



ANGLICAN MARRIAGE IN THE ISLE OF MAN

A Guide to the Law for Clergy

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Abbreviations

MA	Marriage Act 1984 (of Tynwald)
PCW	parish centre of worship (see MPM s.17)
MPM	Mission and Pastoral Measure (Isle of Man) 2012 (SM 2 of 2012)

ANGLICAN MARRIAGE IN THE ISLE OF MAN

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1 Introduction

1.1 Status and date of these notes

These guidance notes are issued by the Sodor and Man Diocesan Registry, and are based, with the permission of the Registrar of the Faculty Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the 3rd edition (2010) of *Anglican Marriage in England and Wales: A Guide to the Law for Clergy* issued by that Office. They are based on the Marriage Act 1984 (of Tynwald) and incorporate the changes made by –

- Marriage and Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2011
- Civil Partnership Act 2011
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (Amendment) Act 2016
- Marriage Measure (Isle of Man) 2019
- Marriage Measure (Isle of Man) 2022

They are not a complete statement of the law, but are believed to be correct as at 1 April 2024.

1.2 Scope of the notes

By virtue of its historically established position, the Church of England has a number of privileges and also a number of duties in relation to marriage in the Isle of Man. In these notes the expression 'Anglican marriage' is used as a shortened form of 'marriage according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England'.

To place Anglican marriage in context, and so that the clergy may have a complete picture of the alternatives available, some reference is also made to civil and non-conformist marriage, but the coverage of this area is much less comprehensive.

Guidance relating to a 'qualifying connection' is included in section 5 of these notes. If a party seeks to establish a qualifying connection, further reference should be made to the statutory guidance issued by the Bishop (see 5.6 below).

1.3 Services of blessing

On some occasions (for example where a divorced party is remarrying) it may be appropriate for a civil marriage (eg. in a register office) to be followed by a service of blessing in church. Such a service may be very different in content from the marriage service, or very similar; but in any event it is not legally a marriage, and does not require any formal preliminaries or registration. Such services fall within the field of liturgical law rather than marriage law; and accordingly they are outside the scope of these notes. Clergy are, however, referred to 'An Order for Prayer and Dedication after a Civil Marriage' commended by the House of Bishops and published in *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*. However please see section 14 below.

2 The right and duty to marry

2.1 The general rule

Where there is a right to marry in a parish church there is usually a corresponding duty on an incumbent or priest-in-charge to solemnize that marriage, or to arrange for a suitably authorised person to do so. Under the present law, the categories of person with a right to be married in a parish church are —

- (i) a person who is resident in the parish,
- (ii) a person who is enrolled on the church electoral roll of the parish, and
- (iii) a person who has a qualifying connection with the parish.

Subject to a number of statutory exceptions, there is a duty to solemnize the marriage of a person establishing one of these rights. A failure to do so will amount to neglect of duty if the incumbent or priest-in-charge refuses to do so, or to provide an assistant curate or other qualified person to do so in his or her place, and may give rise to disciplinary proceedings.

2.2 Exceptions to the rule

Some exceptions to this duty to marry have been made by statute: these are

- (i) where there is a particular relationship of affinity between the parties (see 13.3 below), or
- (ii) where one of the parties is divorced and has a surviving former spouse or civil partner (see section 14 below), or
- (iii) where one of the parties is the former spouse or civil partner of the other's parent, or the parent of the other's former spouse or civil partner, or
- (iv) where one of the parties is a person of an acquired gender (see section 16 below), or
- (v) where the registrar's certificate procedure has been used instead of the grant of a licence or publication of banns.

In all of these cases the incumbent has a free discretion to solemnize the marriage (or to make the church available) or to decline (MA s.5A).

Since the commencement on 1 July 2023 of the Marriage Measure (Isle of Man) 2022, a national of a country outside the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland cannot marry after banns or by common licence, but only by a special licence or a registrar's certificate (see section 8 below). There is no current statutory basis for requiring a minister to solemnize a marriage after the registrar's certificate procedure, but this represents a potential conflict with the human right to marry and to manifest religion or belief. See also 2.6 on human rights.

There are no other exceptions: for example, the fact that a party (or both parties) are unbaptised does not deprive them of the right to marry after banns.

2.3 Practical limitations on the rule

Where the general duty applies, the incumbent is still entitled to receive reasonable notice: in the case of banns there are specific requirements as to notice (see 7.6 below). The incumbent is entitled to appoint the date and time of the marriage, provided he or she acts reasonably (not insisting upon an unreasonable delay, or going outside the canonical hours, which are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). The incumbent also decides whether to offer the services of the organist, choir and bellringers.

The form of the service (as between the Prayer Book, Series I, Common Worship and, in certain circumstances, the rite entitled *An Order for the Marriage of Christians from Different Churches* — see 17.2 below) is a matter to be agreed between the incumbent and the parties, or for the Bishop's decision if they disagree.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the incumbent has considerable leverage over parties who insist upon invoking their strict legal right to marry; consequently, arrangements for marriage are almost always made by mutual agreement rather than in reliance upon the letter of the law.

2.4 Considerations other than the choice of preliminary

These notes deal with preliminaries to marriage, each type of preliminary being examined in turn. Clergy advising those who intend to marry should, however, direct their attention also at the outset to the intended place of marriage (see sections 3 to 6), possible impediments (sections 13 to 16), the question of who can conduct the marriage service (section 18), the availability of registers (section 20) and fees for the marriage itself (section 21).

2.5 The choice between the four preliminaries to Anglican marriage

There are four possible preliminaries to Anglican marriage —

- (a) the publication of banns (see section 7);
- (b) a common licence (see section 9);
- (c) a special licence (see section 10);
- (d) a registrar's certificate (see section 8).

Banns are the normal preliminary. However, banns are not appropriate —

- with certain exceptions, if one of the parties lives outside the Isle of Man
- if there is urgency
- if there is a relationship of affinity between the parties
- if the parties wish to avoid local publicity.

In all of these cases some form of licence is appropriate: a common licence should be obtained where possible (see section 9).

Banns are also not appropriate if one of the parties is neither a British citizen nor an Irish citizen (a citizen of the Republic of Ireland). In this case a registrar's certificate (see section 8) or a special licence (see section 10) is appropriate.

The main reason to seek a special licence as opposed to any other preliminary is a desire to marry in a parish where neither party has a legal qualification to marry or where marriage is to be solemnized in a building not normally authorised for marriages. Good cause must be shown (see section 10).

2.6 Human rights

The European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into Manx law by virtue of the Human Rights Act 2001.

Since 22 July 2016, when the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Amendment) Act 2016 came into force, it has been lawful for a civil marriage in the Isle of Man to be between couples of the same sex (MA s.4A). The Act also allowed religious organisations to opt in to conduct marriage ceremonies for same sex couples, provided the relevant governing authority of that religious organisation had given written consent to marriages of same sex couples (MA ss.19A & 29A). The Act states that any duty of a member of the Anglican clergy to solemnize marriages (and the corresponding right of any person to have his/her marriage solemnized by a member of the clergy) is not extended to marriages of same sex couples (MA s.4A(3)). Where two persons of the same sex consent to or acquiesce in the solemnization of a marriage between them in the Church of England, such a marriage is void (MA s.17(4)). The marriage of same sex couples in the Church of England at a future date would require primary legislation.

Article 12 of the Convention provides that *'Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the national laws governing the exercise of this right'*. Accordingly the fundamental right to marriage exists only between members of the opposite sex and is exercisable only according to the national laws governing marriage itself. Article 12 does not therefore —

- allow members of the same sex to marry each other according to the rites of the Church of England
- give a right to be married in a particular place of the parties' choosing
- give a right to a marriage in church where one person is divorced.

This is because the national law has made provisions regulating this, and the right to be married will need to be exercised within these provisions. It will not be possible for parties to a marriage to claim their human rights have been interfered with under this article unless they are frustrated in their attempt to be married by the imposition of requirements beyond those of the current law. Clergy must be careful, therefore, to ensure that they properly understand and apply the laws relating to marriage so as not to give cause for a claim that a Convention right has been breached by them in impeding a marriage that ought, under the law, to be permitted.

2.7 The pastoral aspect

These notes are inevitably much concerned with law and formalities. However, clergy will be aware of the pastoral opportunities offered by 'occasional offices' such as marriage. When relying upon a residential qualification for marriage after banns or by licence there is at least the geographical scope for preparation, follow-up and pastoral care by the parties' local clergy and congregation. When a special licence is granted

waiving residence requirements, care is taken to see that the parties' own local clergy are at least aware of the proposed marriage. Where a couple live at some distance from where they are to be married, thus making marriage preparation difficult (see Canon B30, para. 3), there is good opportunity to put such couples in touch with their local clergy who may be able to undertake that preparation. This is to be warmly commended. Officiating clergy, local clergy and surrogates should all be mindful of the image of the Church that a couple receives when going through the preliminaries to marriage.

3 Buildings available for Anglican marriage

3.1 Parish churches, parish centres of worship and licensed chapels

There is only a limited range of places where Anglican marriage may be solemnized (other than by special licence). Anglican marriage may take place in —

- a parish church (MA ss.6, 12)
- a parish centre of worship (MPM s.17)
- a chapel licensed for marriages by the Bishop (MA s.14).

These are the only buildings to which marriage register books are issued.

Buildings which are not parish churches, and whether consecrated or not, may be licensed by the Bishop for public worship. Any building so licensed may then be further licensed for the marriage of persons living in the parish in which it is situated (see 4.3 below) or designated as a parish centre of worship (PCW — see 4.5 below).

3.2 Cathedral

As from 1 January 2024 the Cathedral Church of St German is the parish church of the Cathedral parish¹ (up to that date it was one of the parish churches of the parish of the West Coast), and the same rules apply to it as to other parish churches.

3.3 Military chapels

No provision is made in Manx law for the licensing of military chapels for marriages.

3.4 Marriage of detained and housebound persons

No special provision is made in Manx law for Anglican marriage of housebound and detained persons where they are living, receiving treatment or detained. Such a marriage may be authorised by special licence (see section 10 below).

3.5 Shared churches

The fact that a building may be covered by an agreement under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969² does not, by itself, confer upon the building any status as a place of

¹ Cathedral Pastoral Scheme 2023 (SD 2023/280)

² The Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 (of Parliament) is extended to the Isle of Man with modifications by the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1986 (of Tynwald).

marriage. A shared building which is a parish church remains a parish church; a PCW or a building licensed by the Bishop for marriages remains so authorised. A shared building which is not authorized for marriages may be subsequently designated a PCW or licensed by the Bishop despite the sharing agreement.

The only difference which a sharing agreement makes is that it becomes possible for the building to be authorized for Anglican marriage as above and at the same time registered for marriages of some other Christian denomination under MA s.29. This would not otherwise be possible, since an Anglican building cannot normally be registered under MA s.29 and a non-Anglican building would not otherwise be licensed by the Bishop for marriages.

3.6 Closed churches

A church which has been closed for regular public worship by a pastoral scheme ceases to be a parish church or to be licensed for marriages, as the case may be (MPM Sch.1 para.15(3)). A special licence is required and will only be granted where there are longstanding links with the building.

3.7 Civil marriages

It should be noted that the provisions (MA s.19) which allow marriage in a place (other than a register office or registered building) approved by the Registrar General, or in another place with the consent of the Registrar General, apply to civil marriages only. Anglican marriages may not be solemnized on such premises. Anglican clergy may not solemnize civil marriages, and may only solemnize marriages according to the rites of the Church of England in buildings identified in this section.

3.8 Other places by special licence

For the places where a marriage by special licence may take place, see 10.6 below.

4 Factors governing the choice of location

4.1 Limited choice of buildings

Although a building may be available for the solemnization of Anglican marriage (as explained in the previous section) it does not follow that a couple can be married there simply as a matter of their personal choice. To be able to assert an entitlement to be married in a particular church one of the parties has to be able to point to a right in law to be married in the building in question. In addition, before the marriage can take place an appropriate form of preliminary must be carried out (see 2.5 above).

