

What Can a Church Do?



Six out of ten marriages survive! That's the good news to proclaim. But we need urgently to raise that figure higher. Marriage breakdown may bring many sad consequences to spouses and to their children: ill health, poverty, under-performance at school and at work, substance abuse, instability in the next generation, and more.

- The Minister and other leaders need to make the strengthening of marriages a **priority**. (Single, divorced and widowed people will be pleased that marriages are to be helped if their own needs are met in other ways.)
- The Minister will usually not have time to do enough, so he/she should **appoint a lay couple** to lead marriage work. The Minister can still contribute to it, as well as overseeing the couple. The couple in turn need another couple to work with them, and yet others (married or single) to pray.
- **Tell the congregation** what the church is doing and why.
- Get an excellent seven minute video on **the benefits of Marriage Preparation** to show to couples who come to arrange their wedding. It can be obtained for £10 from Chris Grimshaw, Sharpham Barton, Totnes, S Devon TQ9 7DX. Couples who have been cohabiting think they have done their own marriage preparation. Statistics show they have not and indeed that cohabitation harms, not helps.
- Find couples in your church who have been married five years or more to be **confidential mentor couples** to the engaged and to young marrieds.
- Train the mentor couples **to use a pre-marriage questionnaire** PREPARE or FOCCUS with couples soon after they book their wedding. These questionnaires, or "inventories", are much the best way of enabling a couple to get to know all about each other, and about their hopes and expectations for the future.
- For **PREPARE** contact John Deagle, Southampton Voluntary Services, Voluntary Action Centre, Kingsland Square, St Mary Street, Southampton SO14 1NW Tel: 023 8021 6003 Email: prepare-enrich@scft.org.uk Website: www.prepare-enrich.co.uk
For **FOCCUS** contact Nick Gulliford, Quel Bec, Cothelstone, Taunton TA4 3ED Tel: 01823 432420 Email: nick@affinities.org.uk Website: www.affinities.org.uk
- Put on a **marriage enhancement course** at least once a year and invite all couples in the church. A marriage enhancement course is to make any marriage better than it is now. From the second course onwards encourage church members to invite non-church-going couples, so that the community benefits.
- Encourage **husbands or wives with difficulties** to look for help early. Most leave it too late. The Minister should ask couples who have survived severe marriage difficulties to make themselves known to him/her confidentially, so some can be available to help others. This is the most effective way to save marriages.

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Smaller churches can work together with other churches.

The Marriage Resource web site gives much more help, so that any church can develop its work for marriages. The page 'Taking Marriage Seriously in Your Church' gives more detailed reasons for the urgency of this task. See also the pages on Marriage Preparation, Mentoring, Marriage Enhancement, and Helping Marriages in Difficulties.