# Archdeacons' Briefing No 1 August 2008

Welcome to a first edition of **Archdeacons' Briefing** which we hope will offer straightforward and useful advice on appropriate topics as and when necessary. This particular note relates to the new Marriage Legislation that comes into effect on 1st October 2008. The notes are taken from the Church of England website (www.cofe.anglican.org) and provide links ***(Press control and click on highlighted areas)*** to all the relevant documents. Should you have any difficulty accessing these or would like any further advice or help on these matters please don't hesitate to get in touch with us direct.

Geoff and Peter

**The Marriage Measure and Marriage Law Review**

The Church of England has been considering for some time possible alternatives to the calling of banns and widening the choice of places in which couples can marry. The Marriage Law working group was established by the Archbishops Council in October 2002 following the debate in the General Synod in July 2002 on The Challenge to Change. The details of the proposals and the means by which the Marriage Law working group envisaged that church legislation would give effect to them were inextricably bound up with Government proposals to reform the civil registration system. However, when the Government decided not to proceed with their reforms, the group embarked on a more limited programme of reform regarding the place of marriage and certain ecumenical issues relating in a new marriage measure.

In July 2007, the General Synod overwhelmingly passed the Church of England Marriage Measure and it received the Royal Assent on 22nd May. The Archbishops have now signed an instrument bringing all the provisions of the Measure into force from **1st October 2008.**

The Measure seeks to respond to changing social conditions and in particular to the increasing mobility of our society today. It does not affect the existing right of parishioners. A couple continue to have the right to be married in the parish church of a parish where one or both of them are resident or entered on the electoral roll.

However some people would like to marry in a church because it has special significance for them, even though it is not where they live. This measure enables a church to offer the same welcome to a couple who wish to marry there and who can demonstrate a straightforward connection with the parish as it does to those who live in the parish itself, without the couple having to apply for a special licence.

The object of the Measure is to grant couples the same right to marry in the parish church of a parish with which one or both of them can demonstrate a "qualifying connection" of a kind specified in the new legislation as a person resident in the parish would have.

A person has a Qualifying Connection with a parish if:

**that person:**

- was baptised in the parish. (This does not apply where the baptism formed part of a combined service of baptism or confirmation); or
- had his or her confirmation entered in a church register book of a church or chapel in the parish; or
- has at any time had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least 6 months; or
- has at any time habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least 6 months;

**or**

- a Parent of that person has at any time during that person's lifetime:
- had his or her usual place of residence in the parish for at least 6 months; or
- habitually attended public worship in the parish for at least 6 months;

**or**

- a Parent or Grandparent of that person was married in the parish.

In all these cases/In all cases involving church services - i.e. coming to/going to/attending normal church services, baptism, confirmation or marriage - this applies only to Church of England services.

A copy of the Marriage Measure legislation can be found at

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/uk-church-measures/cm-2008-index

In consequence, the House of Bishops has now issued the guidance required by s.3 of the Measure. A pdf of the guidance can be found at
http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/marriagefamily/marriageanddivorce/marriagemeasure/cemmguidance.pdf

and a word document containing a specimen welcome form for the use of parishes and couples can be found at
http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/marriagefamily/marriageanddivorce/marriagemeasure/marriagewelc.doc

The Marriage Measure will change the mission landscape with respect to church weddings. It offers the Church an opportunity to clarify, reissue and celebrate its wider welcome, so as to meet the needs of couples requesting church weddings better and to integrate more of them into the ongoing life of the local church. CME training on law, theology and preparation for marriage is already available for dioceses. However the Archbishops' Council has also initiated 'the Weddings Project' which is intended to help grasp this opportunity. It is focusing consultation, training and research on two trial dioceses, Bradford and part of Oxford, and two Cambridge theological colleges, Ridley Hall and Westcott Houses. Resources and learning from the two year project will then be offered to the whole Church.

**Notes on people who are marrying by virtue of connection with parish**

You can find a full copy of the Guidance from the House of Bishops re the Marriage Measure 2008 at:

http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/marriagefamily/marriageanddivorce/marriagemeasure/cemmguidance.pdf

To save you wading through it all (but it is a useful reference), on p.5 the guidance re the wording at the reading of banns is given thus:

" (*usual intro*) N … of the parish of X who wishes to be married in this church by virtue of his/her connection with this parish";