you proceed to marriage in church I and St. Lawrence's are available to offer you guidance and support as you proceed on life's journey.

### **What now?**

Having read this information, if you wish to make arrangements to meet the Vicar, please contact Martin on (01782) 513247 or by email: [martin@biddulphchurch.org.uk](mailto:martin@biddulphchurch.org.uk)

Revd. Martin Cannam  
November 2010