

Marriage Council Report

Proposer: Revd Dr Leonard Madden

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Thank you for this opportunity to present the report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council which you will find in detail in your Book of Reports.

Let me begin by publicly thanking Bishop Pat Storey for her time as Chair of the Marriage Council. Her leadership and enthusiasm has been pivotal in shaping the Council ethos and its direction of travel. On behalf of all the members of the Council, I offer her our prayerful thanks.

So, you will be glad to know, I do not intend to go over every item of the report as I encourage you to do so in your own time and to give it careful and prayerful consideration. Please take particular note of our counselling services. You shouldn't feel alone in your ministry and our trained and professional counsellors are here to help.

While the report is there to be read, I would draw your attention to the Clergy Retreat to be held in early autumn this year or in the spring of next year.

These retreats have become a feature of our work and have proved popular when they are offered free of charge and somewhat less so when a modest charge is applied.

While you will understand that this is not a total surprise, as I realise we clergy are rather canny with our money, I nevertheless do urge you to consider the value of these retreats not solely in monetary terms.

They offer two nights in a four-star resort to get your heads showered along with your spouse, as well as receive excellent and not too onerous nor demanding teaching on a variety of subjects pertinent to your marriage. All meals are included!

The focus of the retreats is on you, the married couple, and giving you space to be **you** away from the demands of parish life, as well as the freedom to explore issues that may be relevant to your marriage at the time.

The modest and subsidised charge applied to the retreat is exceeded by the benefits gained over the couple of days. The retreat in March was postponed due to lack of interest, not because clergy didn't want to go, but it would appear there was an expectation that it would be free of charge.

A decision will be made soon as to whether to hold the next retreat in early autumn this year or early spring next year. Again, there will be a subsidised charge and I respectfully ask all DCOs

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[diocesan communications officers] to ensure their clergy are made aware of the retreat as we really would like to be in a position where we are regretfully turning people away rather than cancelling or postponing.

And finally, if you have a passion for marriage there remain places open on the Council board. I'd very much like to hear from you. The Council's remit is vital in the work of the Kingdom. Perhaps God is calling you now. Come and join us. With that, I have pleasure in proposing the 2025 report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council and commending it to Synod.