

More choice for church weddings



“Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love.” William Shakespeare

A new year dawns and with it the opportunity, by God’s grace, to continue to love and even perhaps, to find a new love. For those wishing to marry in church within our Benefice, there is now the possibility to marry in any one of our five churches. Up until now, couples have been limited to marrying within their own Parish Church or a church with which they have a qualifying connection but not the option of being able to choose to marry within any church that falls under the jurisdiction of their Vicar. In recent months our Parochial Church Councils had all agreed to apply to the Bishop of St Albans for what is known as a Section 23 Order, which has now been granted. In practice, this means that a couple’s banns may now be called in any of the churches, though usually in the church where they are to be married, as well as offering more choice regarding the venue for the big day. We are blessed with five stunningly beautiful churches, all of architectural merit within their right, including St Lawrence’s, Ardeley, St Peter’s, Benington, St John the Baptist, Cottered, Holy Trinity, Throcking and St Mary the Virgin, Walkern.

For those who choose to marry in exotic places overseas or grand hotels closer to home, there is also the option of having your marriage blessed locally in church. This often means being able to invite folks whom you may not have been able to include on the day of your wedding. A Service of Blessing is also available for those who wish to renew their marriage vows around the time of special anniversaries – though every wedding anniversary is special!

Post-Covid, further changes are afoot regarding the possibility of being able to be married outside. The experience of needing to meet in fresh air during the pandemic has enabled a re-think when it comes to where you can be married, currently limited to licensed buildings. The law is now set to change which will allow weddings to take place in outdoor spaces such as botanical gardens etc and more likely than not will also include churchyards. This will be a first and I'm sure will be popular with many couples.

At present marriage in Church of England churches is limited to heterosexual couples. The debate on same sex marriage however is beginning to shift with some senior bishops now calling for the Church to become more inclusive and aligned with the norms in everyday society. Over 1000 clergy, including myself, have now stated publicly that they would be willing to marry same sex couples in church once this becomes legal. I'm hopeful that this day now draws nearer.

If you would like any further information on any of the above, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

God Bless

Revd Mark Bailey