

*Worldwide Marriage Encounter
Engaged Encounter United Methodist
Clergy Précis*



An experience for couples seeking a life-giving relationship with each other, with the church and with God.

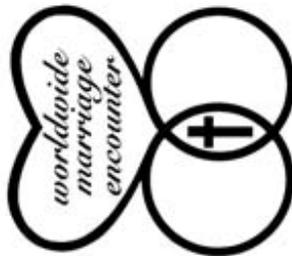


Purpose of the weekend

- To create and renew the couple relationship
- To renew the couple relationship with God
- To renew the United Methodist Church

This précis is to enlighten clergy of the scope and quality of the Marriage and Engaged Encounter programs. It is not suggested that this précis be copied or distributed to participating couples. The joy and enthusiasm of a relationship building experience is enhanced by the extemporaneous dynamics for each couple as the weekend unfolds.

Address Service Requested



Why?

How many times do couples say to each other, “We need to take some time for just the two of us.” Couples dearly love each other, yearn for an intimate and more fulfilling relationship, but time is scarce in our society.

In time, most couples sense the “romance” of earlier years has diminished. The effort to regain that joy seems too difficult to rekindle and the spouse is taken for granted.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter were developed specifically to equip couples with the knowledge and communication skills necessary to grow through the barriers that seem to arise in couple relationships. For couples who care for each other and desire deeper relationships, Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter can provide a proven sound communication tool useful for the rest of their lives. It is psychologically sound and based on theological and doctrinal concepts of the United Methodist Church. "We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman." *2004 Book of Discipline* paragraph 161 p. 99

Benefits For The Church...

In recent years, society has lowered the standards and commitments of marriage relationships. Couples with “good” marriages are subjected to alternatives to marriage which seem more commonplace than quality marriage enhancement programs. Couples with communication difficulties have a tendency to “hide” them from the pastor, church and friends until the barriers and problems are almost too enormous to overcome and they are unable to rebuild the faith, loyalty and trust of earlier years.

Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter are positive programs for couples who cherish their relationship, who desire to maintain a high standard for their marriage and who are willing to seek perfection in their “walk” with each other and with God.

Couples returning to the church after a weekend experience seem to have a renewed image of themselves, a renewed commitment to God and a renewed vision of the church as it reaches out to the community.

Relationship to the Church

The General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church in 1985 endorsed Covenant Inc., the non-profit organization affiliated with Worldwide Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter.

Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter programs are in conformity to the principles of the United Methodist Church as an Affiliate Organization of the General Board of Discipleship.

Covenant Inc. is not funded by the church nor does it give monies to the church. The relationship is reciprocal for mutual endorsement.

Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter pledges to encourage couples to return their couple love to the church for the benefit of others and to the strengthening of the Body of Christ. The strength of the church is related to the strength of the couple’s relationship with God.

For More Information

Couples who have attended weekends are available to present information talks to couples interested in either Marriage Encounter or Engaged Encounter. In a prepared presentation, the couple shares their views and benefits from the weekend, then answer any questions of those in attendance.

A video tape depicting a portion of a weekend and couple testimonials is available for viewing upon request.

Bulletin inserts, reservation forms, posters, and other publicity materials are available by contacting the couple listed below.

or

www.encounter.org

Healing In Marriage: Shows how healing in marriage extends marriage as a covenant to its fullest. Creates an understanding that hurts are bound to happen and to strive for the presence of healing in their relationship.

Sharing The Vision: Provides an opportunity for couples to make a life-giving decision to commit part of themselves—time, treasures, and talents—to the Engaged Encounter vision.

Closing Service: Draws the weekend to a close with a worship service.

A Brief History

Marriage Encounter is rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition as it was developed in Spain in the 1950's. So dramatic was the program's impact on couple communications, that it was brought to the United States in 1968.

Several United Methodist lay and clergy couples who had attended Catholic weekends saw the value of such a program and shared the dream of Worldwide Marriage Encounter for United Methodists. After reviewing and tailoring the program to United Methodist tradition and theology, concurrent weekends were held in October 1976 in New York, Kansas, and Colorado.

Since then, thousands of lay and clergy couples have attended Worldwide Marriage Encounter United Methodist Weekends in the United States.

Engaged Encounter began in the Roman Catholic church in Detroit Michigan in 1968. It is an out growth of the Marriage Encounter experience.