4.2 Parish churches

The MA recognises the longstanding principle that a person who is resident in a parish has the right to be married in the parish church. The Act also confers additional rights:–

- a person who lives in one parish, but usually worships in the parish church of another parish, the right to marry in that church provided that his or her name is entered on the church electoral roll of the latter parish (MA s.18);

- a person who lives in one parish, but has a 'qualifying connection' with another parish, has the right to marry in the parish church of the latter parish (see section 5).

4.3 Licensed chapels

Where the Bishop has licensed a public chapel for the solemnisation of marriages, a couple may lawfully marry in that chapel provided at least one of them resides in, or is entered on the church electoral roll of, the parish within which the chapel is situated (MA s.14(1), s.18(2)). The banns may then be published in that chapel (MA s.6(2)), but must also be published in the parish church of the parish and, if a party is resident in another parish, in the parish church of the latter parish (MA s.6(1), (3)).

4.4 Extra-parochial places

There are no extra-parochial places in the Isle of Man.

4.5 Parishes without a parish church

Where a parish has no church, the Bishop may license a building for public worship, and may then designate it as a 'parish centre of worship'; it is thereupon treated as a parish church for the purpose of marriages (MPM s.17). A couple, either of whom resides in the parish, or is on the church electoral roll of the parish or has a qualifying connection with the parish, have the right to marry in the PCW. No buildings are currently designated as a PCW.

No PCW is currently designated in the Isle of Man.

4.6 Church undergoing reconstruction, etc.

If a parish church is disused in consequence of rebuilding or repairs, or for any other cause, the Bishop may direct that banns may be published and marriages solemnized in some neighbouring parish church or chapel instead of that church (MA s.14(3)).

Where a person intending to be married has a qualifying connection with the parish of which the disused church is a parish church, the marriage may be solemnized in the church or chapel specified in the direction (MA s.17A(6)).

4.7 United benefices and pluralities

A special power is given to the Bishop in relation to the publication of banns and solemnisation of marriages where two or more benefices are held in plurality or there are two or more parishes or parish churches in the area of a single benefice (MPM Sch.1 para.15(4)). The Bishop may give a direction as to where the banns may be published and where the marriage may be solemnized.

Where such a direction is in force a person with an entitlement to be married, whether by residence, entry on a church electoral roll or qualifying connection, in one of the churches of the benefices or benefice in question, may have his or her banns published and his or her marriage solemnized in the church, or any of the churches, specified in the direction (para.15(4)). There is no obligation upon a couple to marry in the alternative church, because their right to marry in a particular church is expressly

preserved (para.15(5)). Furthermore, somewhat unusually having regard to MA s.11, the marriage may be solemnized in the church where the right to marry applies, even though the banns have been published in another church in accordance with the Bishop's direction (para.15(5)).

Where a person intending to be married has a qualifying connection with a parish affected by the Bishop's direction, the marriage may be solemnized in the church, or any of the churches, specified in the direction (MA s.17A(7)).

4.8 Marriage of non-UK/Irish national

A person who is neither a British citizen nor an Irish citizen may be married by authority of a registrar's certificate in the church specified in the notice of marriage, but has no statutory right to be married in any particular church (see 2.5 above). Furthermore the marriage may not be solemnized in any church without the consent of the incumbent (MA s.14A(2)(a)).

5 Qualifying connections

5.1 The legislation

Since the Marriage Measure (Isle of Man) 2019 came into force on 1 March 2019, a person who has established by evidence a 'qualifying connection' with a parish is in the same position as a person who lives in the parish, or who is entered on the church electoral roll, as regards being able to marry in the parish church following publication of banns or by common licence (MA s.17A, s.17C). This principle is subject to a number of qualifications and exceptions, which are set out below.

5.2 Criteria for establishing a qualifying connection

A person is treated as having a 'qualifying connection' with the parish if he or she satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

- He or she was baptised in the parish (unless the baptism took place in a combined rite of baptism and confirmation, in which case only the confirmation is relevant) (MA s.17A(3)(a));
- His or her confirmation has been entered in the confirmation register of any church or chapel in the parish. (Under Canon B 39 paragraph 2, a person's confirmation is entered in the register book of the church or chapel whose minister presents that person to the Bishop for confirmation.) (MA s.17A(3)(a));
- He or she has at any time had his or her usual place of residence or habitually attended public worship in the parish for a period of at least six months (MA s.17A(3)(b) and(c));
- During his or her lifetime, his or her parent has had his or her usual place of residence or habitually attended public worship in the parish for a period of at least 6 months (MA s.17A(3)(d));
- His or her parent or grandparent was married in the parish (MA s.17A(3)(e)).

The references in these criteria to baptism, confirmation, marriage and public worship are all confined to services according to the rites of the Church of England (MA s.17A(8) (b)).

'Parent' in the final two criteria includes an adoptive parent or a person who undertook the care and upbringing of the person concerned, and 'grandparent' has a corresponding meaning (MA s.17A(8)(a)).

For the residence qualification indicated by the words 'usual place of residence', see 6.3 below.

Banns will be the usual preliminary, but the common licence procedure is available for cases involving a 'qualifying connection'; some detailed provisions which apply here are explained in section 9 below.

5.3 Parishes ceasing to exist or changed in extent

There are special provisions for cases where a parish has ceased to exist, or there have been changes in the parish boundaries, subsequent to the events which have given rise to the qualifying connection in a particular case.

- If the connection is with a church, or with an address, which is now in a different parish, the connection is transferred to the parish where that church or address now is (MA s.17A(4)).
- If the connection is with a parish, and a church which was a parish church of that parish at the time when that person had the connection has since become and continues to be a parish church of another parish, the connection is now with that other parish (MA s.17A(5)).

5.4 Marriages otherwise than in a parish church

Where one of the couple has a qualifying connection with a parish which has a PCW (see 3.1 & 4.5 above), the couple may marry in the PCW if they wish, irrespective of whether there is also a parish church (MA s.17A(2)).

5.5 Minister to require satisfactory evidence

A person who wishes to marry in a parish in reliance on a qualifying connection must provide such written or other information as the minister of the parish requires in order to satisfy him- or herself that the qualifying connection exists (MA s.17B(4)).

If necessary, the minister may call for information to be provided or supported by means of a statutory declaration (under the Evidence Act 1871) (MA s.17B(5)). (See also 5.6 below.)

The 'minister' for this purpose will normally be the incumbent or priest-in-charge. If there is no incumbent or priest-in-charge, and a team vicar has a special cure of souls for an area including the church where the marriage is to take place, the team vicar has the functions of the minister. If there is no such person, those functions are exercisable by the cleric appointed by the Bishop for the purpose. (MA s.55(1))

Where a common licence is needed, those functions and responsibilities are transferred to the surrogate (MA s.17C(3) & (4)).

5.6 Statutory guidance

In deciding whether the information provided is sufficient, the minister must have regard to the statutory guidance³ issued by the Bishop under MA s.17D.

As well as giving general guidance on how the minister should discharge his or her role, the Bishop's guidance provides a recommended form for a person who wishes to rely on a qualifying connection to complete and submit to the minister, in order to assist both couples and clergy in ensuring that the minister is provided with the necessary information.

The guidance also deals in detail with the different types of qualifying connection set out above, and explains what information the minister should normally regard as sufficient to establish each of them. It makes clear that the minister should not require a statutory declaration as a matter of course, but gives examples of cases where it may be appropriate to call for one and explains the legal requirements for making the declaration and provides a specimen. A statutory declaration should not be required where a common licence is being applied for, as one of the parties will have to swear an affidavit verifying the information given.

The Bishop's guidance also provides assistance for the clergy on recognising exceptional cases which are not straightforward and what advice to seek in dealing with them.

It is essential that a member of the clergy who is asked to agree to a marriage by virtue of a qualifying connection should have familiarised him- or herself with this guidance, and should have regard to it in dealing with the request.

5.7 Genuine link but no qualifying connection

In cases where the couple wish to marry in a building customarily used for Anglican worship and one or both of them have a genuine connection with the place in question, but do not have a 'qualifying connection' as defined above (see 5.2), it is still possible for them to apply for the Bishop's special licence.

Section 10 will then apply.

6 The meaning of Residence

6.1 Statutory provisions

The qualification for a person to marry in a particular place depends very much upon where that person lived, even though for most purposes there is an alternative qualification in the form of entry on the church electoral roll.

In order to establish whether the legal requirements for solemnisation of marriage in a particular place are satisfied, it is necessary to look at the facts of the individual case in the light of the legislation which governs the type of preliminary which is to be used. The legislative provisions, so far as they relate to residence for the use of banns or a common licence are as follows:

³ Available online at http://www.gumbley.net/qualifying_connection_guidance.pdf

Banns:

'the parish ... in which one of [the parties] resides' (MA s.6);

Common licence:

'the parish... in which one of persons to be married has had his or her usual place of residence for 15 days immediately before the grant of the licence' (MA s.12).

6.2 Areas of common uncertainty

Two types of case commonly arise in considering whether the legal requirements for marriage in a particular place are satisfied. These relate to:

- (i) the person who claims an address as his or her 'home' at a time when he or she is, in physical terms, living elsewhere; and
- (ii) the person who arrives in a parish expressly in order to marry there, and so is physically resident at the relevant date or dates but may have no intention to make a permanent base in the parish.

6.3 Common licence — usual place of residence

The residence test for a common licence is that of the person's 'usual place of residence', and it is necessary to satisfy that test for the whole of the 15-day period under MA s.12.

So far as situation (i) in 6.2 above is concerned, it appears that throughout the relevant period there must be a place in the parish which can properly be regarded as that person's 'home'. If that is the case, the fact that he or she is physically absent for the whole or part of the 15 day period, eg. on holiday, does not prevent the test being satisfied.

Two situations which have given rise to particular difficulties in the past have been —

- students who live away from the parental home in term-time or even for longer periods, but who return there regularly
- persons who have to live away from the parental home for longer or shorter periods in order to be at or near their place or work although again they return regularly

Examples of the latter include members of the armed forces and diplomats sent abroad for a tour of duty. The central issue here is whether the parental home remains that person's 'home', or whether he or she has established a 'home' elsewhere and is merely a visitor when he or she returns to the parental home.

One significant factor, although it is not conclusive on its own, is whether he or she has a room in the parental home which is regarded as 'his/her room', with his or her belongings, which remains unoccupied in his or her absence. The nature of his or her accommodation where he or she is working or studying may also be relevant; eg. a student who gives up his or her lodgings, or has to leave his or her hall or residence, during the vacations, or a person working away from the parental home who has nowhere else to go during a period of leave, is much more likely to have his or her

'home' at the parental home than, say, a student who has rented or joined with others in renting a house or flat near the university or college and lives there for much of the vacations as well as in term time.

As regards situation (ii) in 6.2 above, a person who lives in accommodation in the parish for 15 days, even if this is clearly only a temporary arrangement, could be said to have his or her 'usual place of residence' there for that period.

6.4 Banns — residence

Uniquely, the original residence requirement for banns under MA s.6 does not have to be satisfied over a stated period, but simply at one instant in time — that is, at the moment when the application for the calling of banns is given to the minister or someone acting on the minister's behalf. Moreover, the test is that the person concerned must 'reside' in the parish at that moment, not (as in 6.3 above) that he or she has a 'usual place of residence' there. This might suggest that the residence has to be physical residence but without an element of recurrence.

6.5 Conclusion

Although it has been possible to give some clear guidelines in this section on the various legal provisions regarding residence as a qualification for marriage in a particular place, there will always be cases where it is possible to argue for more than one view of a given individual's legal position. In the final analysis, clergy and those issuing common licences will have to reach their own conclusion on whether the person genuinely satisfies the relevant test, on the basis of common sense and the general guidance given above.

