

## Reminiscing

A number of pastors have shared that couples came to them several years ago for a quicky marriage. When told they would need to wait four months and receive premarital preparation, couples would comment that that is what another church had told them, as they went out the door seeking yet another church. Pastors were elated that together they were making a positive impact on marriage on their community.

Remember signing the Clackamas County Marriage Policy (CCMP), perhaps ten years ago? Pastors from 170+ area churches pledged that if they would uphold the following minimum standards for the marriages in their care. Our contract stated we would:

- Promote sexual purity and abstinence outside of marriage.
- Teach faithfulness within marriage.
- Encourage a courtship of at least one year which includes at least four months marriage preparation.
- Require a minimum of four mentoring sessions, utilizing both Scripture and a premarital inventory.
- Endeavor to train mature, married couples to serve as mentors to work with seriously dating and engaged couples, newlyweds, blended families, and those experiencing marital difficulties.
- Schedule two post-marital counseling sessions within the first year of marriage.
- Provide marriage enrichment opportunities, such as classes, small groups, and/or retreats, to build and strengthen marriages.
- Support marriage and families in prayer.

Reviewing 2001-2011 Clackamas County stats, from the time we began the CCMP, show the divorce rate has fallen 20%! And at least 2100 children didn't experience the trauma of the dissolution of their parent's homes. There doesn't appear to be any major influence other than that of pastors and their marriage leaders. Congratulations, you've done well. However, the divorce rate had dropped 28% through 2008; we've now lost 8% of that gain these past few years. Now would be a great time to evaluate and enhance your congregation's marital offerings.

Next month we'll offer a closer look into the marital statistics of our three county metro area.