

Monday 13th September 2021

Esgob
Llanelwy
The Bishop of
St Asaph



LETTER OF AUTHORISATION
FOR THE USE OF A SERVICE OF BLESSING
FOLLOWING A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP OR MARRIAGE OF A SAME SEX COUPLE

Dear Colleagues,

You will probably be aware that last week Governing Body passed a Canon permitting the bishops to authorise the experimental use of a Service of Blessing for a Civil Partnership or Marriage between two people of the same sex.

By this letter I am now communicating to you that I am, in line with my colleague bishops on the bench in their own dioceses, authorising the Service for use in this diocese for the next five years from 1st October 2021, with the following guidance.

1. The service can only be used for those same sex couples who have already contracted a civil partnership or marriage recognised by the civil law of England and Wales. In circumstances where this might not apply because a civil partnership or marriage has been contracted in another jurisdiction not recognised by the law of England and Wales, I should be consulted to offer further guidance.
2. The service may be offered in either or both languages in any Church building of the Church in Wales, or in another permitted location, such as after a registration of a same sex civil partnership or marriage at a hotel or marriage venue has been completed.
3. There will be no residency requirement in respect to the use of a particular church building, although it is expected that couples should be able to demonstrate some connection with the Church building or congregation at which they request the use of the service.
4. There is no time limit following any civil ceremony as to when the service may be requested, and we may expect, in the early stages, to be approached by couples who have made these commitments long before the advent of this service.
5. The experimental Order of Service has been developed by SLAC in consultation with the bishops, and authorised in its current form by Governing Body. It should be used as given, and without further addition or amendment. There are a number of



Gregory K Cameron * Esgob Llanelwy * Bishop of St Asaph
Esgobty, Llanelwy St Asaph, LL17 0TW * 01745 583503 * bishop.stasaph@churchinwales.org.uk

alternatives given in the rite, and clergy should advise couples about their use. In particular, where couples wish to repeat the vows made in their civil ceremony, it is expected that the text of such vows or declarations will be agreed beforehand with the officiating minister to ensure that they are consistent with a broad and inclusive understanding of the credal statements of the Church in Wales. The bishops also expect such vows or declarations to be consonant with the commitments to permanency, fidelity and mutuality already understood for couples getting married according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church in Wales.

6. After the experimental period, SLAC may be invited to develop a definitive rite. You are therefore encouraged to keep a record of any observations you or the couples concerned or participating congregations wish to make in response to the use of the rite, for possible submission to and consideration by SLAC in due course.
7. The officiating minister at the service shall always be an incumbent or priest-in-charge in this diocese or the holder of a current licence from me or my predecessors. Where other ministers of the Church in Wales or of another Church, which is a member of Cytun or of the Anglican Communion, are requested to participate, it will be at the invitation and discretion of the incumbent or priest-in-charge responsible for the Church building being used. Lay or clergy friends and relatives of the couple may participate in those elements of the service which are similar to those undertaken by lay people at other services and liturgies of the Church in Wales. As bishop, I may be consulted for further advice or determination if needed.
8. No cleric of the Church in Wales is obliged to officiate at this service. In circumstances where a cleric does not feel able to officiate at a Service requested by any couple, he or she shall refer the matter to me as diocesan bishop and chief pastor to decide what provision shall be made. A blanket refusal should not be given.
9. A fee may be paid to the officiating cleric and to the appropriate Church council in line with the fees set for the existing service of the Blessing of a Civil Marriage.
10. Any further enquiries concerning the use of this Service may be directed to me.

Work is currently being done to bring the draft Rite into line with the almost fifty amendments made at Governing Body, mainly of a typographical nature. We anticipate that this work will be completed by the end of September, and that the Rite will be available in the liturgical section of the Church in Wales website for download and use on 1st October, or shortly before. Copies of the Rite customised for individual or specific use are acceptable, provided that Note 5 above is strictly observed.

Yours in Christ
+ Gregory Iwan



Gregory K Cameron * Esgob Llanellwy * Bishop of St Asaph
Esgobty, Llanellwy St Asaph, LL17 0TW * 01745 583503 * bishop.stasaph@churchinwales.org.uk