7 Banns

A recommended form of application for the publication of banns is at Appendix 1. (If a party seeks to establish a qualifying connection, he or she should also be asked to complete the form included in the statutory guidance issued by the Bishop (see 5.6 above).)

7.1 Publication in parish of residence

Where a marriage is to be solemnized after banns in the parish church, PCW or licensed building of the parish where one of the parties resides, banns must be published in the parish church(es) of the parish(es) where each party resides (MA s.6(1), s.11(1)). (As to 'residence', see section 6.)

7.2 Publication in usual place of worship

Where a marriage is to be solemnized in a church or chapel which is a person's 'usual place of worship' (see 4.2 above), banns must be published (MA s.6(1)-(3), s.11(1)) —

- in that church or chapel, and
- in the parish church(es) of the parish(es) where each party resides.

A church or chapel is a person's 'usual place of worship' if and only if he or she is entered on the church electoral roll of the parish in which it is situated (see 4.2 above).

7.3 Publication in case of a qualifying connection

Where a marriage is to be solemnized after banns in the parish church of a parish with which one of the parties has a qualifying connection (see section 5), the banns must be published (MA s.11(1), s.17B(1)) —

- in that parish church, and
- in the parish church(es) of the parish(es) where each party resides.

7.4 Special cases

Where a marriage is to be solemnized in another building because a church is closed for repairs or reconstruction (see 4.6 above), banns must be published —

- in that other building and
- in the parish church of the parish where the other party resides.

Where the Bishop has given directions under MPM Sch.1 para.15 (see 4.7 above), the banns for any marriage taking place by virtue of those directions must comply with them. They may permit the banns to be published in one church and the marriage to take place in another.

7.5 Publication outside the Isle of Man

A marriage may take place in the Isle of Man after banns if one of the parties lives in England, Wales or Jersey. Publication of banns takes place as usual in the place in the Isle of Man where the marriage is to be solemnized; but the other party's banns may be published at a church of the Church of England in England or Jersey, or a church of the Church in Wales, according to the law or custom there prevailing (MA s.6(4)).

The publication of banns as a preliminary to marriage has been discontinued in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Bailiwick of Guernsey. If one party lives in any of those territories (or elsewhere outside the British Islands), the recommended course is to marry by common licence (see 9.3 below).

Banns cannot be published in the Isle of Man for a marriage which is to take place in England or Wales.

7.6 Dates and time of publication

Banns are to be published on three Sundays preceding the marriage (MA s.7). There is no requirement that these should be three successive Sundays, although this may be a convenient way of ensuring that the banns are called the requisite number of times before the date fixed for the marriage to take place. They may be published at a morning, afternoon or evening service.

No person may publish the banns, either in the parish where the marriage is to take place or elsewhere, unless the parties have provided —

- written notice of their full names, their places of residence, and the length of time for which each one has resided at the place of residence stated, and
- specified evidence, in accordance with regulations⁴, to prove that both are nationals of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland; the preferred form of evidence is a valid British or Irish passport. (MA s.8)

Clergy are encouraged to follow advice issued by the Church of England Records Centre (including the records management guide *Keep or Bin? – The Care of Your Parish Records*) regarding the handling of personal data and retention or destruction of specified evidence, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

7.7 By whom published

If there are clergy officiating at the service when banns are published, they must be published by a member of the clergy (MA s.9(1)). If there are no clergy officiating, then provided the service is Morning or Evening Prayer and at the usual time when banns are published in that church, a lay person may publish the banns (MA s.9(2)(b)); this would normally be the Reader officiating at the service.

7.8 Wording of banns

The wording of banns is laid down by statute (MA s.7(2)), and either of the following forms may be used:

- I publish the banns of marriage between A.B. of _____ and C.D. of _____.
If any of you know any cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony, ye are to declare it. This is the first [second or third] time of asking.
- I publish the banns of marriage between A.B. of _____ and C.D. of _____.
This is the first [second or third] time of asking. If any of you know any reason in law why these persons may not marry each other, you are to declare it now.

Where marriage is taking place in a church which is not either person's parish church but is where one or both are members of the church electoral roll or have a qualifying connection, the requirement laid down by MA is to have banns read in that church and in the parishes of residence. There is no requirement to state that the party to the marriage has a legal qualification with the parish in which he or she is marrying.

It will be noted that neither form requires the parties' current marital status to be stated.

7.9 Banns for minors

Banns are published for minors (persons under 18) in the same way as for adults, and parental consent is not required when a minor applies to have banns published. The remedy of a parent of a minor who does not consent to a marriage is to object when banns are published (see 7.10 above).

⁴ Marriage (Evidence of Nationality) Regulations 2023 (SD 2023/153)

7.10 Objections to banns

Where the consent of a person is required to the marriage of a minor, that person is entitled to object to the marriage. For the persons whose consent is required, see 12.2 below.

In order to object, the parent or guardian must openly and publicly cause his or her dissent from the intended marriage to be declared at the time of the publication of banns (MA s.3(7)). The publication of banns then becomes void; and having satisfied himself or herself of the objector's standing, the incumbent should note the objection in the banns register and proceed no further on the minor's application. (It does not however prevent a fresh application by the minor to have banns called.) Objections to banns should not be permitted to disrupt a service. Whether an objection appears to be well founded or not, the person publishing banns should state that the objection is noted, and that the objector should see him or her after the service to give particulars of the objection, and should then proceed with the service (or with the calling of any other banns).

The dissent of a person whose consent is required is the only ground which can render the publication of banns void. However, other allegations of legal impediments (for examples, see 19.2 below) should be investigated before the marriage is due to take place, if they are prima facie supported by evidence. Objections that do not amount to legal impediments (eg. that a brother disapproves of his sister's marriage) cannot be entertained. The clergy should seek advice from the Diocesan Registrar on any objection.

7.11 Register book of banns

For each building in which banns may be published, the Parochial Church Council is required to supply a register book of banns. The book must be made of durable materials and marked in the prescribed manner, and is available from church bookshops. The person publishing banns is to read from the book 'and not from loose papers'. After each publication the person publishing banns is to sign the book, or cause it to be done under his or her direction. (MA s.7(3))

7.12 Certificates of publication

If banns are published in one church for marriage in another, it will be necessary for a certificate to be issued that banns have been published in the former church as required by law. The officiating minister must see this certificate before the marriage goes ahead. Details for the certificate can be taken from the banns register, and it must be signed by the incumbent or priest-in-charge of the church where the banns were published. (MA s.10)

7.13 Functions restricted to the clergy

It will be noted that the involvement of clergy is essential only for the last stages in the banns procedure: a lay person may sometimes publish banns and sign the entry in the banns register; but a member of the clergy must always sign the certificate of publication (if required).

7.14 Duty to publish and certify

Clergy have discretion in certain cases as to whether to solemnize the marriage of a person with a legal qualification to marry in the parish, or to make the church available for that purpose (see 2.2 above); they have no such discretion about calling the banns of such a person or issuing certificates. A person with a legal qualification to marry in the parish who gives the required notice and prescribed evidence of nationality, even if divorced, is entitled to have his or her banns called whatever the view of the incumbent; and failure to call banns on request is neglect of duty.

In certain cases where the parties are related by affinity, the marriage may not take place after banns, but only by common licence or special licence (see 13.3 below).

7.15 Time for validity of banns

A marriage after banns must be solemnized within three calendar months from the last publication. After three months the publication of banns becomes void, and must be repeated from scratch if the marriage is to go ahead later (MA s.11(2)).

7.16 Fees

The current Parochial Fees Order prescribes a fee to be charged for the issue of a certificate (no fee is payable for the publication of banns). The fee should be paid when the parties apply for banns to be published.

8 Registrar's certificate

8.1 When a registrar's certificate is required

Formerly an Anglican marriage in the Isle of Man could not be authorised by a registrar's certificate but, under the Marriage Measure (Isle of Man) 2022, from 1 July 2023 a marriage of a person who is not a British citizen or Irish citizen may take place only by authority of a registrar's certificate (or the Bishop's special licence), and not after banns or by common licence (MA s.11(3), s.13(2A)).

A registrar's certificate is not available if each party is a British citizen or Irish citizen (MA s.24(1)(c)).

8.2 Procedure for registrar's certificate

The procedure for the issue of a registrar's certificate for an Anglican marriage is similar to the preliminaries for a civil or non-conformist wedding. The parties must give a notice of marriage to the Civil Registry. The notice is entered in the marriage notice book, and after a period during which the issue of the certificate can be forbidden, a registrar issues a certificate of marriage, authorising the parties to be married at the specified church or chapel.

The following protocol has been agreed with the Civil Registry.

- (1) The minister first ascertain whether the couple are permitted to be married after banns (ie. whether they are both British or Irish citizens), and require them to complete and sign the application form in Appendix 1. If they cannot show that

they are both British or Irish citizens, he or she then writes "Registrar's certificate required" at the foot and signs it.

- (2) The minister then scans the form as a PDF file and emails it to the Civil Registry (civil.registry@gov.im), sending a copy to the couple. The Registry emails the couple and asks them to contact the Registry to arrange for them to attend and complete the notice of marriage.
- (3) The Registry will request the immigration authorities to investigate the status of overseas nationals before issuing a certificate of marriage.
- (4) When issuing the certificate (which will be based on the information supplied in the application form) the Registry will email it to the couple, with a copy to the minister.

The minister should keep the original form and the registrar's certificate with the parish marriage records for at least 6 years.

8.3 Where and when marriage may take place

Where a marriage is to be authorised by a registrar's certificate, there is no legal requirement that either party be connected with the parish concerned. However, the marriage will not be valid unless it takes place at the church specified in the certificate (MA s.14A(1), s.20(3)), which will be that specified in the application form and the notice of marriage. The minister must therefore ensure that it is accurately identified in the form.

A marriage by authority of a registrar's certificate may not take place in a church or chapel without the consent of the incumbent or priest in charge (MA s.14A(2)).

The marriage must take place within 12 months from the date specified in the registrar's certificate as the date when the notice of marriage was entered in the marriage notice book (MA s.26).

9 Common Licence

9.1 Advantages of a common licence

Marriage by common licence may take place on the basis of one party's qualifying residence, entry on a church electoral roll or qualifying connection without any action being necessary where the other party lives. It is recommended where a party is resident outside the Isle of Man (see 9.3 below). The initial procedure for obtaining a licence is given at 9.7 below.

9.2 Qualifications for the licence

The qualifying period of residence is that one party has had his or her usual place of residence (see 6.3 above), for 15 days immediately before applying for the licence, in the parish where the marriage is to take place (MA s.12).

Alternatively —

- a party may marry by licence in his or her 'usual place of worship' although not resident in the parish; a church or chapel is a person's 'usual place of worship' if, and only if, he or she is entered on the church electoral roll of the parish in which it is situated (see 4.2 above);
- a common licence may be issued for a marriage in a place in which one or both parties could have been married by banns by virtue of a qualifying connection (MA s.17C(1); see section 5 above).

A party who has qualifying residence in a parish which has no church or only a PCW (see 4.5 above), or where the church is closed for repairs or reconstruction (see 4.6 above) may be authorized by common licence to marry in the church of a neighbouring parish. A common licence may also be issued for marriage in the church of a neighbouring parish where this is covered by the Bishop's directions under MPM Sch.1 para.15 (see 4.7 above).

A common licence cannot be granted unless the persons to be married deliver to the person granting the licence evidence prescribed by regulations⁵ that both are nationals of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland (MA s.13(2A)). The preferred form of evidence is a valid British or Irish passport.

If this evidence is not produced, the person to whom the application is made should refer the applicant back to the minister who has been asked to conduct the marriage. The minister should then follow the protocol outlined at 8.2 above.