Engaged Encounter United Methodist began in Tucson, Arizona in 1981 where 4 couples who had attended a Marriage Encounter United Methodist weekend met with some Catholic couples and with their help adapted their outline to United Methodist traditions and theology. The first United Methodist Engaged Encounter weekend was held in Arizona in 1984. It is the vision of Engaged Encounter to have weekends available to all engaged couples.

Benefits To The Couple...

Couples receive sound practical down-to-earth advice about marital communications.

Couples discover the intimacy they can share, which is seldom depicted by the media and society standards prevalent today.

Couples realize that they are not alone; that others experience similar feelings, needs, challenges, and problems; and they also share similar hopes, dreams and goals for their relationship.

Couples explore and apply God's desire for marriage and how it correlates between the faith commitment to each other and the willingness to work at the marriage.

Couples are exposed to their faith community and the care that the church has for them...that God their pastor, family and friends want the best for their marriage.

Belief

Marriage is a sacred covenant relationship, a dynamic, growing inter-action and devotion between spouses who faithfully love and cherish each other. This covenant is modeled from God's unconditional love through Jesus Christ—God present in our world.

The mystery of being in love and marriage is an experience of the love call of God. The marriage constitutes and signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and His Church.

Weekend Structure

Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter are presented by married couples; one is a pastor and spouse and the others are lay couples, all of whom have attended previous weekends and are members of the United Methodist Church.

Throughout the weekend, presentations are given with time to reflect as individuals upon each presentation with a question leading them to discoveries in their own relationship and perspectives. Then time is provided for each couple to share their responses openly and honestly in private.

Opportunities for group sharing are limited and participants are encouraged to share only if they desire.

Who Conducts The Weekend?

The ages and marital experience of the presenting couples combine to present peer-relatedness, maturity and the spirituality of Christian marriage and family life. Presenting couples strive to live in an open and caring relationship. Their personal experiences are shared lovingly and deeply with the attending couples.

The presentations are carefully written by each presenting couple and reviewed by Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter leadership to hold true to the perspective of the church and the focus of this experience. Presenting couples are dedicated to the renewal of their own relationships and to the United Methodist Church, of which they are members. Clergy who present weekends are ordained elders of the United Methodist Church. All presenting couples offer their gift of love and time to other married couples and realize no monetary rewards.

Marriage Encounter Is Not...

- 1) a teaching or lecture series
- 2) sensitivity training
- 3) a group sharing experience
- 4) a bible study
- 5) marriage counseling

When Are Weekends Held?

Weekends are scheduled according to the demand and attendance in an area. Weekends begin usually on Friday evening and end mid afternoon on Sunday. The “building block” process necessitates couples to understand that all sessions should be attended. Weekend dates for all of the United States can be located at www.encounter.org

Where Are Weekends Held?

Marriage Encounter and Engaged Encounter weekends are held across the United States. Motels or retreat centers are utilized for presentations, dining and private rooms.

Topics of the Engaged Encounter Weekend

Beginning Our Journey: Couples are encouraged to look at each other as individuals and to understand the importance of communication and trust as we share the Weekend.

Decision to Love: Helps couples to understand the cycle of stages of love that constantly reoccur. Love is not dependent on feelings, but is a decision that can be life giving.

Unity: Encourages couples to see unity as an ultimate goal of marriage.

Faith: Shows how marriage is best built on faith and commitment. Marriage is a covenant with our spouse and God. The relationship with God and the Church helps couples keep the covenant of marriage.

Family and Friends: Helps couples be aware of the changes in their relationships with family and friends that will result from marriage.

Planning and Finances: Challenges couples to examine their individual values and goals, to begin the ongoing process of formulating couple values and goals, and to set priorities that will be necessary to achieve these goals.

Coping With Change: Helps couples recognize the need to protect the stability of their marriage by communicating feelings regarding loss, whether physical or because of changes in life situations such as death or divorce.

Intimacy: Stresses the importance of intimacy in the couple’s relationship and that intimacy is more than sexual intercourse.

Our Engagement Promise: Provides an opportunity to write and share with each other a covenantal promise.

weekend, is offered as an on-going tool to enhance their relationship at home.

Marriage As A Covenant - The meaning of covenant and the couple relationship to God and the church is presented. This is a chance to rekindle their hopes and dreams for their marriage and reflect on their unconditional love for one another.

Keeping Our Relationship A Priority - Identify ways to keep their relationship alive and vibrant and explore the value of reevaluation in order to keep their relationship a priority.

Sharing in The Dream - An opportunity is given to share the vision of Marriage Encounter United Methodist with our community, our church and our world. History and vision are shared with the couples.

