**Getting Married in St Margaret’s**

As far as it is legally possible, we want to welcome you for a church wedding and in Barming we have been celebrating this special moment with couples for centuries.

As a church we recognise marriage as the union between a man and a woman, so we are unable to offer same sex ceremonies.

The good news is that you can marry in church regardless of your religious beliefs, whether or not you are christened / baptised and whether or not you have been a regular churchgoer and even if you have been married before.

You do however require what we call a qualifying connection.  In other words you need to have some form of connection with the church in which you wish to get married.  Although there is a long list of connections, only one has to be achieved, by either the bride or groom.

**Qualifying Connections**

A couple can marry in church if one of them:

1. Lives in the parochial parish

(You can find out if you are in the parochial parish by visiting www.achurchnearyou.com)

1. Is on the church's electoral roll

(This is a form of church membership open to those who either live in the parochial parish, or who have regularly worshipped in the church for at least six months)

3. Has at any time lived in the parochial parish for a period of at least 6 months

**4. Has regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months.**

5. Was baptised / christened in the parochial parish.

6. Was prepared for confirmation in the parochial parish.

7. One of their parents, at any time after they were born: has lived in the parish for a period of at least 6 months.

8. One of their parents has at any time regularly gone to normal church services in the parish church for a period of at least 6 months.

9. One of their parents or grandparents was married in the parish.

10. They are granted a Common Licence, Special Licence or Superintendent Registrar's Certificate.

You will notice that connection 4 is highlighted in bold.  If none of the other connections apply it is possible to achieve connection 4, by worshipping in a main service for six months before the wedding date.

At St Margaret's we consider regular worship to be twice a month, so in the lead up to your wedding you would be required to attend worship a minimum of 12 times.  We have a weddings diary at the back of the church, and it is the responsibility of the couple to sign this each time they are in church to demonstrate this connection.

With weddings being booked / planned a year in advance, we are happy to make the booking in faith that you will achieve the connection of regular worship.

**Regular Worship**

Even if your connection is one of the others, we still encourage you to worship with us regularly before your wedding. This will help you to become familiar and comfortable with the building and the Rector / Vicar

**Legalities**

Since getting married gives you a whole new legal status with many benefits, there are considerations for the vicar to make in both UK civil and church law. There are some basic requirements but there could be complications if:-

One or both of you is a national from a country that is outside the European Economic Area. Special procedures apply to the legal preparations for these marriages, to protect and celebrate those which are genuine and to help prevent those which are not.

If one or both of you has been married before. There may well be a way forward for you to be re-married in church but the vicar has certain considerations in these circumstances.

Although same-sex marriage legislation has changed, it remains the case that it is not legally possible for same-sex couples to marry in the Church of England.