9.3 Overseas residents

Where one of the parties lives outside the Isle of Man and does not fall within any of the cases set out in 7.5 above where banns may be called elsewhere, the marriage cannot take place by banns, because the law requires the banns to be called in the place of residence of each party as well as in any other place where the marriage is to be solemnized (MA s.6). In such a case an application should be made for a common licence.

9.4 Divorced and unbaptised applicants

The grant of a common licence to a divorced person with a former spouse still living is at the discretion of the Bishop. Advice has been issued by the Bishop and is set out in Appendix 2. The surrogate should inspect both the provisional and final divorce orders, and satisfy himself or herself that the criteria set out in Appendix 2 are met.

The lack of baptism of either or both parties is not in itself a bar to the granting of a licence to enable a wedding to take place in church, and accordingly there is no need to refer an application to the Bishop when neither party is baptised.

9.5 Minors

The age of the parties must be stated when applying for a common licence. If a party is under 18 (unless a widow or widower), written consent to his or her marriage is required, usually of the parent(s) or guardian (see 12.2 below). The consent should be

⁵ Marriage (Evidence of Nationality) Regulations 2023 (SD 2023/153)

produced when the application is made, and the declaration in support must state that it has been given (MA s.13(2)).

There are a limited number of circumstances in which the Bishop, Vicar General or surrogate may dispense with consent (see 12.2 below).

Note also that a marriage of a minor may be invalid if either party is domiciled in England and Wales (see 12.4 below).

9.6 Surrogates

Common licences are essentially an exercise of the episcopal power of dispensation — the Bishop dispenses with the requirement of banns. The power may be exercised on the Bishop's behalf by the Vicar General, and the Bishop may delegate the consideration of licence applications to surrogates. Application may therefore be made to local clergy who have been appointed surrogates for marriages.⁶

Surrogates are appointed by instrument under the Bishop's hand and seal. They continue in office on a vacancy in the See and on the appointment of a new Bishop.

9.7 Application for licence

One of the couple seeking to marry by common licence should appear (by appointment) before the surrogate, bringing any documentation required as in 9.2 to 9.5 above. (Note that the residence, church electoral roll requirement or qualifying connection must be satisfied before the application is made, but the party who satisfies it need not be the one who makes the application.) It is often helpful if the officiating minister is in contact with the surrogate before the application for a licence is made.

There is no official application form for a common licence, but the applicant is required to make a solemn declaration, on a form in a book supplied by the Civil Registry, that there is no impediment, that the requirements as to residence, entry on the church electoral roll or qualifying connection are fulfilled and, where appropriate, that any consents to the marriage of a minor have been given or dispensed with (MA s.13(2), s.17C(2)). It is to be stressed that all the requirements of the common licence should have been completed before the oath is sworn. If satisfied, the surrogate grants the licence. The officiating minister must insist upon seeing the signed licence before solemnizing the marriage.

9.8 Caveats

It is possible for a person alleging some impediment to an intended marriage to hold up the grant of a common licence in the Isle of Man by entering a caveat in the Diocesan Registry. The caveat need not be in a prescribed form, but must be in writing, signed by or on behalf of the caveator and must give the caveator's address and the grounds of objection to the marriage. If not withdrawn, the caveat will prevent the issue of a licence unless and until the Bishop, Vicar General or surrogate is satisfied that it ought not to obstruct the grant of a licence or the caveat is withdrawn (MA s.13(3)). A clergy surrogate should seek the advice of the Diocesan Registrar before issuing a licence in such a case.

⁶ Usually the Archdeacon and some or all of the team leaders of the mission partnerships.

A caveat entered in another diocesan registry, the provincial registry or the Faculty Office does not prevent the grant of a licence in the Isle of Man.

9.9 Validity period

A marriage by common licence must be solemnized within three calendar months from the date when the licence is granted (MA s.13(4)). After three months a fresh licence application must be made if the marriage is to go ahead later.

9.10 Provincial and Faculty Office common licences

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have no power to grant common licences in the Isle of Man.

9.11 Fees

The current Parochial Fees Order prescribes fees which are to be charged on applications for common licences.

10 Special Licence

10.1 Grounds

The Bishop of Sodor and Man has the unique right to grant a special licence for marriage at any convenient time or place in the Isle of Man. This jurisdiction (expressly preserved by MA s.57(5)) is sparingly exercised, and good cause must always be shown why a more normal preliminary to Anglican marriage cannot be used. The Archbishop of Canterbury has no power to grant a special licence for marriage in the Isle of Man.

The most common need for a special licence is the parties' desire to marry in a building not normally authorised for Anglican marriage (as to which see 3.1 above), or in a parish where they cannot satisfy a requirement for residence, entry on the church electoral roll or qualifying connection. The Bishop's policy on the grant of special licences is set out in Appendix 3. Advice on grounds which may be considered sufficient for the grant of a special licence may always be sought from the Diocesan Registrar by letter or telephone.

10.2 Procedure

Persons wishing to marry by special licence should first approach the member of the clergy whom they wish to officiate at the marriage, and the persons who have control of the chosen building (the incumbent in the case of a parish church, the governing body in the case of a school or college chapel, etc.) It is the responsibility of the officiating member of the clergy to ensure that the clergy of the parishes where the parties live (or worship) are aware of the intended marriage, and to ascertain whether they have any objection to the marriage being solemnized by the chosen officiant in the chosen location. The parties should also seek the goodwill of close relatives towards the marriage, even though there may be no minors involved.

The parties should then request application forms from the Diocesan Registrar, or download them from the internet⁷. The forms are in three parts: one part is to be completed by the parties; the second by the officiating minister of the clergy; the third by an appropriate official if either party is resident outside the Isle of Man. Supporting letters may be required for some parts of the forms. The completed application forms, any supporting documents and the statutory fee should be sent to the Diocesan Registry.

After checking the application, the Diocesan Registrar submits it to the Bishop. If the Bishop indicates that he is willing to grant the licence, the Registrar informs the applicants and requests one of them to swear an oath verifying the details given and the absence of any impediment. This can be done before a commissioner for oaths (in the Isle of Man, an advocate, or an official at the General Registry). On receipt of the oath, the licence will be granted.

In view of the discretionary nature of special licences, sufficient time should be allowed for consideration of an application and the grant of a special licence. Consequently an application should be made as soon as a date for the marriage has been agreed with the officiating minister, and not left until the last moment. For this reason applications will be accepted by the Diocesan Registrar at any time up to 18 months before the date of the marriage.

10.3 Minors and divorced and unbaptised persons

The Diocesan Registrar adopts the same practice over the marriage of minors as that described at 9.5 above.

The Bishop will consider granting a special licence for the marriage of a divorced person with a former spouse still living where it is clear that the criteria set out in Appendix 3 are fulfilled. It should not be assumed that a special licence will necessarily issue. The form to be completed by the officiating minister includes a statement that he or she has seen both the provisional and final divorce orders and that he or she is satisfied that the above criteria are met.

There is no requirement that either party be baptised.

10.4 Emergency applications

Special arrangements may be made in a genuine emergency. In such cases the clergy or the couple concerned should first contact the Diocesan Registrar.

10.5 Validity period

There is no statutory time limit for the solemnization of a marriage by special licence.

10.6 Venue

A special licence may be granted for Anglican marriage 'at any convenient time or place' (MA s.5(b)). This provision is very wide, and could in theory cover buildings of other Christian denominations, the open air, and territorial waters; however, in practice it is the Bishop's usual policy only to permit marriage in buildings customarily used for

⁷ http://www.gumbley.net/special_licence_app.pdf

Anglican worship. Some medical need must normally be shown for marriage elsewhere to be authorised, eg. in a hospital or private house. See further the guidelines in Appendix 3.

10.7 Fees

The current Parochial Fees Order prescribes fees which are to be charged on applications for special licences. The fee may be waived in a genuine emergency.

11 Registrar General's licence

In order to give a complete picture of the range of marriage preliminaries, it may be helpful to know that the Registrar General can issue a licence for marriage in emergency which has some of the characteristics of a Bishop's special licence (MA s.36). However a Registrar General's licence cannot be issued for Anglican marriages.

12 Minimum age for marriage

12.1 Marriages of persons under 16

In the Isle of Man a marriage between persons either of whom is under the age of 16 is void (MA s.2). Clergy who are asked to marry a person whom they suspect to be under 16 should ask for proof of age.

12.2 Consent to marriage of persons under 18

A marriage of a person aged 16 or 17, not being a widow or widower, requires parental consent, unless legally dispensed with (MA s.3). If such consent is required and is not given or dispensed with, the marriage is not void, but conducting it is a disciplinary offence (see 12.3 below). Clergy who are asked to marry (otherwise than by common or special licence) a person whom they suspect to be under 18 should ask for proof of age; if the person is not shown to be 18 or over, the clergy must also ensure that parental consent has been given.

The consent of the following persons is required (MA s.3):

- (a) subject to (b) to (d), each parent (if any) who has parental responsibility for the minor, and each guardian (if any) of the minor;
- (b) if a residence order is in force, the person or persons with whom the minor lives or is to live in accordance with the order (*instead of* the consents required by (a));
- (c) where a care order is in force, the authority in whose care the minor is by virtue of the order (*as well as* the consents required by (a));
- (d) where neither (b) nor (c) applies but a residence order was in force immediately before the minor reached the age of 16, the person or persons with whom he or she lived or was to live in accordance with the order (*instead of* the consents required by (a)).

If any person whose consent is required is absent or inaccessible, and some other person's consent is required, the minister (in the case of a common licence, the surrogate) may dispense with the consent of the former. If no other person's consent is required, the Bishop or the Vicar General may dispense with the consent, or the High Court may give consent.

If any person whose consent is required refuses consent, the High Court may give consent in that person's place.

In the case of a marriage by common licence, the applicant must state in the declaration when applying for the licence that any necessary consents have been given or dispensed with (MA s.13).

Parental responsibility:

- The parents of a minor both have parental responsibility for him or her, even if divorced or separated by court order, unless deprived of it by order of a court.
- The consent of a parent with parental responsibility is required whether or not the minor is living with that parent, except where (b) above applies.
- The consent of the natural father of an illegitimate child is not required unless he has parental responsibility, either because he has entered into a parental responsibility agreement with the mother or because the court has made an order giving him parental responsibility.

12.3 Canonical requirements

Canon B 32 as it has effect in England, ie. as amended by Amending Canon No. 43, provides as follows:

No minister shall solemnize matrimony between two persons either of whom is under 18 years of age.

This reflects the change in marriage law in England noted below, but the amendment does not apply to the Isle of Man as no corresponding change to the marriage law of the Island has yet been enacted. The previous text of the Canon remains in force in the Island, as follows:

No minister shall solemnize matrimony between two persons either of whom (not being a widow or widower) is under 18 years of age otherwise than in accordance with the requirements of the law relating to the consent of parents or guardians in the case of the marriage of a person under 18 years of age.

12.4 Change in minimum age in England and Wales

Similar rules applied in England and Wales until 27 February 2023, when the UK Marriage Act 1949 was amended so as to invalidate the marriage after that date of any person under the age of 18.

This change in the law may affect a marriage taking place in the Isle of Man, if either party has a connection with England and Wales. This is because the capacity of a person to marry, and thus the validity of any marriage that he or she enters into, depends on the person's *domicile*, a highly technical legal concept. Generally speaking, a person's domicile is the country where his or her 'roots' are, which may but need not be the

country of residence or the country of nationality. A person under 18 is normally treated as domiciled in the country of his or her parent's domicile (usually the father's but sometimes the mother's).

The result of the change in the law of England and Wales is that a marriage of a person domiciled in England and Wales, wherever it takes place, is void if *either of the parties* is under 18.

A minister who is asked to marry a couple, either of whom is aged under 18 at the date of the wedding, must already check that parental consent to the marriage, if required, has been given or dispensed with (see 12.2 above). The minister must also check whether either party (or the parents of the party under 18) may be domiciled in England and Wales, and if so, take no further action until the couple have taken legal advice.

