**Ireland - Development of Teams**

**From Single Team to Region.**

An encounter between John and Bernadette Blayney and a French Jesuit in the summer of 1963 sowed the first seeds for the development of the Movement in Ireland. Pere de Lavalette introduced them to Father Jack Kelly the following year and exactly 25 years after the first Team met in Paris, the first Irish Team meeting took place in February 1964 and included John and Bernadette and Fr. Jack as the first Chaplin. Fr. Jack had already experience of Teams in France. Harry and Clotilde Meigh travelled from Cheltenham to help in the formation of this first Team.

Ireland then developed as part of the Teams in Great Britain and in 1974 became a Sector of the English Region with Robert and Aoibheann Daly becoming the first Sector Couple. To facilitate the continuing growth, in 1984 the Irish Sector was divided into three Sectors with an Assistant Regional Couple appointed to be responsible for the development of the Teams and were supported by Gerry and Frances Roche and Pat and Mary Molumby. John and Bernadette were the couple responsible for the development that saw Ireland celebrate its 25th anniversary by becoming a separate Region in January 1989.

**Leadership of the Region**

**Sector Couples when Ireland was a Single Sector**

Robert and Aoibheann Daly 1974 – 1984

David and Mary Orr 1976 – 1979

Colin and Catherine Pearse 1979 – 1982

Bart and Anne Flynn 1982 – 1984

**Assistant Regional Couples**

Bart and Anne Flynn 1984 – 1985

David and Mary Orr 1985 – 1988

John and Bernadette Blayney 1988 – 1989

**Regional Couples**

John and Bernadette Blayney 1989 - 1993

John and Elaine Cogavin 1993 - 1997

Seamus and Marie O’ Brien 1997 - 2001

Paddy and Jacinta Quigley 2001 - 2005

Brendan and Moyra Bunting 2005 - 2009

Pat and Carmel Cunneen 2009 - 2013

Tony and Breda Preston 2013 - 2017

James and Elaine Keogh 2017 - 2021

The Region has had many Team members support the various responsibilities over those years as newsletter editors, treasurers, literature and in the running of special events. The spiritual guidance has been provided for the Region on a continuing basis from Fathers Hubert Delaney, Dan Kelliher, Peter Ward, Denis Nulty,(now Bishop Nulty) Declan Hurley and Gerry Cassidy.

**History of Sector Development**

**Dublin Sector**

That first Team formed in 1964 and subsequent Teams were part of the English Region and became an Irish Sector in 1974. In 1984 it became part of the English and Irish Region and from 1989 as a separate Sector of the Irish Region. Since 1989 it has been served faithfully by several Sector Couples and many Chaplains and other couples. The Sector Couples were Alan and Geraldine Pearse, John and Elaine Cogavin, Donal and Katriona O’ Keeffe, Prionsais and Caitlin O’Hallain, Paddy and Jacinta Quigley, Sean and Grainne Misteal, Pat and Carmel Cunneen and Tony and Breda Preston.

**Mullingar Sector**

Teams started in Mullingar in 1979. Oliver and Anne Marie Leavy were encouraged by Fr. Christy Fox of the Mill Hill Fathers, to set up Teams in Mullingar in the Midlands. Their first chaplain was Fr. Michael Smyth, who is now Bishop of Meath and continues in his support. Mullingar became a separate Sector in 1984 and since then has been served by Sector Couples: Oliver and Anne Marie, Seamus and Marie O’ Brien, Tom and Valerie Moore, Gerry and Maeve Clifford, Pat and Jeanie Treanor, Florian and Dermot Leavy and Frank and Margaret Fagan.

**Belfast Sector**

The first Team was formed in Belfast in October 1979 and it became a separate Sector in 1984. Belfast Sector included Teams started in Greenisland and Lisburn. Belfast hosted its first national event with the Responsible Couples weekend in October 1994. The Sector Couples who have served are: Paddy and Ann Scott, Gerry and Margaret Mulhern, John and Nuala McMorrow, Charlie and Maureen McMullan, Michael and Pauline Flanagan, Declan and Deirdre Kennedy and Brendan and Moyra Bunting,

**Cork Sector - now disbanded**

Teams started in Cork in 1982 and became a separate Sector from Dublin in 1992. In 1997 through the piloting of Barry and Geraldine Daly they formed the first Team in Limerick. That same year Cork hosted their first Responsible Couples weekend at the Dominican Retreat Centre in Montenotte overlooking the entire city. Barry and Geraldine were the first Sector Couple and have been followed by: Sean and Edel O’Callanain, Pat O’Donovan and Mary Ryder, Finbarr and Kathleen O’Mahoney.

**Galway Sector**

Liam and Dolores Corcoran from Mullingar piloted the first Team in Galway in 1990. Mullingar continued to provide piloting resource until Galway was formed into a separate Sector in 1998. Stephen and Marguerite O’Neill led the development of Teams in the West since the beginning and not surprisingly became the first Sector Couple for Galway. They were followed by Eddy and Emmie Lloyd, Jack and Anne Hutchinson and Billy and Ann Hyland.

