

Marriage Council Report

Proposer: The Revd Jonny Campbell-Smyth

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Archbishops, Bishops, Members of Synod

In preparation for this speech, I looked back at what I stated at last year's Synod regarding the Council's hopes and plans for the year ahead, and it is therefore reassuring to now reflect that what we promised last year to Synod we have achieved. As Chair it has always been important to regularly review and consider our aims so that we are always addressing the issues and needs for the Church today. Therefore, since last year we have critically reviewed how we as a Council function, and from that review we have highlighted not only what we have done well, but also where we need to improve, and we have now determined our aims and objectives for the next three years. The report before you gives you a sense of the areas that we have engaged in, however it will never reflect the significant amount of work done by the Council. I would like to thank all members of the Council for their commitment.

With the best will in the world, we have recognised that whilst the members of the Council know how we help the wider Church in marriage preparation and support, many rectors and leaders on the ground are not aware of who we are, what we do and how we can support them. Therefore a significant part of our strategy for the next three years is to make the resources of the Council more known and more accessible. The Council today will be launching its promotional video with the intention of communicating this at all diocesan synods in the next year. Accessing our resources easily by church leaders is key to the future and we are mindful that accessing these via the Church of Ireland website can be difficult – therefore we intend working closely with RCB staff to make this easier. We are also conscious that clergy and leaders are very busy, so we would like to explore ways how we as a Council can provide and run online courses on behalf of dioceses or rural deaneries to support couples preparing for marriage and those who are married to enrich their relationships. We are also mindful that whilst we have helped couples who are looking forward to their wedding day, we have not yet explored the support for couples who are remarrying, or the traumatic impact there can be on a husband and wife when serious illness hits them, or how a spouse recovers after the death of their partner in life. In addition, the Council recognises that working more closely together with other church bodies will be important to ensure all aspects of relationship are considered – namely Mothers' Union, Mind Matters, and others. All of this will happen whilst continuing with the bread-and-butter functions of the Council.

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So there is much to do. As you leave the Synod Hall today, we will be delighted to provide you with our new information booklet that we hope can go into the hands of members within your local churches to make our resources more accessible in the future. Finally, we are delighted to let you as Synod see our new video which we believe will greatly help churches, leaders and couples across the island who desire to see relationships flourish.

[Video]

Synod, I am pleased to propose that the report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council be received.