

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

The Session¹ of Second Presbyterian Church expresses our profound concern for the integrity and sanctity of marriage and family in both the Church and our society. We are especially concerned for the families of Second Presbyterian Church. God has spoken to us in His Word, which we believe is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, clearly defining the nature of marriage, how we are to function in our families, and the urgency of obedience; yet we have often gone our own way, to our own undoing. There is great pleasure and much good in the Christian home; there is great pain and much evil in violating God's Word.

THE CHRISTIAN AND MARRIAGE

We commend to all of God's people the following scriptural guidelines for Christian marriage:

Christian marriage is a union between believers, one man and one woman, each of whom credibly professes faith in Jesus Christ and believes in salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Marriage is designed by God to last as long as they both shall live. God instituted marriage for the mutual help and satisfaction of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and developing of their moral and spiritual character; and for the propagation or adoption of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.²

Marriage is a covenant in which both partners solemnly swear their fidelity to one another, picturing the covenant that Jesus Christ has unconditionally made with His bride, the Church. This covenant is made by vow (just as God's covenant with us includes His solemn oath)³ and is sealed, or consummated, by sexual union, which is reserved only for this covenantal marriage relationship. God's standard is chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards. The Scriptures teach that Christians should marry only other Christian believers sharing a common faith and a deeply-held commitment to build a Christian home.⁴ We recognize, however, that not all Christians experience a common depth of knowledge, understanding, and conviction, and that often one grows in knowledge, understanding, and conviction after marriage.

Due to the solemnity and binding nature of the marriage covenant, persons considering engagement should seek God's will through prayer and the counsel and consent of their families and also their pastors before engaging to be married. After a couple becomes engaged, further pastoral counsel is essential to prepare them for marriage.⁵

Our pastoral counseling includes such topics as the following:

- a discussion of the couple's spiritual backgrounds
- the biblical foundation of marriage and Christian engagement
- implications of each partner's family background
- communication and interpersonal relationships

¹ We gratefully acknowledge the considerable help received from the "Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage" by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

² Genesis 1:27,28; Romans 10:9,10; Ephesians 5:21-33 and Ephesians 6:1-4; Malachi 2:13-16

³ cf. Hebrews 6:13-20; 7:20-22

⁴ Malachi 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 11 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Psalm 127:1

⁵ When the prospective couple is out of town or otherwise unable to meet regularly with one of our pastors or counselors, our pastors will help the couple locate a suitable, accessible, counselor and will gladly correspond and coordinate with all parties.

- conflict resolution
- relating successfully to future in-laws
- the roles of husband and wife
- financial management
- the sexual relationship
- child-bearing and rearing
- a shared spiritual life in the home and church
- the tragic consequences of divorce

Our pastors may refer the couple to Christian psychologists or counselors to explore additional issues. As the wedding date approaches, the pastor and other church staff will help the couple prepare a marriage service that is worshipful and distinctively Christian.

After marriage, the couple should seek the Lord's will and pleasure in every way, through reading the Scriptures and praying together, and by living together in Christian love and forgiveness. The couple should be vitally involved in the life of Christ's Church and regularly take advantage of the ministries offered them. Couples at all stages of marriage should continue to look for and participate in opportunities to build and maintain a strong Christian marriage, such as MidWeek classes, small groups, books, tapes, marriage seminars and retreats. It is important to realize that a successful marriage requires continual and persistent hard work.

When serious conflicts cannot be resolved, a couple, or even one partner if the other is unwilling, should seek pastoral or other counsel within the church immediately. Too often, troubled marriages fail because the couple is too proud to seek help until a crisis has occurred and opportunities for reconciliation are severely limited.

THE CHRISTIAN AND DIVORCE

We affirm at the outset that any discussion of divorce should be conducted in a spirit of genuine humility. Difficult ethical problems arise in any divorce, and completely innocent parties are seldom to be found. Few experiences in life are more agonizing than the breakdown of a marriage. It is often exceedingly difficult to know and to do what is right, but with prayerful and diligent study of God's Word, we can build a godly foundation for decision-making.

