



Diocese of Down and Connor
Updated Guidance on the Celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage
4th June 2020

Weddings in Exceptional Circumstances

From 15th May NI Executive permitted the solemnisation of Marriages where one of the partners or an immediate family member is terminally ill¹.

Such weddings may take place **inside** the church and are subject to the restriction of a maximum of 10 persons (including the couple and the celebrant.) and with social distancing observed.

The normal canonical requirements for marriage are not affected by the relaxation of restrictions but, in the circumstances, should be no more than necessary.²

Outdoor weddings

On 4th June 2020 the NI Executive confirmed that from 8th June 2020 **outdoor** weddings, including religious weddings, may take place with no more than 10 people present and with social distancing observed.

The following norms and guidance will apply for any such wedding celebrated in the Diocese of Down and Connor:

1. Permission to celebrate marriages, in accordance with canonical and liturgical norms using the Rite of Marriage only (i.e. excluding the celebration of a Nuptial Mass and/or distribution of Holy Communion) in *another suitable place* other than a parish church, in accordance with can 1118³, is granted.

¹ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-regulations-and-what-they-mean-you>

² Cans 1108 §1 & 1119

³ Can. 1118 §1. A marriage between Catholics or between a Catholic party and a non-Catholic baptized party is to be celebrated in a parish church. It can be celebrated in another church or oratory with the permission of the local ordinary or pastor.

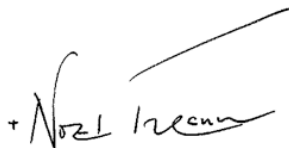
§2. The local ordinary can permit a marriage to be celebrated in *another suitable place*.

§3. A marriage between a Catholic party and a non-baptized party can be celebrated in a church or in *another suitable place*.

2. Each Parish should identify such a *suitable place* outdoors where it would offer such ceremonies to be celebrated. In the absence of an appropriate outdoor space around the parish church, an alternative at another local parish could be identified. The outdoor space should always be ‘sacred ground’ – i.e. the grounds of a church or other local religious site.
3. By way of exception, where circumstances require it and / or where ecumenical relationships permit, and especially in the case of inter-church marriages, the grounds of a neighbouring Christian church or other place endorsed by that church authority for outdoor weddings will be acceptable.
4. Parishes should not be expected to provide canopies or gazebos or other forms of shelter. The erection of marquees would not be in the spirit of the regulation.
5. The above, extraordinary permission to deviate from the norm of marriages taking place in a church, will expire when marriages can again be celebrated inside.

This will happen in accordance with the steps outlined in the NI Executive’s Coronavirus Recovery Strategy, “Pathway to recovery”⁴ and /or otherwise determined by amendment of the NI Public Health Regulations (2020).

6. Any additional dispensation or relaxation to the above should be referred to the Chancellor.
7. These Guidelines will be reviewed as and when necessary.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ Noel Treanor', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right above the name.

+ Noel Treanor
Bishop of Down and Connor

4th June 2020

⁴ <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/executive-publishes-coronavirus-recovery-strategy>

