

Church of Ireland Marriage Council – Report 2005

CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL

REPORT 2005

MEMBERSHIP

Appointed by the House of Bishops

Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

Elected by General Synod

Rev J McDowell (Chairman)
Mrs O Thorpe (Honorary Secretary)
Rev Canon Dr JPO Barry
Mrs J Bunting
Mrs H Caird
Mrs H Clarke
Mrs D Cromey
Mrs I Deverell
Rev Canon PR Draper
Mr G Glenn
Mrs G Good
Rev G Haire
Mrs A McGrath
Mrs P Wallace

In attendance

Mrs S Massey

Consultant

Mrs C Missen

The Marriage Council finds itself in a period of transition, trying to address the problems of supporting Christian marriage in Ireland. As a result a fair portion of the Council's effort has been expended on considering what our role might be for the future.

STRATEGY DAY

In order to help the members of the Council to reflect on its work in the past and to plan for the future a Strategy Day was held in Church of Ireland House. The day was facilitated by Mr Tim Wray of the Irish Management Institute who used his consultancy expertise to help the Council identify its strengths and weaknesses and its opportunities and threats. It also allowed the Council to consider whether it wished to do more of the same in future years or whether it should try to work in other spheres. The Strategy Day

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also highlighted the question of whether Council is resourced to provide innovative services.

As a result of the Strategy Day the Council is exploring a number of initiatives involving cooperation with other agencies as well as expanding its current areas of endeavour.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION AND MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Services under the above headings continue to be in increasing demand, especially in the Republic of Ireland where the Council's efforts have been focussed. Five professionally qualified counsellors continue to offer marriage preparation to individual couples. Marriage Preparation and Marriage Counselling are heavily subsidised by the Council thanks to the generosity of the Family Support Agency who provide grant-aid for such services. We will continue to offer the Clergy training day to Dioceses yet to avail of the training.

In many ways these services are the basic stock in trade of the Council providing support at parish level and ensuring that a high degree of professional and pastoral expertise is available to the Church of Ireland.

ON-LINE COUNSELLING

Using the services and expertise of Mrs Claire Missen, a consultant to the Council, we are working on the possibility of adding an element of on-line counselling to our range of services.

MARRIAGE COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Marriage Council website continues to expand and is updated with news and appropriate features on a monthly basis. It also provides rudimentary information about the services of the Council and where possible directs enquirers to additional resources through a wide range of links with other sites.

The site receives around 2000 hits per month of which around 240 could be assessed as genuine visitors rather than momentary glances created by search engines.

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

A marriage support programme in the form of a PowerPoint Presentation has been acquired under licence from Christian Guidelines. The programme was piloted in Rathfarnham parish on 4 November 2004 and was well received although it will require minor modification to suit our circumstances. The programme was facilitated by Mrs Glynis Good, a member of the Council and is available to all parishes together with the necessary PowerPoint equipment. The challenge for the Council and indeed for the church will be to identify and if necessary train a network of facilitators to present the programme.

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MARRIAGE LAW

Changes in Marriage Law similar to those which came into effect in Northern Ireland in 2004 are expected to be introduced in the Republic sometime in 2005 and the Marriage Council will respond by producing guidance for both clergy and those intending to marry in the Church of Ireland when necessary.