Because human beings are sinful, they may devise a multitude of reasons why marriages should be dissolved. The Scriptures, however, give explicit sanction for divorce only in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or in the case of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion. We recognize that there are marriages which require extended counsel and insight in determining whether a couple should divorce, separate, or live together as a married couple in a strained and difficult relationship. Examples of these cases are drug, alcohol, gambling, or pornography addictions, violent physical abuse, internet affairs, and extra-marital romantic liaisons. While it is not the purpose or intent of this paper to deal with every type of marital conflict, we do emphasize the need for seeking the wisdom of the church and other godly counsel in determining God's will in difficult marital relationships.

In all cases, the couple should not rely on individual judgment alone, but should seek the counsel of pastors and elders who will explore carefully all possibilities for reconciliation and who will also minister to those whose marriages may end in divorce.⁶ We emphasize the necessity for actively seeking guidance from the church in these situations due to the magnitude of hurt, anger, and lack of objectivity that often exists when one or both partners in a marriage have committed a serious violation of the marriage covenant.

Divorce inevitably represents a violation of God's standards, but in His infinite mercy and wisdom, God regulates divorce and provides the way for healing and recovery. As we look at the Old and New Testaments, we must be sure to follow His Word on these matters.

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, marriage is instituted in Genesis 2 when God brings Eve to Adam to be his helpmate. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."⁷ The phrase "be united" is a

⁶ Matthew 5:31,32, 19:1-15; 1 Corinthians 7

⁷ Genesis 2:24

covenantal term that emphasizes the commitment of marriage and is used elsewhere for the Israelites to “hold fast” to the Lord with love and loyalty.⁸ God’s plan for the marriage covenant is the same as His covenant with His people.

Divorce, on the other hand, although an allowed practice in Old Testament times, was neither commanded nor encouraged. The Mosaic Law, in general, assumed the practice of divorce and regulated it but did not condone it.⁹

In fact, the prophet Malachi affirms that God hates divorce, and because of multiple divorces in Israel, God

“no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.”

“Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.”

“I hate divorce,’ says the Lord God of Israel, ‘and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,’ says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith.”¹⁰

The New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus comments upon practices in Old Testament times and calls His people to be faithful to the will of God as expressed in the Old Testament. Jesus said,

“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way in the beginning.”¹¹

“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that the Creator made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate.”¹²

Nevertheless, the New Testament explicitly permits divorce in circumstances of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion by one who acts as an unbeliever. (It is important to note that since, under Mosaic law, adultery was punishable by stoning, that case is not discussed in the Old Testament.)

a. Adultery or other gross sexual immorality

In Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:3-9, Jesus cites “marital unfaithfulness” (Greek: *porneia*) as the grounds for divorce. *Porneia* refers to gross sexual immorality, which breaks the one-flesh principle. Matthew uses this broad Greek word rather than the Greek word *moicheia*, which refers to adultery in a narrow sense, i.e. sexual union with someone other than one’s spouse. We thus conclude that Jesus allowed divorce in cases of adultery (in the narrow sense) and gross sexual immorality that breaks the one-flesh principle.

b. Willful, irremediable and prolonged desertion

In I Corinthians 7:12-15, the Scriptures cite the case of a man who becomes a Christian after marriage. His wife, however, remains an unbeliever but is willing to continue living with him. The injunction is that he is not to divorce her. But if she were to leave him she is to be allowed to do so. This case of desertion is the abandonment of the marriage by an unbelieving spouse, which the Christian spouse, with the help of his/her elders, is unable to reconcile. “When deserted, the believing man or woman is not bound,” that is, he or she is free to divorce.¹³

8 Joshua 22:5

9 Leviticus 21:7,14; 22:13; Numbers 30:9; Deuteronomy 22:19, 29; 24:1-4

10 Malachi 2:13-16

11 Matthew 19:8

12 Matthew 19:4-6

13 Some might wonder how irremediable desertion can be accepted as an allowable ground for divorce when Jesus said that only “marital

Sometimes, to our great sorrow, there is a severe breakdown of a marriage – so much so that even two believers may be advised to separate for a period of healing and to facilitate reconciliation. In such a circumstance, there should be pastoral and Christian psychological counseling, strategies and attempts to move toward reconciliation as soon as possible, and absolutely no consideration of divorce or romantic relationships with other parties. In the case when two believers separate or even if they disobediently divorce one another, the Apostle Paul said “such persons must remain unmarried (or separated) or be reconciled to one another.”

