

**SPECIAL AGENDA IV: DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTIONS
MARRIAGE MEASURE 2008: QUALIFYING CONNECTIONS
DIOCESE OF RIPON & LEEDS**

Where a person has a right by residence, or by membership of an electoral roll, to be married in a parish church, it has long been possible for the bishop to give his general consent to the marriage taking place in any church within the benefice concerned. This is an appropriate provision providing flexibility and expressing the sense of welcome to those seeking to be married. In many united benefices the churches and parishes effectively work together as a single unit and this is always to be encouraged.

The 2008 Church of England Marriage Measure gives welcome opportunity for those with a qualifying connection with a parish to be married in the parish church, and clergy are now used to responding positively to such requests. However, there is no provision for the bishop to give his general consent for those with a qualifying connection with a parish to be married in another church within the benefice. The legal advice is clear that the qualifying connection is with a parish, and therefore the wedding must take place within that parish, and not elsewhere in the benefice.

This creates an unfortunate distinction between those with a right to be married by residence, or through the electoral roll, and those with a qualifying connection. Two people have attended the same school and grown up as neighbours. One has stayed in her parental home and may be married in any church in the benefice. The other has moved away, has a qualifying connection, but may only be married in the one parish church. This distinction seems to us unnecessary, hurtful and difficult to justify.

Our request is for what we see as an unfair anomaly to be removed by legislation, and we have been informed that a diocesan synod motion is the appropriate way to test this.

The Rt Revd John Packer
Bishop of Ripon and Leeds
May 2010