

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2010

CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL

REPORT 2010

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

Elected by General Synod

Mrs J Bunting

Mrs H Caird

Mrs D Cromey

Mrs G Good

Rev BJ Harper (Chairman)

Rev BJ Hayes

Rev MEE McElhinney

Mrs L Sandes

Mrs O Thorpe (Honorary Secretary)

In attendance

Mrs S Massey

Consultant:

Mrs C Missen

Executive Summary

The Marriage Council exists to provide a range of services in support of marriage throughout the Church of Ireland.

At the General Synod 2009, the motion was passed that the General Synod takes seriously the impact of ministry on clergy marriages and family life and encourages the Marriage Council to develop methods of support, while acknowledging also that clerical life brings many joys which should be recognised and cherished.

With that guidance, and building on the feedback from our focus groups, the Marriage Council is piloting a retreat for clergy and spouses. This is not targeted at couples experiencing stress in their relationship but it is a positive and affirming action towards those who are serving the Church. The retreat will be facilitated by one of our counsellors but the emphasis will be on allowing couples the opportunity and space to reflect.

It was reported last year that the Council had suggested that a Church-wide working group be established to examine the issue of tied housing. The Standing Committee has appointed such a group but it has not yet been convened. The council would wish to keep this issue before Synod.

Contemporary Couples

As a result of a successful application to the Priorities Fund a clergy training programme *Contemporary Couples* designed and run by the Marriage Council has been launched in the Dioceses of Connor and Down & Dromore. It would be hoped that an updated form of this course could be delivered to other dioceses in the future when funding improves.

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2010

Preparation, Counselling, Enrichment

The Marriage Council continues to offer Marriage Preparation, Marriage Counselling and Marriage Enrichment advice and programmes, generously funded by the Family Support Agency (FSA) in the Republic of Ireland. Unfortunately, the budget contribution from the FSA may be heavily cut in the future and the provision of professional counselling services will be at risk. At present, funding enables the provision of one counsellor to one couple marriage preparation at a cost of €110 and marriage counselling is available at €70 (or at the discretion of the Counsellor depending on circumstances) through the FSA.

Pastoral Care Module for Clergy

A training module on the pastoral care of marriage has been established and delivered to the final year students in the Theological Institute. This has been facilitated by Mrs Claire Missen and Mrs Glynis Good.

Website

www.marriagematters.ireland.anglican.org

Due to budget constraints, our website has received minimal up-dating during the year. However, it continues to attract the attention of those who are planning their marriages.

Future Direction

Along with the many other Church agencies and committees, the Marriage Council has been asked to reduce its budget. We are committed to doing so and are also committed to providing the best support possible to the Church in its ministry to those who are married or preparing for marriage. The Council will do so by providing resources and training to clergy and by encouraging parishioners and dioceses to take affirmative action to support clergy and their families. The Council is pleased to note that other agencies (e.g. The Church's Ministry of Healing and the Board for Social Responsibility (NI) are also providing support and counselling for clergy.

As part of our planning for the short-term future, the Council has decided to focus on three primary areas. These are:

- 1) the provision of counselling services;
- 2) the provision of resources for clergy involved in marriage preparation and counselling. This may include web-based resources and a library;
- 3) continuing to examine the needs of clergy marriages and to encourage programs of enrichment and support.

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2010

Personalia

The following members will be leaving the Marriage Council, having completed six years of service:

Mrs Desney Cromey, Mrs June Bunting, Mrs Hazel Caird, Mrs Glynis Good and Mrs Olive Thorpe.

The Rev John McDowell resigned from the Council following his appointment as honorary clerical secretary.

The experience and enthusiasm of these members will be greatly missed by the Council. The remaining members are extremely grateful to them for their service and wish them well in their respective roles within the Church.

The thanks of the Council are expressed to all those who have assisted with its work throughout the year, including our counsellors, consultants and secretarial support.

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2010

APPENDIX A

A RESOLUTION TO BE PROPOSED TO THE GENERAL SYNOD

That the following be elected members of the Council for the period 1 June 2010 to 31 May 2012:

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

A bishop to be appointed by the House of Bishops

Elected by General Synod

Mr KAL Barrett

Rev BJ Hayes

Rev BJ Harper

Rev MEE McElhinney

Mrs L Sandes

Rev D Somerville

Mrs D Whitley

Ms R Willoughby