Scripture’s teaching, then, is that any divorce which takes place on any grounds other than adultery or other gross sexual immorality or willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion represents a breaking of the marriage vow and, therefore, is a breach of personal integrity and has no sanction from God. However, in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable and prolonged desertion, an offended spouse is within his/her rights to divorce without reproach from the Lord and His Church.^{14,15}

The Session of Second Presbyterian Church has adopted the following position:

“It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution except that caused by the death of husband or wife. However, in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion, which cannot be remedied in any way by the church, it is allowable for the offended party to sue for divorce. In considering the possibility of separation or divorce, the persons involved must not rely solely upon their own desires but should seek counsel from the church, because the corrupt nature of humankind is inclined to create and support arguments for the wrong separation of those whom God has joined together in marriage.

The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the church, in keeping with the Word of God, and after proper deliberation concerning each person’s eligibility and suitability for marriage. Clearly, in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion which cannot be remedied in any way by the church, the offended party may divorce and after the divorce may marry someone else, as if the offending party were dead.¹⁶

At the same time, the Bible never commands believers to divorce, even in the case of adultery. Through the healing power of God’s grace, even the greatest offenses can be overcome and the most troubled relationships restored. But even in cases where marital reconciliation is not advisable or possible, it is always incumbent upon Christians to forgive each other, no matter how grievous the sin, because in Christ we have been completely forgiven all of our sins.¹⁷

In the case where the parties involved proceed to divorce without biblical grounds, the Session will seek to maintain lines of communication and exhibit love to both husband and wife. The elders may ask other church members to help them reach out to couples and families in special need. In some cases, the elders may seek to help by applying some of the principles and practices of the EPC Book of Discipline, as embraced in our church membership and ordination vows. Our church is determined to use all the means provided by God through His love and grace for the health and restoration of our families.¹⁸

A divorce does not end our efforts to encourage and strengthen the lives and families of Second Presbyterian Church. The Scriptures, our Evangelical Presbyterian Church Constitution, and the love we have for one another require us as a church to continue to encourage and exhort one another to righteousness, “and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”¹⁹

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unfaithfulness” was sufficient cause for divorce. Working in the new Gentile environment, Paul further explicated the meaning of porneia when he taught that abandonment, or desertion, was, in effect, a form of marital unfaithfulness – a forsaking of the sexual union in marriage. Paul taught clearly in I Corinthians 7:5 that marriage partners are not to “deprive each other” for extended periods, except by mutual consent for seasons of prayer. Irremediable desertion entails “sexual immorality,” because it forsakes the physical union.

14 1 Corinthians 7:11

15 Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:12,15; Malachi 2:16

16 The Session of Second Presbyterian Church has adopted an amended version of Chapter XXIV of the WCF, which it believes more accurately expresses the biblical teaching and the historic Presbyterian view on this issue, as opposed to the more recent chapter adopted by the PCUS and PCUSA, as well as our own EPC. *See Appendix A.*

17 Matthew 18:21-35 Ephesians 4:32

18 Matthew 18:15-17

19 Hebrews 10:15-25

In God's infinite kindness, He continues to guide us as our Good Shepherd, even when we have failed to carry out His original design for marriage.

In the case of a biblically warranted divorce, we believe the Scriptures teach that one is free to remarry in the Lord, since there are no lingering obligations to remain unmarried.²⁰

When separation or divorce occurs without biblical grounds, the individuals involved must remain single or be reconciled to their spouse. Jesus teaches that those who are involved in an improper remarriage commit adultery.²¹

If a former spouse has remarried or unilaterally refuses reconciliation in such a way as to reveal himself or herself to be, in effect, a deserting unbeliever, remarriage to another person becomes a valid option for the offended party.²² The former marriage relationship and all lingering obligations to remain single have been permanently broken.

