



T H E P A R I S H O F  
**S T W I L F R I D**  
H A R R O G A T E

**From the Team Rector  
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Dear friends,

**Revised and updated advice for couples due to be married here in 2021: Version 3  
Issued May 26<sup>th</sup> 2021**

I'm writing to you again, to update you on what looks likely in the coming few months in the hope that this might help you plan for your Marriage Service.

**Where are we now?**

**We're currently in 'Step 3':** Weddings can take place – but with a restricted number of 30 people in attendance. This includes, Bride and Groom, bridesmaids etc (i.e. you may invite up to a maximum of 28 people, including children, in addition to the two of you). The officiating priest, organist and a professional photographer are excluded from this limit.

All covid-19 measures remain in place: face-coverings must be worn by all who attend, test and trace registration for the congregation on arrival, the use of sanitiser etc. Those attending must sit in household or 'bubble' groups: and must maintain 2m distance from each other group. Stewards will be on hand to assist with this.

Congregational singing (i.e. singing hymns) is not allowed. The Director of Music can talk you through what is possible, musically. We can also live-stream the service via our parish Facebook page, if you would like that (but no pre-recorded music can be used). During this phase, we are unable to ring the church bells.

**Next Steps: Step 4?**

A review of 'social distance' measures was due to take place during May. This has now been pushed back into June. Current indications are that some 'covid secure' and social distancing measures **are highly likely to remain in place for some time after 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.**

**Step 4: 'Not before' 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021?**

The introduction of 'Step 4' on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, where all *legal* restrictions are planned to be removed is now looking more unclear. That is in part due to worries surrounding the 'Variants of Concern' originating from India. Data is incomplete, but HMG hopes to have clearer data within the next few weeks. Again, the Government were going to announce what it hoped to achieve at Step 4 (and when that would be) 28 days ahead of time. We now know that announcements about 'step 4' and what it will or won't involve, are likely to be made a week or so in advance.



## Current Advice

**You are strongly advised to use caution when thinking about numbers at this point.** Step 4 could well be delayed; local or national restrictions on attendance could remain. You should consider a 'Plan B' option **now**: in case you need to reduce the number of people you can invite. Any restriction on attendance in churches is likely to be mirrored by restrictions on other venues. You will undoubtedly liaise with any reception venues or wedding planners as this develops.

One course the Government might follow is to mirror the advice for Funerals, where the restriction on numbers has been replaced with a 'maximum capacity' figure based on each 'venue'. The maximum capacity number for St Wilfrid's is currently set at 70 and will only change following the social distancing review: i.e. it is highly unlikely to change until late July, August or September, if at all this year. Congregational singing is unlikely to return before the Autumn (i.e. no hymn singing).

Again, for us, as for you, we will only know what actually will be able to happen when it is announced. That might be with quite short notice. Some of you will have noticed that the Prime Minister himself has move his wedding to 2022...

### Planning – what you need to do now

We will still need **you** to check your banns will be read in the parish(es) where you live (if you do not both live in this parish) in good time, if you haven't already done so. If they can't, we will provide you with the information to obtain a licence to marry.

For **all** Marriage Services this year, my very best advice to plan to keep the service as simple as possible: ensuring that the 'essential' elements – those we require - of the service are in place – and to be flexible if circumstances change, for better or worse (no pun intended).

I understand that you may have a request for additional readings, music etc – and if circumstances allow, we will do our best to accommodate them. But, this may not be possible. We follow the best advice we have in order to keep everyone as safe as possible. Your understanding and help in this regard is vital.

We do, absolutely, continue to sympathise with all of you at this time. That's why we're, at this stage, advising you to use caution in any planning.

Finally 'Signing the registers' has now been replaced by 'Signing the Marriage Document' as I indicated in my last letter. After your wedding takes place, the completed Marriage Document is sent to Harrogate registry office by us. You will not be issued with any certificate by us on or after your wedding day. If you want a copy of your wedding certificate, this will be supplied on application and payment of the fee by North Yorkshire County Council via their website. You should wait 14 days after your wedding before applying for a copy.

As we will need to complete the document before your wedding, we'll be in touch for any further details we need in addition to those you have already supplied us with.

Please be assured of my prayers for you all,  
Fr Gary

