

## MARRIAGE

### TIME TO GET INVOLVED...

*The second of two papers that are based on presentations made by Revd Andrew Body to Mothers' Union supporters in the Diocese of Winchester in 2008. Revd Body is a parish priest in Guildford Diocese, and a respected author of three books on marriage whose work has involved a symbiotic relationship with Mothers' Union. His book 'Growing Together' is a guide for couples getting married, which is now also available as a workbook for marriage preparation sessions.*

#### ... with Wedding Goers

- A Welcome Team - some churches rely on the vergers, others have a team of vergers and other 'welcomers'
- A Welcome Board (like in hotels) - 'the Church of ... welcome Jane and John and their guests...'
- Refreshments - offer coffee in the church beforehand, as guests have often travelled long distances
- Offer a Reception Catering Service by forming a Deanery or Benefice Team
- Offer flower arranging services
- Offer a crèche
- Sell Pot Pourri bags for use in place of confetti
- Have an Occasions Board in the Church, with photos of recent events, including weddings, baptisms etc
- Offer wine (or coffee and cake) in the church to those not going on to the reception
- Arrange diversionary activities during the photo session - a crèche, refreshments etc.
- Include the couple's names on pew sheets in the weeks before their marriage.

#### ... with Couples

**Welcoming** - parish couples can be given welcome packs with all the information they may need, including contact details for all aspects of their wedding; flower suppliers, photographers etc and even including details on car parking. If a couple agree, their photo can be taken - it will help clergy remember them individually and can also be used for an Occasions Board, encouraging parishioners to remember the couple in prayer. They could also be offered a small token gift, perhaps a bible or marriage preparation book.

**Preparation** - Speak positively about marriage preparation sessions, saying 'of course you will want to attend our preparation sessions' (so that it doesn't sound compulsory!) There are many different approaches to marriage preparation: a sequence of individual sessions with the couple (which allows more information to be shared); to single or multiple sessions for groups of couples. Clergy may really appreciate parishioners sharing the responsibility for leading such sessions.

**Mentoring** - can be offered by an established married couple from the parish with the approval of the parish priest.

**'A Day to Celebrate'** - a relaxed and enjoyable opportunity for building relationship with couples preparing for their wedding, which will also give them a feel for the 'big day' itself. (See over page.)





**Cana Ministry** - is a system developed by Ross-on-Wye Mothers' Union and has been featured in Mothers' Union magazines. It involves befriending the couple, facilitating their wedding and supporting them afterwards.

**Following up** - with the couple after their wedding can be as simple as sending the couple a Christmas card for their first Christmas together and an invitation to a Valentine Service. If a parishioner attends the wedding with a digital camera, a photo of the wedding couple can then personalise a card for their first anniversary. Remember that young couples often move home; couples can be commended to their new parish.

#### ... with Communities

- **Publicity** - put together a wedding leaflet, exhibit in your library or church, get local wedding events into the local press and media, on the parish website etc
- **Exhibit at Wedding Fayres** - an important opportunity for a church (or Mothers' Union) exhibition stand. Often the exhibitor's fees are reduced for charities. Supporting resources are available from Mothers' Union Head Office, Mary Sumner house to help you make this possible.
- **Work with other wedding venues** to offer marriage preparation
- **Work with Registrars** in the same way.

## A DAY TO CELEBRATE - LOOKING FORWARD TO MARRIAGE!

*The following is an edited version of material produced by Mary Sumner House, head office of Mothers' Union.*  
In consultation with your incumbent, choose a Sunday near Valentine's Day, design and send out invitations to all couples proposing to get married in your church during the year, and advertise the event more widely to attract couples still 'thinking about it'.

Provide an afternoon of activities to include:

An organist and/or musicians, to play music from a printed list of appropriate music for "Coming In", "Going Out", "Signing the Registers" etc.

- Invite some singers to perform hymns from a list of those suitable for weddings;
- Invite some members of your congregations to read from a list of suitable wedding readings;
- Invite the flower ladies to decorate the church as they would be able to offer a wedding couple, the local florist to create a display of examples of their work and similarly the local photographer and chauffeur;
- Provide suitable refreshments and a break for informal conversations - at this point you may like to have invited couples who were married the previous year to join in;
- Create a display of material relating to what the parish and regional Mothers' Union provide in the way of Marriage Preparation and Parenting;
- Have all the appropriate information available for couples to take away;

Close the afternoon with a short act of appropriate worship.

#### Books by Revd Andrew Body

##### *Growing Together*

is for couples preparing for marriage and was written with the help of Mothers' Union in Guildford Diocese. It is also available as a course with a CD of resources.

##### *Pocket Prayers for Marriage*

is an anthology of prayers, some from Mothers' Union members and some composed by Andrew. These are all available through Christian Bookshops or at [www.eden.co.uk](http://www.eden.co.uk)

Mothers' Union Head Office Address:

Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB Tel: 020 7222 5533

A range of books and cards for weddings is available at the Mothers' Union online giftshop:  
[www.shop.muenterprises.co.uk](http://www.shop.muenterprises.co.uk)