

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2011
CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL
REPORT 2011

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

The Rt Rev Richard Henderson, Bishop of Tuam (resigned January 2011)

Elected by General Synod

Rev Arthur Barrett	Mrs Leslie Sandes
Rev Brian Harper (Chairman)	Rev David Somerville
Rev Bruce Hayes (Honorary Secretary)	Mrs Deirdre Whitley
Rev Elizabeth McElhinney	Ms Rosalind Willoughby

In attendance

Mrs Sandra Massey

Consultant

Mrs Claire Missen

Executive Summary

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

We are focussing on three areas:

- 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.

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. We intend to apply for further funding before our present allocation runs out.

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.

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Contemporary Couples

The *Contemporary Couples* clergy training course was considered to be successful and the Council is now updating this resource in order to ensure that it lives up to its name. This course involves a series of seminars highlighting the sorts of issues that clergy may encounter in providing pastoral support to couples and families. We would encourage dioceses to make use of the course.

Clergy Support

The clergy and spouses retreat was successfully piloted in Cork and is being made available to all dioceses. It is hoped to encourage dioceses to use the retreat as an opportunity to acknowledge the marriage partnerships involved in ministry and the particular issues, positive and negative, which arise. The retreat involves a Saturday and Sunday stay at an hotel/resort and the diocese would take responsibility for Sunday cover, which would not be considered as a ‘weekend off’. The cost of the retreat is carried by the diocese and the participants.

Provision of resources

We are committed to providing good resources within a limited budget. We have updated our *Marriage Matters* material which is now available from Mrs Sandra Massey in Church of Ireland House, Dublin and also through our web-site www.marriagematters.ireland.anglican.org

The Year Ahead

Along with the many other Church agencies and committees, the Marriage Council continues to work on a reduced budget. We are committed to doing so for the benefit of the whole church 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. We continue to seek ways of encouraging and supporting couples, particularly in the present financial climate.

Personalia

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. We extend our thanks to those who have completed their term of office, the Rt Rev Richard Henderson, Mrs Desney Cromey, Mrs June Bunting, Mrs Hazel Caird, Mrs Glynis Good and Mrs Olive Thorpe.