

The Cecil County

Community Marriage Policy

We Believe...

God has established marriage in Scripture.

God intends the marriage bond to be between one man and one woman and to last for a lifetime.

As religious leaders we have a responsibility before God to raise the standard for marriage preparation, enrichment and restoration.

As religious leaders we believe we have a responsibility before God to strengthen and nourish step-families.

Therefore, We Will...

Encourage a courtship of at least one year.

Affirm fidelity in marital relationships.

Educate ourselves and our congregations about the negative effects of premarital sexual activities and cohabitation.

Provide a premarital preparation process of three to six months, which includes premarital mentoring sessions providing spiritual guidance and the use of a premarital inventory such as PREPARE and FOCCUS to be thoroughly reviewed with the couple by a marriage Mentor Couple.

Provide enrichment opportunities in the church and community by marriage retreats, classes on communication, conflict resolution and building intimacy. The provision of an annual in-house marriage enrichment weekend is preferred as the way to make it possible for every couple in the congregation to participate.

Identify, inspire and train couples with strong marriages to serve as marriage mentors for :

Couples in serious relationships (teens, pre-engaged), engaged couples, newlyweds, couples wanting to strengthen their relationship, couples experiencing marital stress, couples in second marriages or with step-children.

Provide mentoring for marriages in crisis and in need of reconciliation and restoration that are at the brink of divorce, primarily through specially trained mentor couples who have reconciled and restored their own relationship.

Cooperate with other congregations in sharing resources and information to enable churches with fewer resources to provide best practices for their members to also build healthy marriages.

Signed by: Clergy of Cecil County , MD

Dated:

AN OPEN INVITATION TO THE CECIL COUNTY FAITH COMMUNITY

This policy is a work in progress and we invite and encourage other churches to become signatories to the policy statement. If you wish to discuss the policy or add your name to the growing list of committed churches please contact:

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PREPARING...

STRENGTHENING...

RESTORING...

Marriage In Our

Community

**MARRIAGE
SIVERS**



Why Do We Need A

Community Marriage Policy?

STRONGER MARRIAGES EQUAL STRONGER COMMUNITIES

What positive change in American family life could improve the over all well-being of married couples and children?

Many believe it is strengthening the marriage relationship and increasing the possibility of children born and reared in healthy, married, two-parent families that will bring this improvement. There is ample research to support the



belief that children of such families have significantly lower rates of poverty, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, delinquency

and substance abuse and are less likely to engage in premarital sex.

Others believe that marriage and family are institutions ordained by God who intended for them to last a lifetime.

Since the vast majority of marriages take place in houses of worship, the clergy can play a critical role in laying and maintaining the foundation of a life-long relationship by...preparing, strengthening, and restoring marriages and providing support to stepfamilies.

The secular community can play an important role by reviewing their organizations and businesses to find ways in which they too can strengthen marital relationships and family life.

DEFINITION: COMMUNITY MARRIAGE POLICY

A set of agreed upon guidelines for premarital preparation and community support for marriage. Its purpose is to empower couples for healthy, life-long marriages by...

- raising the standard for the preparation, strengthening and restoration of marriages
- provide support to step-families
- raising the standard of two parent families in the community



This policy is neither intended to imply criticism of individuals who are members of single-parent families, nor does it advocate that abusive situations should be endured.

CURRENT TRENDS ARE CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Current marriage trends: **United States**

2006 Failure Rate 40%

Current marriage trends: **Maryland**

2006 Failure Rate 46.7%

Details on these numbers and a second method of estimating the divorce rate are available from National Vital Statistics Reports or on our website

www.marriageworkscecilcounty.org

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

Since we, the clergy, have identified what we can do, we challenge the community to also identify and commit to things that it might do to build healthy marriages and families, such as the following:

Identify policies and practices that might inadvertently place undue stress upon marriage and family life and consider providing resources that encourage a strong, healthy family life.

Implement changes in the work place and relationship that will more effectively support marriages and families.

Volunteer time, expertise, influence and resources to support initiatives which promote marriage and stable families.

