

COMMUNITY MARRIAGE COVENANT for Religious Bodies in Guilford County

I. *Concern: Marriage Is Sacred*

Our concern as religious leaders is to foster lasting marital unions under God and to establish successful spiritual families. Almost ninety percent of all marriages are performed by religious leaders, and we are troubled by the nearly fifty percent divorce rate. Our hope is to radically reduce the divorce rate among those married in our community.

It is our hope that religious leaders will set minimum requirements to raise the quality of the commitment in those we marry. The goal of the premarital process, including inventories, studying, counseling and mentoring, is to help couples come to a better understanding of what their relationship is about and to clarify their expectations. We hope this process will reinforce their existing strengths as well as assist them in growth areas of their relationship. As agents of God, acting on God's behalf, we believe it is our responsibility to encourage couples to set aside time for marriage preparation instead of concentrating only on wedding plans. While we look forward to celebrating the wedding day, we also look forward to celebrating their lifetime together. We acknowledge that a wedding is but a day; a marriage is for a lifetime.

II. *Marriage Preparation goals to strive for:*

- A. *Waiting period:* A waiting period of at least four months from the initial marital appointment until the wedding date to provide time for reflection and study.
- B. *Premarital Counseling:* At least two sessions that would include a relational instrument or inventory such as Prepare, Myers/Briggs, Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, etc., to help the couple evaluate objectively the maturity of their relationship objectively. We further encourage consideration of faith traditions on marriage, morality and divorce.
- C. *Engagement Seminar:* The couple to participate in a concentrated period of joint introspection in a seminar such as Engaged Encounter or Marriage Preparation through the religious community or community based resources such as the Family Life Council.
- D. *Mentoring Couples:* Each couple to be provided with a mentor couple to provide support and guidance.
- E. *Marital:* Since the first two years of marriage are critical to forming the relationship, we encourage congregations to provide for marriage enrichment.

III. *Covenant:*

- A. Our congregation agrees to work in good faith toward the above goals.
- B. Our congregation pledges to work together with others concerned about marriage in providing training, orientation and support for clergy and congregations in the task of preparing people for marriage.
- C. I pledge to participate in a workshop annually or biennially for the purpose of encouraging each other in this work and improving my skills and knowledge.

Church/Synagogue

Congregational Official's Signature

Date

Pastor, Rabbi, or Priest's Signature