

## CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL

### REPORT 2002

#### MEMBERSHIP

##### *Appointed by the House of Bishops*

Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

##### *Elected by General Synod*

Rev Prof RAB Mollan (Chairman)  
 Rev Canon KA Kearon  
 Rev ECJ Woods (Honorary Secretary)  
 Mrs J Denner  
 Mrs I Deverell  
 Mrs R Macartney  
 Mrs C Missen  
 Mr I Slaine  
 Mrs M Stephens  
 Mrs P Totten  
 Mrs J Turner  
 Mrs P Wallace

##### *Co-opted*

Rev Canon PR Draper  
 Mr G Clark  
 Mr G Glenn

#### “YOURS, MINE & OURS”

“YOURS, MINE & OURS” was the title of a conference on Second Relationships organised by the Council in February 2002. The topic was chosen in response to requests from clergy for teaching and information on the subject. However, although the conference was well attended, the number of clergy present was few.

The conference was addressed by three experts in the area of second relationships: Julia Greer, a couple counsellor and counselling supervisor with Relate NI, Donna Smith, a founding member of the Step-parenting Association (now Parentline Plus) and author of “Step-mothering”, and Claire Missen, co-ordinator of Teen Between, a counselling service for young people run by The Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service in Dublin.

Speakers dealt with the complexity of second relationships and their effect on all the parties concerned. Although second relationships break down at twice the rate of first relationships, it was recognised that the first two years are crucial, and that if the complexities of relationships can be managed in that initial period then enduring

relationships can be established. The step-parent may never be accepted as a substitute parent and should see their role as one of support. It is important to separate parental issues from spousal issues.

The positive feedback from the conference encouraged the Council to feel that it had made a useful contribution to increasing understanding in this area.

### **MARRIAGE TRAINING**

Due to a generous grant from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, the Council was able to offer a free training day on marriage to all dioceses in the Republic.

The day would include the following topics: an overview of the changes and trends in family life today, marriage preparation, the clergy's pastoral involvement in marriage, working with issues of domestic violence, marital breakdown including the implications for the children. This day course would be delivered on behalf of the Council by Claire Missen of The Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service in Dublin.

The Council wrote to all bishops whose dioceses included the Republic offering this course as part of their Ongoing Ministerial Training Programme. To date four dioceses – Meath, Ossory, Cork and Tuam – have arranged to provide this training day. Some dioceses have still to set a date and some have not responded.

The Council is in contact with the Board for Social Responsibility (NI) about joining in a similar training day for Northern Ireland dioceses.

### **MARRIAGE WEEK 10-17 FEBRUARY**

Short prayers for each day of Marriage Week were composed by members of the Council and circulated to church members through *The Church of Ireland Gazette* and diocesan magazines.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

The Council has applied to the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs for funding to contract three marriage counsellors who would be available to deliver marriage preparation and marriage counselling to Church of Ireland couples throughout the Republic of Ireland. To date we are still awaiting the decision of the Department.

### **WEBSITE**

The Marriage Council continues to maintain a website which contains much valuable material and resources in connection with marriage and related topics. The address is <http://marriagecouncil.ireland.anglican.org/>

**CONGRATULATIONS**

The Council was delighted to hear of the election of Mrs Paddy Wallace, a Council member, as All-Ireland President of the Mothers' Union, and offers her our heartiest congratulations.

**THANKS**

The Council would like to express its appreciation and indebtedness to Ms Jennifer Byrne of the RCB for her invaluable work as administrative assistant since the Council was set up in 1996. Ms Byrne has been transferred to other duties in the RCB. We welcome in her place Ms Sandra Massey.

**MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL**

The Marriage Council recommends the following resolution for consideration by the General Synod in 2002:

That paragraph C) of the terms of reference of the Marriage Council as adopted by General Synod 1996 be deleted, and the following substituted:

The Marriage Council shall consist of 1 Bishop nominated by the House of Bishops and 12 other members.

The Marriage Council may at its discretion, co-opt up to 5 additional members.

No member shall be eligible for nomination, re-election or co-option if they have served for three consecutive biennial terms of membership.

A member who has not attended any of the meetings during the previous year shall not be eligible for nomination, re-election or co-option to the Marriage Council for a period of two years.