13 Kindred and Affinity

13.1 The legal basis for the prohibited degrees

The table of degrees of relationship within which marriage of relatives by blood (kindred) or marriage (affinity) is prohibited was, for many years, based on the Canons of 1603. The 1603 table is printed in older editions of the Book of Common Prayer. However, those editions are no longer a reliable guide since the Canons have been replaced (see Canon B 31), and the 'prohibited degrees' are now laid down by statute (MA s.1, Sch.1).

The Church of England, following secular law, now permits certain marriages even though there may be a relationship of affinity between the parties.

13.2 Prohibited degrees — kindred

Marriage between a person and any of the following relatives is prohibited (MA s.1(1), Sch.1 Part 1):

- child (including adoptive child or former adoptive child)
- parent (including adoptive parent or former adoptive parent)
- grandparent
- grandchild
- brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister
- brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister of parent
- child of brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister

13.3 Prohibited degrees — affinity — conditions

Unless the conditions set out below are satisfied, a marriage between a person and any of the following is prohibited (MA s.1(2), Sch.1 Part 2) —

- child or grandchild of former spouse or civil partner
- former spouse or civil partner of parent or grandparent

- parent of former spouse
- former spouse of parent or grandparent
- former spouse of child

In this list 'child', in relation to any person, includes a child who has been treated by that person as a child of that person's family.

The conditions are as follows (MA s.1(2), Sch.1 Part 3):

- (a) Both parties must be 21 or over.
- (b) The marriage must not take place in circumstances where the younger party has at any time before attaining the age of 18 lived in the same household as the older party and been treated by that older party as a child of his or her family.

Both parties should normally be able to make a declaration in writing to this effect, and there is a procedure for investigation by the Vicar General if a couple do not know their own early family background and cannot make such a declaration with certainty. If a caveat is entered on the ground that condition (a) or (b) is not satisfied, a common licence may not be granted until the Vicar General has examined the objection and is satisfied that it ought not to obstruct the grant.

- (c) The marriage cannot take place after banns. The normal preliminary will be a common licence (or sometimes a special licence).

Even if the above conditions are satisfied, a minister is not obliged to solemnize the marriage, or to permit the marriage to be solemnized in the church or chapel where he or she is the minister (MA s.5A).

Although the parties are not within the prohibited degrees if one is the parent of the other's former civil partner, or the former civil partner of the other's child, a minister is likewise not obliged to solemnize the marriage, or to permit the marriage to be solemnized in the church or chapel where he or she is the minister (MA s.5A).

13.4 Prohibited degrees — affinity — procedure

When such a marriage is proposed to take place by common licence or special licence, advice must be sought from the Diocesan Registrar. In all cases involving affinity a clergy surrogate to whom an application for a common licence is made must take no action except on the advice of the Registrar.

13.5 Surrogate parents

Part 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2001 makes provision about which persons are to be treated in law as the parents of a child where the child has been born following IVF treatment. In such cases the advice of the Diocesan Registrar should be sought to establish whether the surrogacy can raise an impediment to marriage.

13.6 Foreign nationality or domicile

Even where both parties are resident in the Isle of Man, there may be circumstances on which they should obtain advice at the outset, eg. where a party —

- has foreign nationality

- has previously been married or divorced abroad, or both, or
- already has children who are foreign nationals or domiciled or resident abroad.

A marriage which takes place in the Isle of Man according to the law as set out in these notes will be held valid, *as to form*, by the courts of the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom, whatever the parties' nationality. However, there are circumstances which may affect the validity of the marriage in this country *as to matters other than form*, eg. where there is a question whether a party's previous marriage or divorce abroad is recognised here. Care needs to be taken to ensure that all relevant circumstances are considered fully in order to decide whether the marriage should take place. See also 12.4 above.

Moreover, even if the marriage is recognised as fully valid in the Isle of Man, there may be a risk of a 'limping marriage', ie. one which is not recognised under the law of the foreign country concerned, eg. where one of the parties is domiciled abroad and does not have full legal capacity to marry under the foreign law. In such a case the couple could be in difficulties afterwards, particularly if they move to or return to the country in question⁸. In an extreme case they could be separated and unable to live together in accordance with their marriage promises. The status of any children, the rights, powers and duties of one party in relation to children and a party's rights to financial provision could also be prejudiced by the other party taking advantage of the foreign legal position.

While the degree of risk will vary depending on the facts and the extent to which the foreign law differs from the law in this country, it is very much in the interests of the parties to take appropriate advice about these matters well before the marriage. The Church also recognises a responsibility to protect, if possible, those whose marriages it solemnizes from falling into the kinds of difficulties indicated above.

There may be practical issues which need to be addressed. For example, a foreign legal document may need to be professionally translated in order to ensure that the English version is legally accurate. Failing to attend to this at the outset may result in unnecessary difficulties and delay nearer the date for the marriage.

14 Divorce and annulment

14.1 Dissolution of marriage

The Church of England follows the law of the land as regards capacity to marry. The fact that the clergy are legally free from any obligation to solemnize in church the marriage of a person whose marriage has been dissolved by a court in the Isle of Man or the United Kingdom does not alter the fact that such a person is, in law, free to marry. However, clergy have the discretion to refuse to marry a couple where one or both is divorced with a former spouse still living, and may also refuse to make the church available for a marriage (MA s.5A). However, they have no discretion to refuse to read the banns (see 7.14 above).

⁸ There is usually no difficulty where the foreign country concerned is a member of the European Union, one of the old Commonwealth countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) or the United States.

14.2 Divorce orders

Clergy should bear in mind that a marriage is only dissolved in the Isle of Man by a final divorce order (formerly known as a decree absolute of divorce). They should always ask to see the final order, bearing the court seal, and ensure that it is not merely a provisional order (formerly a decree nisi). (In England and Wales a provisional order is now called a 'conditional order'.)

14.3 Annulment orders

The Church will also recognize an annulment order made by a court in the Isle of Man (or a decree of nullity of marriage in the United Kingdom), that is, a declaration that there is no valid marriage in existence. An incumbent has the same obligation to marry a person with a qualification to marry in his or her church whose marriage has been annulled as would exist if that person had never gone through a form of marriage. Again, the final annulment order (or decree absolute of nullity or final nullity of marriage order) must be inspected.

14.4 Overseas divorces and annulments

In addition the Church of England will recognize the divorce and annulment orders (decrees) of overseas courts if those orders would be recognised by Manx courts. Divorces and annulments granted by the courts of the United Kingdom and Channel Islands are all recognised in the Isle of Man. In other cases, recognition may depend upon the parties' domicile or habitual residence, connections with the place where the decree was pronounced, and of the laws of the country where the parties were domiciled at the time. If any question arises as to recognition of a foreign divorce or annulment, the advice of the Diocesan Registrar should always be sought.

14.5 Roman Catholic marriage tribunals

The Church of England, and the Manx courts, do not recognize annulments granted by Roman Catholic marriage tribunals. A marriage which such a tribunal has purported to annul remains a valid legal marriage, and a bar to any further marriage, until it is annulled or dissolved by the appropriate civil court in the jurisdiction concerned.

14.6 Marriage in church after divorce

In 2002 the General Synod of the Church of England affirmed the church's teaching that marriage should always be undertaken as a 'solemn public and lifelong covenant between a man and a woman' (Canon B 30). It recognised the importance of caring for those whose marriages do regrettably fail, but that there may be exceptional circumstances in which a divorced person may be married in church during the lifetime of a former spouse. The Synod made clear that the decision whether to solemnize such marriages rests with the incumbent (or officiating minister provided the incumbent is prepared for his or her church to be used for the marriage) and invited the House of Bishops to issue guidelines in this area. The Bishop of Sodor and Man has issued advice to the clergy, which is in Appendix 2.

Common licences are available to the divorced, provided that the advice referred to above has been complied with. The officiating minister should write to the Bishop

explaining his or her reasons for supporting the proposed remarriage. See 9.4 and 10.3 above for the common and special licence procedures for the marriage of divorced persons with a former spouse still living.

15 Civil partnerships

The Civil Partnership Act 2011 (as amended in 2016) allows two single persons of the same sex or opposite sexes to form a civil partnership pursuant to that Act. A civil partnership may only be ended by death, dissolution or annulment, or by being converted to a marriage. The existence of a civil partnership is an impediment to marriage.

A minister may refuse to marry a man and a woman, or to allow his or her church to be used for the marriage, on the ground that a party's civil partnership has been dissolved but the former civil partner is still living (MA s.5A). However he or she may not refuse to publish banns or certify the publication of banns (see 7.14 above), and the House of Bishops' Advice to the clergy on the remarriage of divorcees does not apply.

16 Persons of acquired gender

Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (of Parliament) a person who is at least 18 years of age may make an application to have his or her 'acquired gender' recognised on the basis of either having lived in the other gender for at least two years, or having changed gender under the law of a country outside the United Kingdom. The application is determined by a gender recognition panel which, if it grants the application, will issue a 'gender recognition certificate'. The Gender Recognition Act 2009 (of Tynwald) provides for such a certificate to have effect in the Isle of Man. Surgery affecting a person's biological gender does not convey any status in law unless such a certificate has been issued.

The holder of a gender recognition certificate is eligible to seek marriage in his or her acquired gender. A minister may refuse to marry a person, or to allow his or her church to be used for the marriage of a person, if he or she reasonably believes that person has changed gender under the Act (MA s.5A). However he or she may not refuse to publish banns or certify the publication of banns (see 7.14 above).

Clergy do not have a right in law to ask a person about a changed gender, even if it is suspected. There are strict rules governing issues of confidentiality in this area. The Diocesan Registrar should always be consulted in any such case.

17 The marriage service

17.1 Time

An Anglican marriage must take place between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. (Canon B 35 para.3) unless some other time is permitted by a special licence. (Such permission is normally only given in cases involving extreme medical necessity.)

17.2 Rite

Anglican marriage must follow the authorised rites of the Church of England. As there is a choice between authorised services, the officiant and the couple must agree on the service to be used, and if they cannot agree the Bishop's ruling must be followed (Canon B 3 para.4). The options are: the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the Manx translation of the BCP (1765), the Series 1 rite (also known as '1928'), and Common Worship. The Alternative Service Book is no longer authorised.

Where a couple come from different Christian churches, the Bishop may authorise such variations to the marriage service as are set out in *An Order for the Marriage of Christians from Different Churches*. Guidance on interfaith marriages is available on the Church of England website.

The choice of alternatives within the selected service (except where rubrics specifically state otherwise), and also the choice of hymns and music, etc., are in the last resort for the officiating minister, though he or she would naturally give great weight to the parties' wishes. The vows must be those contained in an authorised rite and may not be altered to suit an individual's tastes.

17.3 Language

In the Isle of Man divine service is required to be celebrated in English or in 'the vernacular' (ie. in Manx) (Canon B 42). The marriage service follows the same rules, and is therefore usually required to be in English (or Manx) whatever the parties' nationality.

However, it is also required that the parties should understand the vows tendered to them, and it follows that where a party does not understand English the vows should be repeated in that party's language.

17.4 Marriage of deaf persons

Occasionally a minister may be approached to conduct a wedding where either or both parties are deaf. There is no statutory guidance as to the conduct of such a wedding, but the minister needs to be satisfied that the parties understand the importance of the marriage ceremony and the promises they are making. Ministers who find themselves in such situations should get in touch with the Manx Deaf Society, who can offer support and advice as to the specific needs of deaf people.

