**Infertility to IVF**

**Theological, Pastoral and Ethical insights for**

**Couples and Clergy**

**by Nigel John Cairns**

**ABSTRACT**

Infertility can be a devastating experience which, in many cases, is unexpected. For Christian couples finding themselves in these circumstances, infertility can lead to an interrogation of their faith on many levels. Prevailing questions are ones about spirituality, theology, ethics and anthropology. Within the context and parameters of their faith, Christian couples also wonder whether fertility treatment, and in this case in vitro fertilisation (IVF), is a permissible option for them.

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide an overview of some of the main theological, ethical and pastoral considerations for couples who are coming to terms with infertility and/or who are considering pursuing IVF as a therapeutic treatment option. This dissertation is also intended to assist clergy who may be called upon to minister within such a context, with the hope of moving their pastoral response from passive listening to having a baseline knowledge which will enable them to engage with the issues at hand and with questions couples may ask.

It may be helpful for any potential reader to know that I hold a positive general attitude towards IVF treatment. In the course of this work, and as a result of my research, I offer my own conclusions on various issues. There are, however, many Christian perspectives regarding the various issues pertaining to IVF. This research does not seek primarily to answer key questions in a simplistic fashion. It is offered to provide enough information for couples to formulate their own conclusions regarding IVF treatment given their individual circumstances. It is also envisaged that this research will assist clergy in giving effective pastoral care from an informed position.