Continuing our Journey - Couples are shown how a renewed vitality in their relationship can renew the church, raise marriage standards in our communities and serve God as a couple

Closing Service: This is a spiritual time of renewing the couple's covenant with each other and with God in an intimate atmosphere of communion and the celebration of marriage.

Engaged Encounter

This program is intended to assist pastors in carrying out the responsibility of premarital instruction. By introducing engaged couples to communication techniques, decision making methods, and increasing the awareness of the covenantal character of their marriage, couples are better prepared to enter into a long lasting relationship. Engaged Encounter United Methodist is a program for pre-marital couples.

Who Should Attend?

Engaged couples and married couples of any age can attend. All that is necessary is a commitment to each other and a willingness to work toward a stronger and more meaningful future together.

Engaged couples and couples married for less than a year are encouraged to participate in an Engaged Encounter Weekend. Couples married a year or more are encouraged to participate in a Marriage Encounter Weekend. Married couples from a few months to over 50 years have found the weekend an exciting experience.

Persons of any religious faith or background are welcome. Couples should understand the Weekend experience is presented in the framework of the Christian faith and from the perspective of the United Methodist Church.

Persons who are receiving marriage counseling or psychiatric therapy should check with their therapist before registering.

A Marriage Encounter Weekend is not intended for couples experiencing marital difficulties, although the weekend has been helpful for some couples in distress. There is a weekend structured with these couples in mind. Relationships in serious trouble may benefit from a weekend planned for marriages in crisis called Retrouvaille.

See <http://www.retrouvaille.org> or call 1-800-470-2230.

The Cost Of A Weekend

Marriage Encounter offers weekends in the faith that all couples may attend without regard to their economic ability. Couples are not discouraged from attending because of a lack of funds. Near the end of the weekend, couples are given the opportunity to anonymously share in the weekend costs that include two nights lodging, five meals, supplies used and nominal administrative costs. Marriage Encounter couples give their talents and time and are not paid for services.

It is necessary for a small fee to be prepaid to assure reservations. A small fee is considered a registration fee and is not refundable if the couple cancels. This fee may be applied to a future reservation. Engaged Encounter Weekends are supported by a fee that is due prior to the Weekend.

Objectives

To introduce couples to a communication tool so they can fully share attitudes and convictions, hopes and dreams, feelings and needs without the underlying expectation that the partner has to change.

To provide an atmosphere to enable sensitivity to each other that will bring to each other a knowledge of the life-giving qualities necessary for the enhancement of mutual respect and benefit.

To increase the awareness of the covenantal character of marriage with God and an appreciation of the mutual joy and responsibility to be shared in living out the marriage according to our understanding of God's desire for marriage.

To support the marriages of all couples and to provide a means of continuing growth and maturity in marriage.

To encourage couples to share their love with the church and their surrounding community.

Synopsis of Presentations

The Marriage Encounter weekend and the Engaged Encounter weekend is presented in four segments:

The **'ME'** phase focuses on the individual and what that person brings to the relationship of marriage.

The **'WE'** phase highlights the couple and what they hold for each other in the marriage relationship.

The **'WE and GOD'** phase relates to the couple relationship with god and our understanding of God's desire for marriage.

The **'WE, GOD and the Church'** phase suggests how couples are to live as examples of God's love and Christ's church.

Topics of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend

Introduction and Welcome - Acquaints couples, become acquainted with the facility, explains the pattern of the weekend, and explore their reasons and expectations in attending.

Communicating our Feelings - Introduces the concept that feelings are a vital part of everyone, neither right nor wrong: feelings are the best indicator of how one is at the moment.

Encounter with Self - Helps couples take a realistic look at the way they present themselves to others, to see how self-doubts limit their relationships, and to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses.

Marriage In Today's World - Looks at the ideals brought to marriage and the world's marriage standards contrasted to intimacy desired. A communication technique is introduced.

Listening - Recognize that listening requires active participation by both parties; explore various styles of listening and obstacles to listening; and discover the difference between "listening with the mind" and "listening with the heart".

Areas for Reaching out to Each Other - Assists couples in learning to accept one another when there are difficult or sensitive areas in their lives. The desired result is greater intimacy.

God's Desire For Marriage - Our deepest longing as husband and wife is to live in a loving relationship. Couples discover that God also wants them to live intimately and responsibly.

Risking to Trust in Dialogue - A challenge is given to risk and live up to all marriage relationships can offer, to strive for mutual authenticity and to share the joy of discovery and acceptance.

Impact of Dialogue in our Daily Lives - The communication technique of dialogue, which has been experienced on the