

UNITED METHODIST MARRIAGE and FAMILY MINISTRIES Overview

How can our churches strengthen marriages and families in our congregations and communities? This field is “ripe for the harvest,” with many families in need of support and with many creative and effective research-based programs and resources readily available.

The devastating impact of marital and family breakdown on individuals and on our society as a whole has been well documented; yet too often our churches seem to stand by helplessly while families fall apart. Many fail - perhaps because they do not know where to start - to provide the relationship education and support needed to build strong families that can cope effectively with life’s challenges. Yet numerous effective programs target various populations with this positive 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 needed to 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 (now Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church) has historically partnered with two marriage ministry organizations: Better Marriages, formerly The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (www.bettermarriages.org) and Marriage Encounter United Methodist (www.encounter.org). Contact information for persons trained through these and other programs and organizations are listed by annual conference in the **United Methodist Marriage Ministries Directory**, posted at www.marriagelovepower.net and at the Discipleship Ministries website.* Please check this listing for your annual conference and nearby areas and consider how you might utilize these persons’ gifts and training. Perhaps you can enlist them to work with marriage and family ministries planning teams and/or to provide leadership for specific situations or events. If you know of other marriage and family ministries leaders active in your area, please send their names and contact information to me at Janepives@gmail.com so that I can invite them into this network.

The *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couples’ Edition* and *Pastor’s Manual, Third Editions* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), the official UM marriage preparation resources, also offer ideas for comprehensive and ongoing marriage and family ministries. Two websites (www.marriagelovepower.net and the Discipleship Ministries website*) provide supplementary and regularly updated resources, including a list of **Upcoming Events and Training Opportunities** scheduled for different locations and “**Best Practices Articles and Recommended Resources**” documents for various aspects of marriage and family ministries (**Relationship Education for Children, Youth, and Young Adults; Marriage Preparation; Marriage Education and Enrichment; and Crisis, Transitions, and Special Situations**). At these websites, you will also find descriptions of **marriage and family ministries offered around the UM connection**, a **Training Day** model for *Growing Love in Christian Marriage*, and **sample Wedding/Marriage Preparation Policies and Procedures**.

Please help encourage marriage and family ministries throughout our connection by sharing with me information about books, curriculum kits, DVD programs, organizations, wedding/marriage policies and procedures statements, names and contact information for other 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 and family ministries, 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.

*<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>
(search by title or topic)

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