Christians regard marriage as a gift from God, part of his plan for how people should live together. Divorce has always been discouraged by Christians, although it has become more accepted over recent decades.

Different churches take different approaches to the subject of divorce:

The **Roman Catholic Church** will only remarry divorced people if the previous marriage has been annulled (indicating that it was never a valid marriage). Annulments are only granted under special circumstances, such as:

- Psychological incapacity to understand the commitment entailed by marriage.
- One of the partners has hidden information such as a previous marriage, impotence or infertility.
- The marriage never being consummated.

A Catholic who divorces and remarries without an annulment is not permitted to receive communion in the Eucharist service.

The **Church of England** teaches that marriage is for life, but will allow divorced people to remarry in church under certain circumstances, such as adultery or abandonment. The final decision is left with individual members of the clergy, who are encouraged to use the following questions in determining the attitude of the remarrying couple:

- Does the couple understand that divorce is a breach of God’s will for marriage?
- Do they have a determination for the new marriage to be a life-long faithful partnership?
- Do they seem willing to explore and grow in the Christian faith?
- Has enough time passed since the divorce for everyone to have recovered, and are there complicating factors from previous marriages (court proceedings or child support payments, for example)?
- Has either of the parties been divorced more than once?
- Was their relationship a direct cause of the breakdown of a previous marriage?

The **Church of Scotland** does not regard marriage as a sacrament. As a consequence, they do not regard it as a binding, lifelong commitment and so will permit divorced people to remarry, regardless of whether their former spouse is still alive. However, ministers will usually meet with the couple to determine whether the issues that led to the end of their previous marriage(s) are likely to have a similar effect on the new one.

The **Methodist Church** believes that marriage should be a life-long commitment, but takes a more sympathetic approach to those who have divorced and wish to remarry. Church policy is that couples in this situation should be helped to find a minister whose conscience will permit him or her to perform a marriage ceremony for them.

The **Baptist Church** does not have a central policy, leaving the matter to the discretion of individual ministers. Some Baptist ministers regard remarriage after divorce as inappropriate and will not conduct such services, while others are willing to do so.

The **Eastern Orthodox Church** permits remarriage after divorce, but the tone of remarriage services is penitential rather than joyful. The Orthodox Church teaches that it, ‘blesses the first marriage, performs the second, tolerates the third, and forbids the fourth’. 