Following a divorce and before entering into a romantic relationship with another person, there should always be a very careful process of exploring the past through pastoral counseling and personal reflection to establish one's eligibility for remarriage according to Scripture and to discover helpful lessons for the future. We also encourage all believers to remember the Apostle Paul's special words of encouragement for the single life, a lifestyle badly undervalued in our own day.²³ In all circumstances, we encourage one to seek prayerfully God's will and godly counsel within the Church.

What about those cases in which people have been involved in an unbiblical divorce before becoming believers and have since remarried? We encourage such individuals to seek God's gracious forgiveness with the assurance that He will forgive them and accept their present marriage.²⁴

Does this mean that in this case God has changed or lowered His standards? Not at all. It does mean, however, that divorce and remarriage, even under sinful circumstances, serious though they be, are not unforgivable sins and, as with all other transgressions, are covered by the blood of Christ.

A CALL TO THE CONGREGATION

We are committed to the encouragement of Christian marriages, and we are also deeply committed to the healing and recovery of God's people, regardless of the circumstances.

Anyone who has been involved in the extraordinary trauma of divorce knows that the pain of the spouses and children is far greater than one normally imagines. The extended families are also greatly affected.

We especially sympathize with those who were not aware of what the Bible teaches on these issues, thus unknowingly making grievous mistakes. In addition, we are profoundly thankful for those saints, either single or married, who have obediently persevered or suffered in order to follow Christ's teachings on marriage.

We encourage all those struggling in their marriages not to withdraw from the fellowship of the Church (which is often the tendency), but rather to seek the help, guidance, and encouragement of God's people. This often means dealing with some painful emotional and spiritual realities. It also means building a Christian plan for the future. Christ's Church must always be a place of healing as we minister the truth in love.

In light of Scripture's clear teaching on the sanctity of marriage and God's strong opposition to divorce, Second Presbyterian cannot condone the easy accessibility to divorce in our contemporary society. Increasingly, we must emphasize the lifelong

20 Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:15,17; 1 Corinthians 7:39

21 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:3-9

22 1 Corinthians 7:12-17

23 The Scriptures portray both the married life and the single life as gifts of God. The Apostle Paul, who was single, describes the single life as one of great fulfillment and undistracted service to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:17-35). Among other notable single adults who greatly affected the Kingdom are John the Baptist, Anna (Luke 2:31-40), and Lydia (Acts 16:11-15).

24 Psalms 32:3-5; Micah 7:18-19; 1 John 1:9

commitment implicit in the marriage covenant and especially in Christian marriage, which should be a constant witness to God's character, His created order, and to Christ's covenant with his bride, the Church. We, the Session, therefore, lovingly and respectfully call the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church as follows:

- As we love each other, we must continue to exhort and encourage each other toward Christ-likeness.
- We believe it is our sacred obligation to teach our young people about God's design for marriage and His grace, which helps us fulfill this design.
- We also believe that it is the privilege and responsibility of all Christians to seek counsel and help in the Church when there is any consideration of marriage or remarriage or any serious problem in their marriages. They certainly must do so when there is potential for separation or divorce.
- Likewise, every Christian is obligated to encourage his or her friends and fellow believers to follow biblical practices and to seek pastoral counsel when considering marriage or when there is potential for separation or divorce.

In a very real sense, our families and their spiritual strength and well-being belong to us all as the community of Christ.

OUR RESOLUTION

We know that only the Holy Spirit Himself can preserve the integrity of our families, and so we earnestly desire to submit ourselves as officers in His Church to further His Kingdom.

We begin, then, with our own lives as officers.

While all Christians are admonished to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ,²⁵ we who are elected²⁶ to positions of leadership in the church have an especially solemn responsibility to behave in an exemplary manner in every area of our lives, including our marriages and families.²⁷

As elders, we recommit ourselves to this calling and to the obligation to hold our fellow officers accountable for our behavior and our teachings. We ask the congregation to pray for us, for we are sinful, needy people.

Secondly, we recommit ourselves to prayer and to ministering the Word of God in all of its love and power to our family at Second Presbyterian. We believe to be true what we have published in this call to our congregation, and we know that truth leads to goodness, and goodness leads to health and blessing. We surely shall at times fail through inconsistencies or lack of wisdom, but we trust nonetheless that God, through His grace, will use His Church to bless and protect His people.

