

Subject: Confidential Manchester clergy forum re Church Weddings project

Attachments: Clergy diary Manchester front page.doc; Clergy diary prep page.doc; Clergy diary ceremony page.doc; Clergy diary follow-up page.doc

Dear clergy colleagues,

In 2010 you participated in the Church of England Weddings project training event and the subsequent research to explore its effectiveness. We are really grateful for your involvement and would like to invite you, one year on, to continue your participation in the project with myself.

We have set up a **confidential diocesan online forum** for you to discuss ongoing issues in wedding ministry with us and with other clergy in Manchester diocese who attended the training event. We are keen to know if there are still issues of concern to you about weddings ministry and its impact on couples /congregations. We would like to consider with you how we can explore these concerns. We hope that we can learn further from you how to develop parallel programmes in the areas of, for example, baptisms and funerals.

We have set up an electronic forum for clergy in Manchester diocese participating in the Weddings project through Basecamp, a project management and collaboration system. *You will shortly receive an email inviting you to join.*

The project training events continue to generate positive feedback. Research towards the conclusion of the summer wedding season revealed appreciation of the support offered by the project resources together with pointers towards continued developmental work. Clergy participating in the research were offered the **attached diary** to facilitate reflective practice during the preparation and follow up of wedding couples and of the wedding ceremony itself. We are continuing to work over 2011 with four dioceses (including your own) to inform continuing project development.

If you want to discuss any aspects of this continued research further please contact myself at the Research and Statistics department, Archbishops' Council tel: 020 7898 1592 or email statistics.unit@churchofengland.org.

Best wishes,

Lynda

*Rev'd Preb Lynda Barley, Head of Research & Statistics
The Archbishops' Council, Church House, Great Smith Street, Westminster, LONDON SW1P 3AZ*

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: *This message is intended solely for the addressees in the first instance and may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender, delete the message from your system immediately and do not disclose the contents to any other party.*

Online marrying clergy forums

1. Welcome and confidentiality:

Welcome to the Church Wedding Manchester confidential clergy discussion forum. Only verified participants in your diocese will be given access to this site along with the Church of England research team. Your views are important to us and will only be used anonymously in any research reporting.

We are keen to know whether, a year after the Wedding Project training event you still have any concerns about aspects of church weddings as they impact your ministry. We intend to use your feedback to inform future work on baptisms, weddings and funeral ministry. A copy of the reflective diary is stored under 'Files'. It may help you to consider your contribution to the following questions:

- a) What questions remain for you (as a vicar) about weddings ministry?
- b) How could we help you explore this?

2. Thank you to those who have signed up for this clergy forum. Can I encourage any one else who is considering it?

I would really like to know how many weddings you have booked for next year and whether this is different for any reason? Can you let me have any comments when you have a minute?

3. Thank you for your insights. Is there any aspect to the Preparation for weddings that you are bringing together that you would like to discuss? I am keen to know whether the training event left you with any unanswered questions?

4. Are these issues ones you can discuss at your chapter or elsewhere with colleagues? Has anyone any observations about the practicalities and tensions in following-up couples after the wedding?

Has anyone got any experiences of couples or their families staying in touch or getting in touch again with church? I know people move frequently but I wonder if you know any stories of anyone who has attached themselves to church (in any way) because of a wedding?

5. A national survey is reporting 5% of churchgoers are drawn to church through weddings. Would this agree with your experience? Have you any suggestions for exploring contact rates in your church?

Have I heard you all correctly that it is building relationships that takes time? Have you any thoughts about what is it that starts them coming to church and for congregation members to start to look out for them?

6. The summer wedding season is drawing to a close and so is the national Wedding project. The project has been clear to welcome couples for a church wedding and you have helped us to consider a number of practical issues.