The Diocesan Registrar makes the following suggestions:

- (i) At the ceremony itself, whenever possible the deaf party or parties to the marriage should be encouraged to speak their vows, even if initially they have to be communicated to them by sign language. Where a deaf person is unable to communicate verbally and makes the vows by signing them back to the interpreter, the interpreter should be encouraged to translate them directly so that the congregation, witnesses and minister hear the words being spoken.
- (ii) The interpreter to such a marriage should always be one of the witnesses to it. If there is any question in the future as to whether the marriage is defective by virtue of one of the parties being deaf and not understanding, such a person can be produced to testify as to the circumstances in which the marriage was conducted. If it is felt appropriate, the interpreter might be asked to complete a

statement indicating that the translation has been given truthfully and in his/her opinion the parties were aware of the undertakings they were giving. This could then be filed with the marriage registers. However, there is no statutory requirement for this to happen.

Care must be taken not to discriminate or act in an oppressive manner towards the deaf, and ministers should feel able to seek advice and support from the Archdeacon or the Manx Deaf Society when faced with situations such as these. As noted in 2.6 above, care must be taken not to impose on those seeking marriage additional requirements which frustrate their fundamental human right to be married in the context of national law. Above all, a minister should not arbitrarily impose different requirements on the deaf or any other disabled person; the law does not impose different requirements, and neither should a minister.

There is no legal requirement in the case of a marriage involving a deaf person that a sign language interpreter be present; all the minister has to be sure of is that the parties freely consent and understand the declarations they are making. It may be, of course, that this will not be able to be communicated to the minister without the help of an interpreter. The Bishop may give permission for the use of a service in British Sign Language in certain circumstances (Canon B 42); if it is desired to conduct a wedding in this way, the Bishop's permission should of course be obtained before the wedding takes place, and the officiating minister must have the requisite skill to conduct the marriage in British Sign Language (and have any necessary permissions to do so: see 18.3 below).

17.5 Witnesses

All marriages require at least two witnesses other than the officiating cleric. There is no statutory minimum age for witnesses to a marriage. Instead a view should be taken as to the maturity of the individual witness. He or she should understand that the ceremony is a marriage and be capable of testifying in court to that effect. There is also no requirement for a witness to be a British national. The witnesses must sign the marriage registers (see 20.3 below).

18 Ministers officiating at marriages

18.1 The requirement of a clerk in holy orders

In the Isle of Man Anglican marriage must be solemnized by a clerk in Holy Orders of the Church of England, Church in Wales, Church of Ireland or Scottish Episcopal Church (MA s.55). In addition, a member of the clergy ordained overseas who has permission from the Archbishop to officiate in the province of York has the same rights and privileges as a clerk in Holy Orders of the Church of England⁹.

However, as a matter of ecclesiastical discipline, other questions (set out below) also have to be considered before such a member of the clergy is invited or agrees to officiate.

⁹ Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967 s.1(2).

18.2 Deacons

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued guidelines in 1992 on the solemnization of marriage by deacons. They are appended to the current edition of the Canons. The officiant at Anglican marriages should normally be a bishop or priest, and a deacon may only officiate with the consent of the incumbent or minister. The rite, on such occasions, should be used without variation. A deacon should rarely, if ever, solemnize a marriage in the first year following ordination.

18.3 Visiting ministers

Where a marriage is proposed to be solemnized by a person from outside the regular clergy of the parish in question, the usual requirements for the exercise of ministry by visitors should be observed. Thus —

- (i) the incumbent, priest-in-charge or, during a vacancy, the mission partnership team leader and churchwardens must consent;
- (ii) if the minister chosen to officiate is in good standing and has not already officiated in the parish within the previous seven days, nor at any other time in the last three months, no special permission from the Bishop is required; otherwise the Bishop's consent is necessary (Canon C 8 para.2(a));
- (iii) if the minister was ordained by a Bishop outside the British Isles, the Archbishop of York must give permission for the exercise of ministry in his province (Canon C 8, para.5).

Also, if a special licence is being sought, the officiating minister must ensure that the parties' parish clergy have no objection (see 10.2 above).

18.4 Clergy licensed under the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967

Clergy licensed to an institution such as a school, college or hospital under the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967 may not solemnize marriages on the premises to which their licence relates except by special licence and with the consent of the incumbent of the parish in which the place is situate.

18.5 Participation of ministers of other denominations

It is by no means unusual for a couple to wish to involve a minister, or lay member, of another denomination in their Anglican marriage service. This is permissible to a certain extent under Canon B 43 but only the Anglican minister may solemnize the marriage.

A minister (or lay member in good standing) of another denomination may assist at the solemnisation of a marriage in the Isle of Man (Canon B 43 para.1(e)), but the invitation to do so may only be given by the incumbent at the request of the couple (Canon B 43 paras.1 & 2(b)). It would thus be incorrect for a couple to arrange for a minister, or lay member, of another denomination to assist in the marriage service without first consulting the incumbent, because the couple are not entitled to issue the invitation. To avoid any misunderstanding it is desirable that the need to request, and procedure for requesting, the incumbent's invitation and the circumstances in which it might be given be set out in guidance in the parish, so that it is readily available to couples when an inquiry about marrying in the church is first received.

The distinction between those matters, which must be dealt with by the Anglican minister solemnizing the marriage, and those in respect of which a minister of another denomination or lay member in good standing may be invited to assist, is set out in note 13 to the Common Worship marriage service. There it is made clear that it is the Church of England minister who must at least —

- (i) establish the absence of impediment;
- (ii) direct the exchange of vows;
- (iii) declare the existence of the marriage (i.e. pronounce them man and wife);
- (iv) say the final blessing; and
- (v) sign the registers.

There are various matters with which a minister of another denomination or lay person in good standing may be invited to assist, and the extent of participation is likely to vary from case to case. He or she may, of course, read a lesson or lead all or part of the prayers. Involvement might extend to such a minister saying all or part of the opening preface, but the Bishop's direction ought to be sought in relation to leading the declarations of intent, or supervising the exchange of rings. An additional blessing could be pronounced by the other minister, provided that it is within the liturgical discretion given by Canon B 5.

The final decision as to which elements of the service may be performed by the minister or member of another denomination rests with the incumbent. Care should be taken to ensure that no confusion arises to who is 'solemnizing' the marriage and who is merely 'assisting'. Note 13 also points out that where the couple come from different Christian communions the Bishop may authorise such variations to the marriage service as are set out in an *Order for the Marriage of Christians from Different Churches* which is published separately.

The participation of Anglican clergy in marriage services in non-Anglican churches is outside the scope of these notes: guidance is available from the Diocesan Registrar.

18.6 Captains of ships or aircraft

The Marriage Act 1984 gives no authority for the captains of ships or aircraft to solemnize Anglican marriage.

19 Objections at the marriage service

19.1 Parental dissent

Objections to banns are covered at 7.10 above. The dissent of a qualified person may render the publication of banns void and the proposed marriage unlawful. Although the marriage service itself contains a rather similar invitation to the congregation to declare impediments, the effect of any objection that may be voiced is quite different.

See also the effect of a caveat against the issue of a common licence at 9.8 above.

An objection at the marriage service cannot render ineffective a previously valid publication of banns (or a common licence or special licence). A parent who has failed to

object to the bans for a minor child's proposed marriage cannot, by dissenting at the marriage service itself, make the marriage unlawful or take away the child's right to marry. Such dissent should therefore be handled with great care. It will normally be pastorally justifiable to adjourn into the vestry for the matter to be investigated and discussed between clergy, parents and couple; but if the couple finally decide to proceed the minister should follow their wishes.

19.2 Other alleged impediments

As well as parental dissent, other legal impediments may be alleged eg. —

- that a party will be under 16 at the date of the marriage,
- that the parties are within the 'prohibited degrees' (see section 13),
- that a party is mentally incapable of giving consent to marriage,
- that the marriage will be bigamous.

A clear prima facie case should be made if the minister is to delay the service, and where such a case is made (or if in any doubt) the minister should seek advice from the Diocesan Registrar as soon as possible.

Under the Prayer Book rubric, the objector is obliged to give security for the costs that the parties may sustain (both in dealing with his or her allegation and on account of the delay in the marriage). He or she can either deposit the required sum forthwith, or undertake to pay it if his or her allegations are held to be unfounded or show no valid impediment. In the latter event, sureties of known financial standing may be required to guarantee the undertaking. Obviously it is extremely difficult for the clergy to assess such costs, and undesirable for a lengthy financial discussion to take place in the service. The objector's willingness in principle to bear costs, coupled with a prima facie case, should be enough to warrant a reference to the Diocesan Registrar.

19.3 Persistent objectors

Objections not covered by the above should not be allowed to delay the service. The minister should indicate politely that the objection is noted, but that he or she intends to proceed. Afterwards the facts may be reported to the registrar or the Bishop if it seems appropriate. If the minister has indicated that he or she intends to proceed but the objector seems set to prevent him or her doing so, the objector should be dealt with in the same way as any other disturber of public worship.

20 Registration

20.1 The duty to register; provision of register books

Following an Anglican marriage, it is the duty of the officiating minister to register the marriage immediately in duplicate books supplied for the purpose. The Registrar General is responsible for supplying register books to the minister in charge of every church or chapel authorised for marriages (see 3.1 above). (MA ss.40-42)

20.2 Which books to use

Where a marriage takes place in a building which has its own register books, the books of that building are to be used.

Where a marriage takes place in a building which has no register books, see Appendix 4.

20.3 Entries in registers

Entries in marriage register books must contain all the details required by the printed form; the couple are required to provide these details on request. An entry must be signed by the couple, the officiating minister and two witnesses (MA s.42). The words used as to the method of marriage should be 'after banns', 'by common licence' or 'by special licence', as the case may be; not merely 'by licence' or 'by ecclesiastical licence'.

For further guidance, see Appendix 4.

20.4 Corrections in registers

An entry is not complete until signed by the minister; any error discovered before the minister signs may be corrected forthwith, so that the error and the correction are both legible.

Corrections to entries after the minister has signed may be made (by a note in the margin of the register, without altering the original entry) within one month after the error is discovered. The minister who has custody of the registers (who need not be the minister who made the entry) must make, sign and date the correction in both register books. The correction is to be made in the presence of the married couple, who must also sign the correction; if the couple cannot both attend when the correction is made, the correction is to be made in the presence of the Registrar General and two witnesses, who must sign the correction. (MA s.46)

For further guidance, see Appendix 4.

20.5 Custody of registers; quarterly returns; completed books

The minister in charge of each church or chapel with its own register books is required to keep the books in safe custody (MA s.44). He must also deliver a quarterly return of entries to the Registrar General (MA s.43). Whenever a book is full, one of the duplicate copies is to be delivered to the Registrar General and the other kept in the church (unless or until it is required to be deposited in the diocesan record office under the Church Records Measure (Isle of Man) 2000) (MA s.45).

For further guidance, see Appendix 4.

20.6 Searches, certificates and fees

So long as a minister has custody of a register book (original or duplicate), he is required to permit searches in the book at reasonable times, and to give a signed certificate of any entry (MA s.48). Fees for searches are prescribed by the current Parochial Fees Order; fees for certificates are prescribed by the Treasury of the Isle of Man (MA s.51(5)).

21 Fees for marriage

Where Anglican marriage takes place in a parish church, PCW or licensed building, fees are payable in accordance with the current Parochial Fees Order made by the Sodor and Man Diocesan Board of Finance. These fees are divided in accordance with the Order between the Board and the parochial church council. The fees due to the Board cover the incumbent's registration duties as well officiating at the marriage.

The statutory fees do not include any charges for optional extras such as music (eg. provision of an organist or choir), bells, flowers and special heating, which are fixed by the parochial church council. They are matters for agreement between the incumbent and the couple and should be itemised separately.

