



The
United
Reformed
Church

Help and Advice Group

Northern Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ (0191-232 1168)

Bulletin 11: CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

The Help & Advice Group was set up by Synod in 2009, to support local churches in being informed and effective in their life and mission. The Group is made up of four members of local churches, together with administrative support from the Trust Officer. We are willing to try to provide specific advice or organise training days on particular topics. Please get in touch if you have questions or wish to suggest a training or discussion event.

This article is part of a series giving an overview of particular subjects of interest for local churches. We also circulate general updates from time to time. Bulletins will also be posted on the members' area of the website with direct links to other websites.

Where readers are directed to web-based resources, the Synod Office is willing to respond to reasonable requests for printed out information for readers without web access, although they may find it more satisfactory to follow up their interest through their local library's web access.

The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

New Government regulations came into force on 5 December 2011, which for the first time give the option for places of worship to offer non-religious civil partnership ceremonies for same-sex couples: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/2661/pdfs/uksi_20112661_en.pdf.

The regulations are permissive in that they allow this option, which previously was not legally permitted.

Each religious denomination has its own consent procedure. In the case of the United Reformed Church, no applications may be made to local authority register offices to register local churches as approved premises for civil partnership ceremonies until General Assembly has given consent on behalf of the denomination as a whole. General Assembly next meets on 6-9 July 2012, and at this stage it is not known what decision will be reached.

Local churches that meet in properties belonging to other denominations or in local ecumenical partnerships would need to wait until **all** the parent denominations had given their consent.

Churches that are interested in registering as approved premises for this purpose should in the first instance contact Synod Office for advice **after July 2012**.

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