

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council Proposer: The Revd John Ardis

**Embargoed Against Delivery
Check Against Delivery**

It is a real privilege to journey with people on the beginning of married life together, also a privilege to be there when people experience difficulty and need help in their relationships. As a church it is important when we prepare people for marriage, that it's not simply a case of choosing hymns and readings (as important as that is), but that we prepare them for a real commitment, for the joy they will experience, and also to equip them for the times when they may experience stresses on their relationships. Unfortunately all relationships come under pressure, some greater than others and it's a very important part of ministry to support people through difficult periods of their life and I hope we in the Marriage Council can assist the church in this aspect of pastoral care.

In proposing this report I would like to thank the outgoing members of the marriage council who have done their duty of six years: the Very Rev. Arthur Barrett (Chairperson), Mrs. Deirdre Whitley and Mrs. Rosalind Willoughby. We note the tragic death of Rev. David Somerville and on behalf of the Marriage Council I extend condolences to his family. David was the honorary secretary of the Marriage Council, and the report you have in front of you was one written mostly by him. He was a very committed member of the council and we give thanks to God for all that he did for the council and for the Church. May he rest in peace.

There have been a number of changes throughout the year. We no longer are in a position to offer discounted pre marital preparation due to funding being cut from Tulsa and now couples are having to pay the full amount of €200.00, but we believe this is good value for money and clergy really should be encouraging couples to avail of marriage preparation in addition to their own (no doubt excellent) marriage preparation. The council continues to subsidise the cost for marriage counselling in the Republic of Ireland of up to €50 per hour.

Our new website www.towardsmarriageireland.com has articles written by marriage guidance counsellors, as well as information on contact details for marriage preparation and marriage guidance counsellors. We also have a new Facebook page.

As a result of the Marriage Act 2015 in the Republic of Ireland the marriage council finds itself working in a changed environment and we are working through what that means to try and maintain our openness to those who require our assistance.

The council is currently updating the 'towards marriage' pack, which when fully updated will be accessible to download from the Marriage Council website. We were very pleased with the success of the course 'The pastoral Care of Marriage and Family Life today' held in St. Columba's Parish Centre, Omagh and the council is hoping to run this also in the southern region at some stage this year. It gives me great pleasure to propose that the report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council be received.