APPENDIX 1

**DIOCESE OF SODOR AND MAN
NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR BANS OF MARRIAGE**

(This form may also be used for a marriage by common licence or registrar's certificate)

*Date and time of intended marriage	20	*Church where marriage is to be solemnized	
	am/pm		
Couple	Man		Woman
*Full name (in block capitals)			
*Address at time banns are to be published (see note 1)			
*How long at this address?			
*Email address			
*Telephone no.			
*Parish			
Date of birth			
Condition (see note 2)			
*Nationality (see note 3)			
*Evidence of nationality produced (see note 4)			
Occupation			
Are you related, or connected by marriage? If so, how?			
Father's full name and occupation (see note 5)			
Mother's full name and occupation (see note 5)			
See note 6	I certify that, to the best of my belief, the particulars given above are correct		
Signatures			
For use by clergy			
Dates for banns			

*Only these sections need be completed if the marriage is to take place in another parish.

APPENDIX 1

Notes:

1. This form, duly completed, must be delivered to the minister before the banns are published.
2. Insert one of the following:
 - Single
 - Widower or Widow
 - Surviving civil partner
 - Previous marriage annulled
 - Previous civil partnership annulled
 - Previous marriage dissolved
 - Previous civil partnership dissolved
3. State nationality correctly (eg. as shown on passport). "Manx" is not acceptable.
4. The evidence of British, Irish or other nationality produced by each party must be stated (see Marriage (Evidence of Nationality) Regulations 2023).
5. "Deceased" or "retired" alone is not sufficient.
6. Information on this form will be used to complete the registers of marriage. Under section 3 of the Perjury Act 1952, if any person knowingly and wilfully makes, for the purpose of being inserted in a register of marriage, a false statement as to any particular required by law to be registered relating to a marriage, he or she is guilty of an offence and liable to custody for up to 7 years and/or an unlimited fine.

Privacy notice

If banns of marriage are to be published, they will include some of the information on this form.

As noted above, information on this form will be used to complete the registers of marriage. Those registers are public documents and available for inspection by any person.

In addition, personal data relating to identity, nationality and immigration status may be shared with the Civil Registry and the immigration authorities.

APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES FOR THE GRANTING OF SPECIAL LICENCES

These guidelines are annexed to the forms of application for a special licence, obtainable from the Diocesan Registrar. The forms comprise form SL1 (to be completed by the couple), form SL2 (to be completed by the officiating minister) and form SL3 (to be completed by an appropriate official where either party does not live in the Isle of Man).

General

- 1 Special licences will not be granted —
 - to facilitate illegal or undesirable marriages, or
 - to secure privacy or secrecy for a marriage, or
 - to relax or modify generally the statutory restrictions on marriage after banns or by common licence issued by a Surrogate for Marriages.
- 2 Special licences may be used to facilitate a marriage in church which might otherwise be difficult or impossible, or to allow a marriage at Bishops court Chapel or King William's College Chapel.
- 3 The grant of a Special Licence is a privilege not a right.
- 4 Where any other legal marriage preliminary (Banns or Common Licence) is appropriate, a Special licence is unlikely to be granted.
- 5 Clergy must ensure that couples who are married by special licence should be prepared for marriage, and be assured of the support of the Church in their family life thereafter.
- 6 Due regard will be had to the extra burden which special licences impose on the parochial clergy. No application will be considered unless SL2 has been completed by the minister who is to officiate.

Sickness

- 7 Consideration will be given to the granting of a special licence for the marriage, in a hospital, hospice or at home, of a party who is chronically sick or dying; the current fee is payable.

Unconsecrated places

- 8 Special licences will not be granted for marriages... —
 - at a place approved by the Registrar General for civil marriages, or
 - at any other unconsecrated place, except in the case of a party who is chronically sick or dying, or in exceptional circumstances.

Consecrated buildings

- 9 Marriage in a consecrated building will not be permitted without reasonable justification, which should normally be a genuine and longstanding personal connection, determined in accordance with paragraph 11 below.

- 10 Wedding tourism is discouraged. The fact that a church or chapel is an attractive location cannot be regarded as a sufficient justification.

Parish churches and licensed chapels

- 11 A special licence is not required for marriage at a parish church or licensed chapel which is the parish church or usual place of worship of either party, or at a parish church of a parish with which either party has a qualifying connection. A special licence will not be granted for a wedding at another church or chapel unless —
- one party can show a genuine and longstanding personal connection to the church building where he or she wishes to be married and its congregation or worshipping community; or
 - the parties wish to be married by the incumbent or priest in charge because of a demonstrable strong family or other personal connection with him or her as an individual.

Former parish churches and chapels of ease

- 12 A person who is an habitual worshipper at a former parish church or chapel of ease should normally be permitted to marry there. Otherwise, the same criteria should be applied as for parish churches and licensed chapels.

Bishopscourt Chapel

- 13 A special licence may be granted for a wedding in the Chapel at Bishopscourt of:
- persons eligible to be married in Kirk Michael after banns,
 - the owner,
 - the father, mother, child or grandchild of the owner,
 - a present member of staff at Bishopscourt,
 - a child of a present member of staff.

The incumbent of the parish of the West Coast must be consulted and counter-sign Form SL2, and should ensure that the priest conducting the wedding will undertake to provide good preparation and on-going pastoral support.

The marriage must be recorded in the marriage registers of Kirk Michael.

King William's College Chapel

- 14 A special licence may be granted for a marriage in the College Chapel of a person with a close connection to the College community:
- a current or former pupil,
 - a current or former member of staff,
 - a parent of a current pupil.

The incumbent of Arbory and Castletown must be consulted and counter-sign Form SL2. The Chaplain should ensure that the priest conducting the wedding, whether the Chaplain or a visiting cleric, will undertake to provide good preparation and on-going pastoral support.

The marriage must be recorded in the marriage registers of St Mary's on the Harbour, Castletown.

Notes to the Clergy

1. When a marriage by special licence has been solemnized, the minister may give the original licence to the couple provided that he or she endorses it in permanent ink, as follows:

Marriage solemnized on [date] at [place] by me, [signature.]

The copy licence must be returned, identically endorsed, to the Diocesan Registrar.

2. Clergy and parishes are warmly encouraged to contact the Bishop's Office for further guidance and resources.
3. In order to establish a contact between couples and the local Anglican parish near to their married home, please use A Church Near You.¹⁰

¹⁰ <http://www.achurchnearyou.com>

APPENDIX 3

DIOCESE OF SODOR AND MAN

Marriage in church after divorce when former spouse is still living

ADVICE ISSUED BY THE BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN

All marriage is holy. The Church recognises all marriages as "holy matrimony", whether celebrated in Church or a civil ceremony. However, there is something very special about marriage in Church because vows are made in the sight of God and his blessing is given to the marriage.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught that all marriages should last for life and the Church clearly upholds his teaching on this: so a wedding in Church is based clearly on the couple's intention that marriage should last until the death of one partner. On the other hand, many parts of the Church recognise that marriages can 'die' and divorce is sometimes a sad reality.

The Church of England acknowledges that "there are circumstances in which a divorcee may be married in church during the lifetime of a former spouse". The assumption behind any marriage in these circumstances is that:

- neither party had been involved in the break-up of the previous marriage of the other party;
- all children are being properly cared for;
- the divorced party or parties have learned from his, her or their experience of the previous marriage or marriages and its ending, so that the new marriage will benefit from the sad experience; and
- the couple understand the Christian gospel of forgiveness and hope for the future in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The parish priest will spend time discussing these issues with the couple before making a decision as to whether they may be married in Church. Clergy must see the originals of the provisional and final orders of divorce (formerly decrees nisi and absolute). In the unlikely event of a difference of opinion the couple and/or the minister may contact the Bishop and ask for a discussion with him.

In certain cases it may be more appropriate for couples to ask for a service of Prayer and Dedication after a civil marriage – and this does not have to take place immediately after the marriage.

It must be understood that the marriage in church of a divorced person during the lifetime of a former spouse is an exception and not the norm.

The Church of Jesus Christ is a body of people who know that they are forgiven sinners and that no-one is beyond the love of God.

*+ Robert Sodor as Mannin
10 August 2009*

APPENDIX 4

REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGES

These notes are based on the General Register Office's Guidebook for the Clergy, adapted for the Isle of Man with the assistance of the Civil Registry.

Marriage registers

1. Section 40 of the Marriage Act 1984 requires that the marriage must be registered in duplicate immediately after the ceremony has taken place.
1. Where a marriage takes place in a building which has its own set of registers, these must be used.
2. Where the parish church is temporarily closed for repairs or rebuilding and the Bishop has directed under MA s.14(3) that banns be published and marriages take place in another building which has no registers, the registers of the closed building should be used.
3. Where a marriage takes place by special licence in a building which has no registers, the registers of the parish church should be used. The minister of the parish church should make the registers available to the officiating minister (if different), on request and with as much notice as is practicable.
4. If the building is being shared with a non-conformist denomination the registers issued to them must not be used.
5. The entry must only be completed by the Clerk in Holy Orders who solemnised the marriage ceremony.
6. The entry must be in the next available numbered blank space in each duplicate register using registration ink. If you make the entry at different places in the two registers, please do not alter the numbers. Instead, make a note in the margins of both books of the entry number to refer to in the other register eg. *"This marriage is recorded at entry number in the duplicate register"*.
7. If you need to spoil an entry, please ring the Civil Registry for advice.
8. In the case of churches of newly-created ecclesiastical parishes or of chapels newly licensed for marriages by the Bishop, assurance is required from the Diocesan Registrar or from some other authoritative source that marriages may lawfully be solemnized therein before the register books are supplied to the minister.

Commencement of entries

9. In no circumstances should an entry be written in a register book until the marriage to which it relates has been legally completed.

Completing the register entries

10. Register entries should always be completed in blue/black registration ink and in distinct and clear handwriting; surnames should be in capital letters. Abbreviations should not be used, except for signatures. Every space must be completed without overlapping into the next space. If no information is given a line should be drawn in the space.

PART I — PARTICULARS OF MARRIAGE

Space 1 — Date of marriage

11. The date of the marriage is to be written as number, month and year, eg. 05 June 2025.

Space 2 — Place of marriage

12. The dedication and location of the church or chapel should be entered, eg. *Parish church of St Andrew, Andreas*. In the case of a marriage by special licence at a hospital or other place, its proper or usual name should be entered. Do not include 'Isle of Man', but include the postcode.

Space 3 — Full names

13. The man's names must be recorded in the left-hand column and the woman's in the right-hand column. The surnames should be written in capital letters.
14. The names will usually be those entered on the banns form or common licence, but you should enter them in accordance with the information given by the parties and not that contained in the documentation.
15. Sometimes a person uses, and is known by, two names at the same time: in this case both names should be entered using "*otherwise*" (do not write 'A.K.A.' for 'also known as'). If either of the couple has been known by another name you should try to link both names using "*formerly known as*" provided that the party does not object. If the party does object, you should advise them that unless both names are entered, difficulties may arise in future years concerning the identity of the party. If the party still objects, you should enter the name and surname by which he or she is known.
16. Where one of the parties have changed their name by deed poll and it has been registered with the Civil Registry, the assumed name and surname only should be entered followed by "*(name changed by deed poll formerly ...)*". You should inspect the copy deed poll issued by the Registry, which will bear the stamp of the Registry.

