

Ad Clerum 3b.4

Services of prayer and dedication after civil marriage

The old diocesan *Orders of Service of Prayer and Dedication following a Civil Marriage* have been superseded by the order authorised by the House of Bishops, which is now included as part of Common Worship. The authorised order of service can be found on pages 173 – 182 of *Common Worship Pastoral Services* (ISBN 0 7151 2007 7) published by Church House Publishing. The service order is also available as a separate publication. Both of these are available from Church House Bookshop, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ or from the Diocesan Resources Centre. This service should normally be used for these occasions.

The bishops ask that you observe the notes on page 183 (page iv of the separate booklet) and in particular the directions about the nature of the service, the entrance of the couple and the rings.

The service is one of prayer for the couple and of dedication of the marriage which has already taken place; it is also an opportunity for the couple to celebrate before God with their family and friends. It is, therefore, appropriate (if the couple so wish) to have music, hymns, a choir, flowers and bells. It helps to set the context of the service if, at the beginning, the minister informally welcomes the couple and the guests and explains the nature of the service so that there is no misunderstanding about what is being done. Any invitations sent out by the couple should also make it clear that it is for a Service of Prayer and Dedication.

The service should normally take place in the parish church of the parish where one of the parties lives or worships. It would be wise to make careful and sensitive enquiry of the couple in order that they may be clear that the service is a real opportunity for a new beginning under God; it may be appropriate to offer an occasion for the use of prayers of penitence as part of their preparation for the service itself. In general they should as far as possible receive the same preparation and instruction as those coming for marriage. It is good if the couple can be encouraged to share in the planning of the service by their choice of hymns, readings and prayers.

There is no statutory fee payable for these services. We suggest that a charge is made equivalent to the full wedding fee, and that the whole sum (including what would be the incumbent's fee in the case of a wedding) be made payable to the PCC. Charges for special heating, organist, choir, bell ringers, flowers, etc, should be the same as those charged for a wedding. Your attention is drawn to the guidance offered in the section on 'Extras' in *A Guide to Church of England Fees* published by the Church Commissioners.

If you need further advice please refer to your suffragan bishop.

Revised April 2015.