However, there could be other pastoral tensions that should be highlighted in the final report to the Archbishops' Council. I would like to thank you for participating in this online forum and enlist your contributions to the final report on the following two questions:

- a) Can you describe a pastoral situation that has recently caused you to reconsider some aspects of your approach to weddings?
- b) Are there any emerging issues that you would like to see researched?

The Wedding Project Manchester diocese Manchester Clergy

Remaining questions

From: Naomi Maynard
Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2011 at 9:34am

Welcome to the Church Wedding Manchester confidential clergy discussion forum. Only verified participants will be given access to this site along with the Church of England research team Revd Preb Lynda Barley and Naomi Maynard. Your views are important to us and will only be used anonymously in any research reporting.

We are keen to know whether, a year after the Wedding Project training event, you still have concerns about aspects of church weddings as they impact your ministry. We intend to use your feedback to inform future work on baptisms, weddings and funeral ministry. A copy of the reflective diary is stored under 'Files'. It may help you to consider your contribution to the following questions:

- a) What questions remain for you (as a vicar) about weddings ministry?
- b) How could we help you explore this?



David Wheeler Fri, 1 Apr at 4:55pm

1) I do think the wedding/ marriage preparation is a key; whilst recognising that this is to some extent personal (i.e. drawing on our personal skills & knowledge); how can we share so as to improve what we do. Perhaps a survey of what we do, and perhaps participating /listening in on what others do? There is a danger (which I recognise in myself) of not wanting to subject ourselves to other's criticism.

2) How can we ensure that good practice continues after we leave a post. I would expect to retire in around 3 yrs and think that almost all I do will be lost (a) because of the inter-regna, and b) because there is no real route to pass on experience to successors).

Here, I don't think the 2 OLM's here have the necessary skills (or time); ditto lay people, and inter-regna are pressured times anyway.

Should deaneries have a role? Is there a case for those parishes with strong ministries in this area being asked to help during inter-regna? Is increasing teamwork a solution (a Diocesan-wide common framework?) (In a course on improving sermons a few years ago, there was an offer of an independent assessor sitting in on a sermon you gave -even on an unknown Service- scary, but it helped me!)

Have you thought about this?



Lynda Barley Mon, 4 Apr at 7:57pm

I too am becoming more conscious that one of the reasons wedding ministry is frequently not more developed is because generally experience is not shared with colleagues and successors. We don't have this in our clergy culture. We expect to do things "our way". I could design a survey to gather experiences but these would depend on local contexts. Deaneries might be the place as you suggest. Would rural/area deans take this on or should deaneries have a wedding/funeral coordinator?

Lynda

The Wedding Project Manchester diocese Manchester Clergy

Welcome to the Wedding project basecamp

From: Lynda Barley
Date: Wed, 23 Feb 2011 at 1:58pm

Thank you to those who have signed up for this clergy forum. Can I encourage any one else who is considering it?

I would really like to know how many weddings you have booked for 2011 and whether this is different for any reason? Can you let me have any comments when you have a minute?

Very best,

Lynda



Judie Horrocks Wed, 23 Feb at 2:48pm

Hi, Lynda! We have 10 booked at the moment, which is similar to our overall numbers in 2009. We also have 10 booked for 2012 and the first one for 2013. So no obvious change, other than holding steady when previously we were experiencing a gradual decline.

Certainly exposure to the Wedding Project research data has improved my approach to enquiries (I handle all our enquirers in the first instance, although follow-up and weddings themselves are shared between myself and my parish colleague).

Yours,
Judie



David Griffiths Wed, 23 Feb at 4:00pm via email

Dear Lynda,

So far we have 25 weddings booked across the town of Horwich for 2011. We recently had a Marriage Preparation weekend, the first we have held. It will be interesting to see how the Royal Wedding affects things.

All best wishes,



Judie Horrocks Wed, 23 Feb at 5:23pm

David,

I'd be interested in finding out what your (or anybody else's!) Marriage Preparation weekend comprised, as we have just set getting something sorted out here as one of our parish goals for this year.

Yours,
Judie
