

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2003

CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL

REPORT 2003

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

Elected by General Synod

Rev ECJ Woods (Chairman)
Mrs H Clarke (Honorary Secretary)
Rev Canon Dr JPO Barry
Rev Canon PR Draper
Rev G Haire
Rev Canon KA Kearon
Mrs I Deverell
Mr G Glenn
Mrs C Missen
Mr I Slaine
Dr J Turner
Mrs P Wallace

The Marriage Council, which was set up in 1996 to enhance the church's effectiveness in supporting marriage and family life, has been implementing a number of initiatives. The following are some of the most significant.

CONFERENCES

The Council has organised two major conferences since its inception. The first was on Marriage Today. Delegates looked at and reflected on the history, theology and reality of marriage. The second conference addressed the matter of Second Relationships.

HANDBOOK

The Council has produced a Handbook of Marriage Preparation "*Towards Marriage*" for use by clergy and church workers. In the future the Council would like to develop and expand support for marriage and parenting by developing training, establishing relevant services and producing literature on related topics.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND COUNSELLING

In seeking to make a helpful and practical response to the alarming rate of marriage break-ups the Council has set up two services at the beginning of 2003, which are now available in the Republic of Ireland. The first seeks to provide marriage preparation for those contemplating marriage, and the second offers the opportunity of marriage counselling for those experiencing difficulties within marriage.

The Council has contracted five professionally trained marriage counsellors in Dublin, Wexford and Cork to undertake marriage preparation with couples on a one-to-one basis, believing this to be more effective than a general course for groups. Each couple will pay €90 to the counsellor and the Marriage Council will pay the balance of €60 for the session of three hours.

A Marriage Counselling service is also being offered, by appointment, with one of the five counsellors, at a subsidised rate.

Both of these services have been made possible in the Republic of Ireland due to a very generous grant to the Marriage Council from the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. Brochures with information about these services have been circulated to all parishes in the Republic and also to Mothers' Union branches, diocesan registrars and youth officers. It is hoped that they will be widely availed of.

ONE DAY TRAINING CONFERENCE FOR CLERGY

Nearly all dioceses in the Republic of Ireland have taken up the Marriage Council's offer of a one day training session for clergy funded by the Marriage Council and delivered by Claire Missen. In Northern dioceses the Council is working with the Church of Ireland Board for Social Responsibility to provide a similar service, again free of charge. The training day includes workshops, which have been structured to inform and support clergy in marriage related issues. These training days have proved to be valuable, worthwhile and have been much appreciated by those who have attended.

The Marriage Council provides a useful service within the Church of Ireland community and desires to serve the whole Church in practical and relevant ways. The Council will continue seeking to fulfil the aims of strengthening the Church's effectiveness in supporting marriage and family life.