We want to pay special attention to our young families and shall continue to provide multiple programs and opportunities for growth, support, and encouragement to couples at all stages of their married life. We also want to provide the same level of care and encouragement to those who are single, whether never married or divorced. We are grateful to God for the many resources He has given us to carry out these ministries at Second Presbyterian Church.

We especially express our gratitude to Almighty God for the exceeding excellence and beauty of His creation, having made us male and female, and having given us the institution of the family. Our desire, above all, is to glorify Him in our families and in all our relationships.

²⁵ Philippians 1:27

²⁶ We believe that a person who is divorced in accord with biblical principles, whether remaining single or having remarried, may serve as a church officer. We must exercise special care, however, in the case of persons considered for church office who have divorced or remarried on unbiblical grounds. In such situations, responsibility for one's failures must be acknowledged and repentance for sin expressed. The persons concerned must have been rehabilitated sufficiently in the confidence and respect of other Christians as to be able to fulfill in an exemplary way the requirements of church office with regard to marital and family relationships. The Session should consider that even when such care is exercised, there may be circumstances in which it would be inadvisable, even though technically permissible, for such divorced or remarried persons to serve as church officers. Community awareness of the situation might also be considered so that not even apparent scandal be attached to the church.

²⁷ 1 Timothy 3:4-5,12

APPENDIX A

The Second Presbyterian Church Sessional Version of Chapter XXIV of the Westminster Confession of Faith approved on October 18, 1999
Chap. XXIV – Of Marriage and Divorce

- I. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, designed of God to last so long as they both shall live.
- II. Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character; for the propagation or adoption of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- III. All persons who are able with judgment to give their consent may marry, except within the limits of blood relationship forbidden by Scripture, and such marriages are valid before God in the eyes of the Church. But no marriage can be fully and securely Christian in spirit or in purpose unless both partners are committed to a common Christian faith and to a deeply shared intention of building a Christian home. Christians should seek as partners in marriage only those who trust in Christ and believe in salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone and who have joined a true Christian Church.
- IV. Marriage for the Christian has religious as well as civil significance. The distinctive contribution of the church in performing the marriage ceremony is to affirm the divine institution of marriage; to invoke God's blessing upon those who enter into the marital relationship in accordance with His Word; to hear the vows of those who desire to be married; and to assure the married partners of God's grace within their new relationship.
- V. It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution except that caused by the death of husband or wife. However, in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion which cannot be remedied in any way by the Church, it is allowable for the offended party to sue for divorce. In considering the possibility of separation or divorce, the persons involved must not rely solely upon their own desires but should seek counsel from the Church because the corrupt nature of humankind is inclined to create and support arguments for the wrong separation of those whom God has joined together in marriage.
- VI. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the Church, in keeping with the Word of God, and after proper deliberation concerning each person's eligibility and suitability for marriage. Clearly, in the case of adultery or other gross sexual immorality or of willful, irremediable, and prolonged desertion which cannot be remedied in any way by the Church, the offended party may divorce and after the divorce may marry someone else, as if the offending party were dead.

APPENDIX B

EPC version of the Westminster Confession of Faith
Chap. XXIV – Of Marriage and Divorce

- I. Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, designed of God to last so long as they both shall live.
- II. Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character; for the propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- III. All persons who are able with judgment to give their consent may marry, except within the limits of blood relationship forbidden by Scripture, and such marriages are valid before God in the eyes of the Church. But no marriage can be fully and securely Christian in spirit or in purpose unless both partners are committed to a common Christian faith and to a deeply shared intention of building a Christian home. Evangelical Christians should seek as partners in marriage only persons who hold in common a sound basis of evangelical faith.
- IV. Marriage for the Christian has religious as well as civil significance. The distinctive contribution of the church in performing the marriage ceremony is to affirm the divine institution of marriage; to invoke God's blessing upon those who enter into the marital relationship in accordance with His Word; to hear the vows of those who desire to be married; and to assure the married partners of God's grace within their new relationship.
- V. It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by the death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows; yet only in cases of extreme, unrepented of, and irremediable unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. Such separation or divorce is accepted as permissible only because of the failure of one or both of the partners, and does not lessen in any way the divine intention for insoluble union.
- VI. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the Church, in keeping with the redemptive gospel of Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm purpose of and endeavor after Christian marriage is manifested.
- VII. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious question as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union.

