

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2007

CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL

REPORT 2007

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

Elected by General Synod

Rev FJ McDowell (Chairman)	Mrs H Clarke
Mrs O Thorpe (Honorary Secretary)	Mrs D Cromey
Rev Canon Dr JPO Barry	Mrs G Good
Mrs J Bunting	Rev G Haire
Mrs H Caird	

In attendance

Mrs S Massey

Consultants:

Mrs C Missen and Mrs A McGrath

General

The Marriage Council exists to provide a wide range of services in support of marriage throughout the Church of Ireland. However, one of the most frustrating restrictions under which our work is carried out, is the inability to access grant aid in Northern Ireland's support of the professional services we offer. In the coming year the Council may investigate the possibility of funding from the Priorities Fund for the provision of services in Northern Ireland.

Marriage Preparation and Marriage Counselling

The Marriage Council can call upon the services of five accredited counselling professionals operating in the Republic of Ireland. Under a scheme grant-aided by the Family Support Agency we provide one-to-one marriage preparation and marriage counselling to couples, at the request of local clergy. The quality of preparation and counselling is very high and we would urge rectors and/or those charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating such services at deanery or diocesan level to consider making use of this generously subsidised provision. Initial enquiries can be made through Mrs Sandra Massey tel: 01/003531 4125626.

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Marriage Enrichment Programme

A Marriage Enrichment Programme, intended for groups of couples in the early years of marriage has been available to parishes for about two years. Details of the programme were presented throughout the year at Diocesan Synods or Clergy Conferences in Armagh, Down and Dromore, Clogher, Cashel and Ossory, and Derry. So far the take up rate of the Enrichment Programme has been disappointing. The programme can be delivered in one night and, if necessary, the Marriage Council can provide a trained facilitator and the required PowerPoint hardware. The Council will also provide training for facilitators if requested.

Support for Clergy and Clergy Spouses

The Marriage Council is aware of the particular difficulties which clergy and clergy spouses face in seeking help or advice on their own marital issues. In order to decide how best we can respond in this area, a questionnaire has been sent to all clergy and clergy spouses. Depending on the result of the survey the Marriage Council will seek to provide a confidential means of helping those who ask for assistance. The Council is encouraged in its aspirations in this area by the initiatives undertaken for similar purposes in some dioceses.

Marriage Law

It is understood that the long awaited changes to the legal procedures for registering marriages in the Republic of Ireland will come into force in 2007.

Website

The Marriage Council website www.marriagematters.ireland.anglican.org continues to attract around 500 genuine hits per month. The site is updated at least monthly and now has a facility to handle queries about the practice of marriage within the Church of Ireland. Liturgical, devotional and other material of general and topical interest can be found on the site.

Structure

In common with other Committees of the General Synod, the Marriage Council has been exploring ways in which it can better fulfill its remit efficiently and cost effectively. We hope to experiment with some arrangements in the coming year.