

AN OVERVIEW OF UNITED METHODIST MARRIAGE MINISTRIES

How can our local churches provide effective ministries with marriages and families within their congregations and communities? This field is indeed “ripe for the harvest,” with many families seeking precisely such resources and with new programs and materials proving their effectiveness in a variety of settings.

The devastating impact of marital and family breakdown on individuals and on our society as a whole has been well documented, yet too often we stand by helplessly while families fall apart. We often fail to provide the relationship education and support needed to build strong families whose members enjoy each other and cope effectively with life’s challenges. Powerfully effective programs target various populations with the same message: we can learn the skills to build healthy relationships; we can unravel the emotional tangles that sabotage our families; we can build on family strengths to establish the deep friendship and mutual commitment that undergird lasting marriages and healthy families. Across our denomination, trained leaders and leader couples stand eager to assist congregations in strengthening families, so that each home may become “a haven of blessing and peace,” in which individuals are nourished to grow to their full potential.

The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship has established affiliate relationship with three marriage ministry organizations: The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment; Marriage Encounter United Methodist; and Marriage Enrichment, Inc. Contact information for these and other programs and organizations are listed by annual conference in the **United Methodist Marriage Ministries Directory**, now posted at www.marriagelovepower.net . Please check the listing for your annual conference and others near by and consider how you might utilize these persons’ gifts and training. Perhaps you can enlist them to serve on a marriage and family ministries planning team and/or to provide leadership for specific situations or events. If you know of other marriage and family ministries leaders active in your area, ask if they would be willing to be included in this directory and send their names and contact information to JaneIves@aol.com.

At the www.marriagelovepower.net website you will also find a separate list of contact persons for **Community Marriage Policies**, ecumenical projects which bring together pastors and others licensed to conduct weddings to agree upon common standards and guidelines for marriages in their community. We encourage United Methodists to participate in such covenants! To learn more about Community Marriage Policies, go to www.marriagesavers.org .

This also features an annotated list of **Marriage Ministry Organizations and Programs**; information about *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couples’ Edition and Pastor’s Manual* (the official UM resource for marriage preparation and other aspects of comprehensive marriage ministries; **Additional Resources** (books, programs and organizations, curriculum materials; a **Training Day** model for *Growing Love in Christian Marriage (GLCM)*, and other relevant documents. In addition, you will find

descriptions of **Marriage Ministries Around the United Methodist Connection, Sample Wedding/Marriage Preparation Policies and Procedures**, and a list of **Upcoming Training Opportunities**.

We invite you to participate in this sharing by letting us know about other resources and programs you have found helpful. Please send me information about books, curriculum, organizations, sample wedding/marriage policies and procedures statements, names and contact information for individuals and leader couples, and descriptions of effective programs you have held or in which you have participated.

We want to recruit contact persons for each conference (or area) to encourage marriage ministry, to share information about resources and programs, and to report back to us what is working and what needs attention or support. If you or someone you know would be willing to serve in this way, please let me know.

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