

### **Mixed Marriage and Rabbinic Involvement adopted at AOR June 2012**

The Assembly of Reform Rabbis UK maintains our continuous commitment to Jewish marriage and where a Jew marries or intends to marry a non-Jew to encouraging the conversion of non-Jewish partners to Judaism.

#### **Section 1 - STATUS QUO:**

At present, members of the Assembly may assist mixed-faith couples around their civil wedding ceremonies in the following ways:

1. Preparations: A rabbi may help a couple plan for the inclusion of Jewish elements around their civil wedding celebrations.
2. Attendance: A rabbi may only attend a mixed-faith celebration/blessing in a personal and private capacity. Rabbis need to consider whether they are present as a friend, or as the rabbi, and what the implications are of their attendance.
3. Aufruf: The Jewish partner may be called up to the Torah in the synagogue on a Shabbat prior to the civil-wedding and offered a celebration/blessing.
4. Chanukat Habayit: A rabbi may attend the home of a mixed-faith couple and affix a mezuzah to a doorpost as well as offering the couple a blessing on their future lives in the house.
5. Any other involvement would be grounds for expulsion from the Assembly.

#### **Section 2 - REMOVING THE EXPULSION CLAUSE:**

1. The Assembly of Rabbis, as a body, maintains a clear opposition to the involvement of rabbis in any kind of mixed faith ceremony/blessing around civil wedding celebrations.
2. However, in the face of pastoral concerns about messages of inclusion, and due to increased intermarriage rates, many of our colleagues disagree strongly with the above, and wish to be involved with couples at or after their civil ceremonies.
3. Whilst not expressing any approval, the Assembly no longer regards involvement in a ceremony/blessing for a mixed faith couple around the occasion of their civil wedding as being grounds for expelling members.

4. Should individual rabbis exercise their pastoral discretion, or publicly state their views concerning mixed-faith ceremonies, they should consider the feelings of their congregations as well as the sensitivities of both their Assembly colleagues and the needs of the Movement.

### **Section 3 – GUIDELINES ON THE NATURE OF RABBINIC INVOLVEMENT adopted at the Assembly of Rabbis July 2012**

At the Assembly of Rabbis meeting in June 2012, although we maintained the Assembly of Rabbis opposition to involvement in mixed faith ceremonies or blessings (called herein "celebration"), we voted, by a large majority, to rescind the expulsion clause. Although we are not at present making a policy, we wish to establish some boundaries beyond which we ask our colleagues not to venture:

1. That there be nothing in the celebration that resembles a Jewish wedding, and thus, that it cannot include the symbols of *chuppah*, *kiddushin*, *ketubah*, *sheva brachot* and that there be no certification relating to the ceremony
2. That neither the Civil Wedding or celebration take place on *Shabbat* or on Jewish festivals.
3. That there be no symbols, liturgical language or clergy participants in the ceremony from other faiths, and that rabbis may not participate in ceremonies conducted by other religions to celebrate a marriage.
4. That celebrations are conducted only once the civil wedding has taken place.
5. That the celebration should not be conducted unless there is a prior programme of study and Jewish participation so that the couple intends to, and is capable of, building a Jewish home.
6. That the Jewish partner must belong to a Reform Synagogue

It is important that no one feel on their own over this. Any colleague who is being subjected to undue pressure to perform or not to perform such ceremonies or blessings should inform the Chair of the Assembly, who will offer support to that rabbi and their congregation. Any colleague who wishes to, may bring matters of conscience to the Assembly for discussion.