**New Growth**

In 2011 new Teams formed in Navan and Dunshaughlin in Co. Meath and in Sligo where Bishop Christopher Jones has supported the commencement and has journeyed with this first Team as their chaplain. A new team is also under pilot in the Dublin Sector.

**Historic Events and Moments**

**Early Formation**

From the formation of the first Team in February 1964, constant attention was given to the nourishment and growth of the couples, individual Teams and of the Movement in general. Regular information sessions, training and development around the theme of married spirituality and leadership training took place, supported by the English Teams and the International Movement. Good communication with the bishops, priests and religious of the Church throughout Ireland has been a priority from the very beginning. The fruits of this communication are that close relationships always existed. No Team, Sector or the Region has been without a Priest Spiritual Counsellor to this day and every parish where Teams exist is supported strongly in their pastoral activities by Team members.

**Formal Formation**

The most significant event in the history was the establishment of Teams of Our Lady in Ireland as an independent Region in January 1989. From this point the formation was taken on by the Regional leadership. Each year a renewal and development weekend is organized for all Responsible Couples. This weekend session was originally held in Dublin. In 1993 Mullingar became the first Sector outside Dublin to host such a weekend. Since then each Sector hosts the event on a rotational basis. The event in Belfast in 1994 was particularly poignant as it came very soon after the Good Friday Peace Agreement. Cork in 1997 and Galway in 1998 welcomed Team members from all over the country and overseas visitors.

During the four year responsibility of each Regional Couple throughout the work, it is recommended that the Region have a special training and formation conference. Such events focus on deepening and renewing all members in the framework and methods of the Movement, while cultivating a spirit of mission and discipleship. Such Training Sessions have taken place on a regular basis in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008

**International Contribution**

In 1995 the Irish Region made another piece of history when it hosted the meetings of the International Leading Team and the International College of the Movement. Hosted in July at All Hallows College in Dublin, it included delegates from 15 countries who worked together in 5 different languages over the two week period. A major highlight of the College was the hospitality evening hosted by the Irish Region. The evening started with a Eucharistic Celebration where members from all over Ireland prayed and celebrated with the Team members from all over the world. Mass was followed by a magnificent banquet, prepared, transported and served by Team members from each Sector in the country. Belfast brought the ham, Cork desserts, Dublin salads and desserts, Galway the wild salmon and Mullingar the beef. All combined for a truly shared Irish gastronomic experience. Afterwards the international guests were entertained by an Irish Teams concert, something very special indeed.

The International Movement asked that every Region in the world put on a special celebration to mark the 50th Anniversary of the ‘Charter’ in 1997. Perhaps inspired by the International College hospitality night, the Irish Sectors decided to combine again. Returning to All Hallows for an afternoon and evening of spiritual sharing, this time the focus was on the Eucharistic Celebration. A Mass which lasted several hours had the theme **“*Being a Christian Couple in the World Today”.*** Each Sector reflected on a different aspect of the theme and developed it as part of the Liturgy which was celebrated by Father Michael McGinnity from Belfast. Again the evening included a shared meal and concert. All was prepared and delivered by an enthusiastic animation Team.

The Region was honoured by having John and Elaine Cogavin invited to join the International Leading Team (ERI). They served for six years from 2001 to 2007 liaising with the English speaking world other than USA. During their time the Movement grew in new directions with Teams forming for the first time in Korea, Malawi, Czech Republic, Belarus and many French and Spanish speaking African countries. Numbers grew from 7000 to over 10,000 Teams worldwide. They were also part of the first global meeting of all Regional Couples which took place in Rome in 2003. There the leaders of the Movement had a private meeting with Pope John Paul II. The Orientation presented to the Worldwide Movement after the Lourdes Gathering reflected the outputs from that meeting and invited all Teams to study ‘Conjugal Spirituality and the Methods of Équipes Notre-Dame’. During this same period to help in the development, communication and unity of the Movement new structures for the English speaking parts of the world were established. A new Super Region of Oceania led by Australia created the support to reach out to developing Teams in New Zealand and The Philippines, while developing missionary outreach to the Pacific Islands. The Transatlantic Super Region was formed to bring together the English speaking parts of Europe, Africa and the West Indies. This is the Super-Region which the Irish Region is now part of.

Ireland hosted the Transatlantic Super Regional Gathering in July 2013.

Equipes Notre Dame became recognized in the Canons of the Catholic Church as ‘The Movement for Married Spirituality’ in 2002. In 2007 a booklet was published in English to include the Charter, the Canonical Statutes of the Teams of Our Lady and include the Decree of Recognition received from the Vatican.

In 2002 the Movement published a document on collegiality, which had its roots in the Dublin College of 1995. This document sets out how the Movement discerns, communicates and operates in a truly collegial manner. This document is an invaluable resource for all in responsibility.

The International Website www.teams-transatlantic.org carries all current information about the Movement and contains all the historical and spiritual documents of the movement.