Proposed Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill

The Response of the Methodist Church in Ireland

The understanding of marriage as received by the Methodist Church in Ireland is stated as follows: "Marriage is a relationship, intended as permanent, between one man and one woman within which sexual intercourse establishes a unique intimacy. A loving marriage relationship is seen as the only appropriate relationship within which sexual intercourse may take place."

In relation to Part 1 of the proposed Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill - Belief Marriage:

Whilst affirming the Christian understanding of marriage outlined above, the Methodist Church respects the perspectives of others who share our view that the commitments made within marriage provide a basic building block for a healthy society, even if they do not share our Christian belief.

We note the important role of the Registrar General in granting authorisation to persons to conduct marriage ceremonies. We welcome the inclusion of the specific assurance that "The Registrar General must not grant an authorisation to a person…… if the Registrar General considers that the religious or belief body of which the person is a member does not meet such qualifying requirements, as may be prescribed.". We would urge meaningful engagement with religious bodies in relation to the development of regulations pertaining to definition of these "qualifying requirements."

In relation to Part 2 of the proposed Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill – Minimum Age for Marriage or Civil Partnership:

The Methodist Church welcomes this element of the Bill on the basis that it will provide appropriate additional protection for the young and vulnerable and will be consistent with other adult age responsibilities at the age of 18.

We are grateful for the opportunity given to response to this proposed legislation.