

Marlow United Reformed Church to offer marriage services to same-sex couples

1. Key details

Following a vote by its members, Christ Church URC, Marlow has become the first church in the town registered to offer full marriage services to same sex couples.

This was made possible after a resolution was passed at the United Reformed Church General Assembly (the denomination's highest policy-making body) in July 2016, allowing local United Reformed churches to register for weddings of same-sex couples.

Having been empowered by the URC at national level, the Church Meeting of members at Christ Church URC, Marlow voted by majority to register the building for same-sex weddings.

2. Quotes

The Church Minister, the Revd David Downing, expressed his personal willingness to conduct weddings for same-sex couples at the church. He said:

“I am delighted that the church has voted with a clear majority to offer this service. We see it as a way of showing that God’s love is for all.

We believe that when a couple make their marriage vows it reminds us of God’s love for us. To be able to offer weddings to opposite and same sex couples is a great way of celebrating love, especially God’s love.”

and

“In introducing a significant change to the way marriage has been celebrated in church life, we hope that this new development both builds on our traditions and reflects the way we believe God wants Marlow United Reformed Church to be.”

3. Next steps

The first wedding of a same-sex couple at Christ Church URC, Marlow could take place from November 2021.

4. Closing

The URC General Assembly decision in 2016 followed legislation in 2013 and 2014 bringing recognition for same-sex marriage into law in England, Wales and Scotland. The legislation stipulated that religious organisations would have to 'opt in' if they wished to offer these marriage services.

Further information for editors

1. Same-sex partnerships were first recognised in law in the UK by the Civil Partnerships Act of 2004.
2. The United Reformed Church General Assembly of 2012 granted consent for local churches within the United Reformed Church to register civil partnerships in their buildings.
3. United Reformed churches that wish to offer marriage services to same-sex couples believe that all couples in committed relationships who wish to solemnise their marriage vows before God should have the right to do so.
4. United Reformed churches are not obliged to register their properties for same-sex marriages. It is a matter for local 'opt-in', if the local church so decides.

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