

York Minster's marriage policy and practise

At York Minster we uphold the traditional teaching of the Church about marriage, that it is a gift of God in creation and a means of grace and that it should always be undertaken as a lifelong commitment. We are delighted to marry all couples who come to us requesting a marriage service providing that they are eligible to be married here. Church of England marriage laws impose clear eligibility criteria that define who is permitted to marry in cathedrals. Every couple wishing to have their marriage solemnized here must obtain a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury. These are issued on his behalf by the Registrar of the Court of Faculties in London.

The Registrar will only issue a Special Licence if the couple has what is referred to in law as a “**present and demonstrable connection**” with the cathedral in question – in practical terms, this normally means that, in addition to any other connection a couple may have with York Minster, past or present, they are attending services at the cathedral on a regular basis for at least six months before their wedding. What the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Registrar will be looking for is **convincing evidence that the couple has a genuine and substantial, personal and on-going, connection with the cathedral** in question, which is so strong that it therefore makes this cathedral the most obvious church in which their marriage service should be held. Our hope and expectation is that couples will continue to worship regularly in the Minster after their wedding for as long as they live in the area.

Every application for a Special Licence must have the cathedral’s support, and all the normal Church of England eligibility rules for having a wedding service held in a church (e.g. neither person has been divorced, etc.) also apply. The full legal rules, regulations and requirements for getting married in cathedrals by Special Licence can be found on the Court of Faculties’ [website](#).

Normally weddings will be conducted by one of the Residentiary Canons, the Dean or a member of the Minster clergy. Licensed clergy in good standing with the diocese of York, and clergy from other Christian churches, may sometimes be invited to assist.

Marriage of those who have been divorced

In **exceptional circumstances** we are prepared to perform a marriage service for a couple when one or both of them are divorced, providing they are able to show a “**present and demonstrable connection**” with the Minster (as referred to above), that official papers relating to a divorce are produced and we receive assurance that:

1. The new relationship did not begin before any previous marriage ended.
2. Both parties understand divorce is a breach of God’s will for marriage.
3. Both parties are determined to make the new marriage a lifelong, faithful partnership.
4. There is a mature understanding of why a previous marriage failed and an expression of repentance about past wrongs.
5. Appropriate arrangements have been made for any children of a previous marriage.
6. Where possible, every effort has been made to establish a good relationship with a previous marriage partner.
7. A sufficient amount of time has passed since the breakdown of a previous marriage.
8. The couple are keen to establish their marriage on the foundations of Christian teaching and in the context of regular worship together.

If you would like to discuss the possibility of being married at York Minster please contact Revd Canon Michael Smith at michaels@yorkminster.org or on 01904 557211 to arrange a meeting.