Space 4 — Age

17. Enter the ages of the couples in completed years followed by the word "*years*" (all lower case) eg. *25 years*.

Space 5 — Sex

18. Enter gender of person.

Space 6 — condition

19. Confirm the condition of the couple and enter it using one of the following descriptions:

- Never previously married or formed a civil partnership *Single*
- Married or formed a civil partnership before but:
 - husband/wife has died *Widow or Widower*
 - civil partner has died *Surviving civil partner*
 - a court has made an order of presumption of death and dissolved the marriage *Previous marriage dissolved*
 - a court has made an order of presumption of death and dissolved the civil partnership *Previous civil partnership dissolved*

marriage has ended in divorce	<i>Previous marriage dissolved</i>
the couple were previously married to each other and the marriage ended in divorce and there has been no intervening marriage	<i>Previously married at on Marriage dissolved on (inserting the particulars of the place and date of the previous marriage and the date of its dissolution)</i>
the couple re-marry where there is doubt as to the validity of a previous ceremony	<i>Previously went through a form of marriage at on (inserting the particulars of the place and date of the previous ceremony)</i>
civil partnership has ended in dissolution	<i>Previous civil partnership dissolved</i>
marriage is void or found void by a final annulment order of a court	use the condition which applied before the void marriage eg. <i>Single or Widow</i>
civil partnership is void and has been annulled by a final annulment order by a court	use the condition which applied before the void civil partnership eg. <i>Single</i>
marriage was voidable and has been annulled by a court and the final annulment order was made (or decree absolute of nullity was granted) on or after 1 April 1976	<i>Previous marriage annulled</i>
marriage was voidable and has been annulled by a court and the decree absolute of nullity was granted before 1 April 1976	use the description which applied before the voidable marriage eg. <i>Widower or Previous marriage dissolved</i>
civil partnership was voidable and has been annulled by a final annulment order of a court	<i>Previous civil partnership annulled</i>

- Married to each other twice in one day. When registering the second ceremony enter the condition of the couple at the start of the day before the first marriage.

20. There may be occasions where the parties to a marriage have validly registered a civil partnership to each other, the civil partnership has been ended by dissolution or annulment, and there has been no marriage or civil partnership with a third person. Unless the civil partnership was formed at a time when civil partnerships between persons of opposite genders was permitted (eg. in the Isle of Man on or after 22 July 2016), a reference to the previous civil partnership would disclose that one of the parties has changed gender. However, if both parties specifically request that the registration refers to their previous civil partnership, you should advise them that it will show that one of them has changed gender, and you should use one of the following descriptions:

civil partnership terminated by dissolution	<i>Previously formed a civil partnership at on Civil partnership dissolved on</i>
civil partnership terminated by annulment order of a court	<i>Previously formed a civil partnership at on Civil partnership annulled on</i>

For further advice, please contact the Civil Registry.

Space 7 — Occupation

21. You need to record the occupations of both parties at the time of the ceremony, in as much detail as possible. The occupation of the person at the time of the ceremony. If the person is unemployed put a horizontal line through the box. Some professions will need more information e.g. *Manager* or *Engineer*: what is the person managing, or what type of engineer? *Homemaker* if not previously married otherwise *Househusband* or *Housewife*.

Space 8 — Residence at the time of marriage

22. Enter the current full addresses of the couple. Please write a full address for both the bride and groom even if they live at the same address. Please do not use ditto marks or 'as above'. Do not include 'Isle of Man', but include the postcode.

Space 9 — Father's full name and occupation

23. Enter the full names of both fathers. The name of a person's natural father should be entered, regardless of whether the person's parents were ever married to one another.
24. The term father may also include step-father, as long as he is or has been married to the mother. You may enter the step-father's name (qualified by *step-father*) instead of the natural father's name if either party requests you do so.
25. If either father has died, you should note this after his name eg. *John Smith (deceased)*.
26. If one of the couple has been adopted, the adoptive father's name can be recorded if:
- the adoptive father and son or daughter have the same surname; use that father's name with no further explanation needed.
 - the adoptive father's name is different; an explanation may be added if wished eg. *George Barnes (adoptive father)*.
27. If a woman was the sole adopter, her name should be entered in space 10 as indicated below, and a line drawn in space 9.
28. If either of the couple does not wish to supply his or her father's details you should put a horizontal line in the box.
29. Enter a full description of the occupation of each father. If the father has retired, note this under his occupation eg. *car salesman (retired)*. You should enter this even if the father has since died. Do not use abbreviations (eg. *HGV driver*).
30. If either of the couple does not wish to supply this information you should put a horizontal line in the box.

Space 10 — Mother's full name and occupation

31. Enter the full names of both mothers.
32. If either mother has died, you should note this after her name eg. *Janet Smith (deceased)*.

33. If one of the couple has been adopted, the adoptive mother's name can be recorded if:
- the adoptive mother and son or daughter have the same surname; use that mother's name with no further explanation needed;
 - the adoptive mother's name is different; an explanation may be added if wished eg. *Mary Barnes (adoptive mother)*;
 - a woman was the sole adopter; her name should be entered in space 10 as indicated below, and a line drawn in space 9.
34. If either of the couple does not wish to supply his or her mother's details you should put a horizontal line in the box.

PART 2 — PARTICULARS OF ATTESTATION

35. In the line commencing 'Married [by][after]' the authority for marriage must always be recorded eg. *after banns, by common licence, by special licence* (if the authority was a special licence of the Bishop of Sodor and Man) or *by registrar's certificate*.
36. After the words 'according to the rites and ceremonies of' the words *the Church of England* must be inserted.

Examination of entry by the parties to the marriage

37. The minister should then ask the couple to examine the entry carefully. If they cannot read it should be read to them.

Signing the entry

38. The entry in both registers must be checked carefully with the parties to ensure that they are both correct. If a discrepancy is found at this stage, it can be amended by a numbered correction. It is important at this stage that the minister explains to the parties that if an error is identified after the entry has been signed it may only be corrected by the addition of a note in the margin.

When the couple are satisfied that the entry is correct they must sign the attestation in their usual manner.

Each of the two witnesses then signs the entry in normal handwriting, giving his or her full name. If a signature is illegible, print the name in pencil in the margin of the entry.

Where a person makes a mark or signs in a foreign language, you should write either

- *the mark of*

or

- *the signature of*

next to the mark or signature and then insert the forenames and surnames of that person.

39. Once the minister is satisfied that the entries are correct, he or she must add his or her name in normal handwriting so that it is legible to all who read it, as well as his or her designation; eg. *'Rector', 'Vicar',* etc. When a marriage is solemnized by the incumbent or curate of a parish other than that in which the marriage takes place he or she should describe himself or herself in the attestation as *'[Rector][Vicar][Curate] of*' adding the name of his or her benefice or parish. The entry is only complete when the officiating minister has added his or her signature and designation.

40. The couple or the witnesses should not be asked to sign the marriage certificate or quarterly return.

Filled register books

41. Once a set of registers is full, the minister should keep one in the safe and deposit the other with the Civil Registry.

Searching and issuing certificates

42. Every minister who has marriage registers in his or her custody must allow searches to be made "at all reasonable hours" (MA s.48). Any search should be made by or in the presence of the minister or a churchwarden or other church official. Where a search is required in completed registers which have been deposited with the Civil Registry or the Manx Museum, the location of these registers should be provided.
43. The minister is also allowed to issue a certified copy of any entry in those registers (MA s.48). Any certificates issued to the public must be issued on the certificate stock supplied by the Civil Registry and be complete copies of the original entries, including any corrections (marginal notes). Do not include numbered errors in a copy of a marriage entry if they were made before the entry was completed. A certificate is the only format in which you can release data held in marriage registers. If you are asked to release data in any other format please contact the Civil Registry for further advice.
44. If an error is made when issuing a certificate, the certificate must be spoilt and a fresh one written. This is done by noting the counterfoil and disposing of the certificate in a secure manner. Further guidance on this practice can be obtained from the Civil Registry.
45. Any certificate issued must be signed by the minister of the church, or another cleric licensed to the church.

Register from which copies are to be made

46. When an error has been made in one book only, a certified copy of the entry should be made from the book containing the correct entry. The marginal error-numbers will not, therefore, always run consecutively in the certified copies.

Corrections

47. There are two types of corrections — those discovered before the entry is complete and those discovered afterwards (an entry is complete after the minister has signed it and added his or her official designation). For any error, there is a formal procedure, and a correction must not be made by overwriting or rubbing it out.
48. For errors in the heading of the entry or to cancel entries, please ring the Civil Registry for advice.

Before the entry is complete

Numbered corrections

49. All errors should be numbered consecutively throughout the register. When you make a correction, you should write the number of the error in figures beside it and repeat the number in words in the margin, with your initials. For example:
- if a word is incorrect, draw a line through it and write the correct word above it eg.

Space 3

margin

Ann (1)

~~Ann~~ SMITH

One and your initials

- if a word has been omitted either insert a caret (^) where the word should be and write the missed out word immediately above, or if there is enough space to write the word insert it eg.

Space 3

John (2)
Peter^SMITH

OR

Peter John Smith (2)

margin

Two and your initials

Two and your initials

- if any group of figures is wrong you should strike through the whole group and replace with the correct figures above eg.

Space 1

2020 (3)
~~2019~~

Four and your initials

- if one of the parties or witnesses has made an error in his or her signature, ask him or her to sign again and number the correction accordingly.

50. A numbered correction can only be made before the entry has been completed.

Particulars transposed

51. If you have transposed the particulars into the wrong spaces or columns you should write in the margin of the entry "*The particulars in spaces/columns and inadvertently transposed*" and initial it.

Errors in duplicate registers

52. Errors and corrections should not be repeated for the sake of uniformity and therefore the numbering of errors may not match in both registers.

53. All errors as outlined above must be reproduced in quarterly certified copies.

After the entry is complete

54. If an error is discovered in the registers after the entry is complete, the couple may wish to have it corrected. You may not do this more than one month after the error is discovered, and in any case, before doing so, you should notify the Civil Registry and seek their advice.

55. There are certain legal requirements for all corrections:

- All corrections must be made in the margin without altering the original details.
- Corrections must be made in the presence of the parties married. In the absence of one or both of the parties the correction can be made in the presence of the Registrar General and two credible witnesses, who should have personal knowledge of the facts of the case.
- The marginal note must be signed by the persons in whose presence it is made and by the minister, along with their designation and date of the correction.
- Corrections must be made in both duplicate registers (if the error occurs in both); if one register has already been deposited with the Civil Registry or the Manx Museum, they will, at your request, arrange for it to be released to you.

- The quarterly certified copies should also be updated; if they have already been sent to the Civil Registry or the Manx Museum, you must send details of the correction to the Civil Registry.

Quarterly certified copies

Preparation of quarterly copies

56. At the end of every quarter (March, June, September and December) the Minister must send to the Civil Registry a certified copy of every entry made in the preceding quarter (MA s.43). The statutory fee for the returns will be paid by the Registrar General direct to the Diocesan Board of Finance.
57. If no marriages have been registered during the quarter, you will need to complete and send a 'Nil Return' form, available from the Civil Registry.
58. When preparing your quarterly copies, please use registration ink and copy all marginal notes and error numbers exactly as they appear on the marriage entry.

Copies for each quarter to be kept separate

59. Only enter marriages from the same quarter onto a quarterly copy form. If an entry from a previous quarter has been missed in the last return please use a new quarterly return sheet.
60. Prepare and keep copies in register order. If any entries have been inadvertently missed out, reproduce these in their proper numerical order.
61. The copies must be exact copies of all the information in the entry including every correction, misspelling, marginal note and number. Copies of signatures must be legible. If a signature is in foreign characters, you should add "*The signature of*" (full name and surname) and copy it as best you can.

Register from which copies are to be made

62. When an error has been made in one book only, any certified copy of the entry should be made from the book containing the correct entry. The marginal error-numbers will not, therefore, always run consecutively in the certified copies.

Errors in quarterly copies

63. Any copying error found to have been made in the preparation of the quarterly copies should, if possible, be rectified by striking out the error made in the quarterly copy and inserting above it the correct particulars as shown in the original entry. (This procedure applies only to the correction of copying errors made during the preparation of quarterly copies — for guidance on correcting of errors in the register, see paragraphs 47-55.)

Certification of copies

64. When you have completed the copies, check that they agree with the originals and then sign and add your designation to the form of certification at the bottom of the second page of each sheet. We will not accept copies without your signature.
65. You need to ensure that the date of certification is not earlier than the date of any note in the margin.

FURTHER QUERIES

66. If you have any further queries, please contact the Civil Registry at civil.registry@gov.im or phone on 01624 687039.