

## Abstract

Marriage breakdown and divorce are common issues within our Church and communities. This dissertation first investigates and evaluates the Church of Ireland's approach to assisting individuals and families in the context of marriage breakdown and divorce. It explores the basis and efficacy of the Church's current model of pastoral care in this context. It looks at examples of congregational experience, particularly in language, liturgy, and terminology, as potential avenues for renewed pastoral care for those whose marriages have broken down. The many other expressions of pastoral care for marriage, both institutional and charitable within and alongside the Church are also identified and considered.

Secondly the New Testament accounts of both Jesus' mission and teaching about marriage and divorce, as recounted in the Gospels and in Saint Paul's letters, are also explored. These establish a clear view of the primacy of marriage from a theological perspective. Equally, a framework which supports a pragmatic response by the Church to the issue of divorce also emerges.

Thirdly this dissertation reviews some worthy liturgical innovations for pastoral care for those whose marriages end in divorce in churches other than the Church of Ireland. I conclude with some proposals for potential action in pastoral and liturgical practice for consideration by the Church of Ireland. A proposal for a trial implementation of liturgy marking the ending of a marriage is primary amongst these proposals.

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