RESOURCES AT SECOND

Our church has been working hard to bring all of the resources God has made available to us to help grow strong marriages and to restore troubled marriages. Members of our staff, the Christian Psychological Center (CPC) staff, and trained and dedicated lay people give countless hours to these ministries. There is also a large body of literature, as well as video and audio cassettes available as resources through our church bookstore and library. Resources available include:

I. The Single Life and Single Again

A. Congregational Communities at Second

1. College Class

This is a community geared towards undergraduate students and those of college age that gathers for Sunday School, small groups, retreats, etc.

2. Crossroads

This ministry of fellowship and encouragement is geared towards graduate students and young professionals in their twenties.

3. Singles at Second (SAS)

This class is for single adults 40 years and up. The focus is primarily on expositional Bible teaching with a strong emphasis on practical application to the life of the single person. (There are MidWeek Bible studies, recreational activities, retreats and other events which build community life.)

B. Special Ministries for those recovering from divorce

1. Divorce Recovery – MidWeek

Our church pioneered this ministry in Memphis and through staff, CPC counselors and trained lay facilitators, brings needed healing for those going through the pain of divorce.

2. Rainbows – MidWeek

This is a time for children of parents experiencing the devastation of divorce to find a safe place to deal with the issues facing them at this difficult time. Contact Children's Ministries for more information.

3. Single Parent Families

This diaconate team seeks to nurture, encourage, and support single parents through a variety of ministries including monthly dinners and regular seminars.

II. Pre-Marital

A. Prepare and Enrich – Assessment Tool

This assessment of engaged couple's expectations and skills that they bring to marriage has been an accurate predictor of areas of strengths and weaknesses. Pastors go over the implications with couples. It is part of the Preparing for Marriage Course.

B. Pastoral Counseling

Three to four sessions with one of our pastoral staff is the norm for couples getting married at Second Presbyterian. They cover marriage from both a biblical and practical framework.

C. Mentoring

Men, women and those anticipating marriage can connect with those older in the faith to learn specific marriage and relational skills through a mentoring ministry that is facilitated through our Congregational Communities (Sunday School Classes).

VII. Marriage Enrichment

D. Congregational Community Ministry

Some of our C.C.s focus intentionally on the dynamics of marriage, particularly in the early years. Every three years or so we begin a new class designed especially to assist young couples in the dynamics of healthy marriage. Currently, Marriage 101, 242, Honeymooners for Life, Covenant Keepers, and Sojourners have this special emphasis.

E. Marriage & Parenting Classes – MidWeek

These intermittent classes help build strong marriage skills while teaching parenting skills for those who have children and teens. Watch the MidWeek brochure for details.

F. Family Camp – Labor Day Weekend

This annual camp provides time for couples and families to be together in a spiritual environment and to focus on truths that help build strong families.

G. Marriage Retreats/Conferences

Congregational Communities will often schedule their own marriage enrichment retreats to encourage couples in their spiritual walk as well as in their marriage.

III. Marriage Restoration

A. Congregational Community Shepherding

We are working toward the day when most marriage difficulties will have loving intervention by our C.C. shepherding team and the shepherding elders in our classes. The “Love one another” command calls us to loving involvement through encouragement early in marital difficulties and is often the best remedy against progressive problems.

B. Pastoral/CPC Counseling

Our pastors and the CPC staff bring complementary skills for counseling help. You may contact either directly.

C. Diaconate Ministry Teams

Our deacons provide a variety of ministries, some of which are of great help to those going through marital difficulties. These include: Single Parent Ministry, Career Support Ministry.

D. Restoration and Peacemakers

God cares very much how we handle problems such as family communication, personal or business disputes, or dysfunctional relationships. Our Restoration and Peacemakers Ministry seeks to heal strained or broken relationships following the plan given by Christ in Matthew 18. Ministry team members work under the authority of the Church Session with the supervision of the Restoration and Peacemakers Committee and our pastoral staff.

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