

## **Salem-Keizer Community Marriage Covenant**

**June 1999, Updated June 2010**

Affirmation: Marriage is holy

As pastors and ministers in our community, we affirm that God has established marriage as a holy institution. God desires that marriage be honored and esteemed among all people as a life-long commitment between a man and woman. As spiritual leaders for our congregations, we witness both the joys of marriage and the pain of divorce. We are grieved that too many marriages end in separation and/or divorce in Oregon. Because most marriage ceremonies are performed by ministers, we want to ensure that as many marriages as possible are loving, healthy and long-lasting. Research affirms that couples who earnestly engage in premarital preparation will have a better understanding of the marriage relationship and, in turn, have better marriages. By entering into this covenant, we as a community of clergy, desire to increase the percentage of healthy marriages and significantly reduce the divorce rate in Salem-Keizer.

Implementation: Defining minimum expectations

To both establish and nurture healthy marriages, we pledge to adequately prepare and support couples whom we join in marriage. We will invest our best skills and resources to help couples discern their readiness for this sacred relationship, and provide them with encouragement to maintain a healthy marriage for life. As ministers, we agree that the following elements should be included in marital preparation:

1. Couples agree to wait at least four (4) months from the initial marital appointment until the wedding date.
2. Couples agree to participate in at least four (4) premarital preparation sessions or in a marriage preparation course. (This does not include any meeting(s) to plan the ceremony.) As part of the preparation process, we strongly encourage the following:
  - Completion of a relational inventory (such as Prepare/Enrich, Meyers Briggs, TJTA, DISC, or similar.) This will help couples objectively gauge their readiness for marriage.
  - That the couple be sexually abstinent until marriage.
  - Teaching of biblical principles on marriage, morality, and divorce. Topics should include expectations, commitment, communication, prayer, finances, sexuality, conflict resolution and other key issues that affect the marriage relationship.
3. Couples agree to participate in a church or community of faith while preparing for their marriage.
4. Couples agree to participate in at least two (2) post-marital sessions within the first year of marriage with a minister, counselor and/or mentoring couple.
5. Couples agree to participate in enrichment and counseling as necessary for the growth of the marriage relationship.

Covenant: We pledge together

By signing this Community Marriage Covenant, we do not imply that we agree on all doctrinal issues. However we do agree collectively that marriage is holy, critical to the well-being of our society, and worth esteeming. We recognize that each minister's style of implementation may vary, and that each of us has a responsibility before God to make conscientious choices in upholding the sanctity of marriage. We recognize that each of us may face circumstances and variables beyond our control, which might call for adjusting some of the minimum expectations of this covenant in that specific case.

By signing this document, we hereby covenant –together and individually- to do the following:

- Be godly role models in our own marriages and family relationships.
- Implement this covenant as the minimum expectation for all couples we marry.
- Share the purpose and details of this covenant with our congregations.
- Promote and offer resources dedicated to the strengthening of marriages.
- Seek ways to increase our competence in preparing couples for marriage and a life-long relationship.

May God bless and guide each couple seeking to be married in our community, as well as the pastors and ministers who prepare them.