

Draft

Three paragraphs on pastoral work shared and to be shared by the two Churches based upon some convergence in their respective theological understandings of marriage and the family, etc.

A. The growth into union of the Churches, though it must await its consummation in a theological accord which as yet lies beyond reach, does not and must not stand still. It will increase, as it has begun, in service and the sharing together of pastoral tasks. The areas of concern in which work together is both possible and necessary are many. One only is instanced because it rests upon solid experience of work done, not upon a mere wish, however laudable, for something which might be done. This instance is of the pastoral service of the Church towards marriage and the family.

B. In recent years there has been a marked convergence of theological understandings of marriage in both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in which the language of sacrament and of covenant both contribute. Whichever language is used, both Churches affirm the marks of permanence and fidelity as characteristic of marriage; both declare the common life of marriage to be a means of grace not only to the married persons and their children but also to the wider community of neighbourhood and kindred in which they are set as a visible realization of Christ's Body; both see men and women as essentially complementary to one another by God's creative ordinance, in the sense that, whether married or unmarried, both they themselves and Church and civil society are properly enriched by the gifts which respectively they have to offer.

C. This common understanding has grown out of pastoral work undertaken in common, and it can encourage much more. Already there is beginning co-operation at the parochial level in the joint preparation of couples for marriage and in the encouragement of the married in the consolidation of their life with that of the Church and in the service of their local communities. This co-operation is shared by priests and lay people, like those trained to be marriage counsellors, and is at the service, not only of mixed or inter-church marriages but also of marriages grounded in a single Church allegiance. Increasingly there is, between the Churches, a sharing of experience and a pooling of professional knowledge and skill in the human and behavioural sciences in the service of marriage and the family. Much more of this is required if the Church of Christ is to shew itself effectively as a community of concern, especially towards those upon whom the pressures of life impose intolerable strains and whose marriages are jeopardized in consequence. In study, research and service, and in training for service, there is a common task which calls for the utmost generosity of the Churches, and a pooling of their resources. It is a matter for deep thankfulness that in this time of need, the Churches are able, because of their growing mutual understanding, to respond to this call together.