



WEDDING & MARRIAGE POLICY COVENANT

ASHLAND COUNTY MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

THE PURPOSE OF THE COVENANT

Believing that God has established and sanctified marriage for the welfare and happiness of the human family, we – as ministers of the Gospel – are concerned with fostering long lasting marital unions under God and establishing spiritual families. Since pastors perform most marriage ceremonies in Ashland County, we are troubled by the high divorce rate. For example, in 2012, there were 327 marriages performed in Ashland County, but there were 185 divorces and dissolutions. Our hope is to radically reduce the divorce rate among those married in our churches. After discussion and research, we believe the following observations to be true.

1. Pastors need to set minimum requirements to raise the quality of the commitment in those we marry.
2. Couples who whole-heartedly participate in premarital testing and counseling have a better understanding of what the marriage commitment involves and will be more likely to establish a fulfilling life-long relationship.
3. Marriage preparation must include both the wedding day plans and teaching on how to establish life-long, Christ-centered marriages.
4. An agreed-upon marriage policy by as many area churches as possible will strengthen marriages and reduce the divorce rate.

THE GUIDELINES OF THE COVENANT

In view of the above beliefs, those pastors who sign below are covenanting that they will strive to implement and maintain at least the following five guidelines.

1. A four-month waiting period: Require a minimum of four (4) months from the initial marital appointment until the wedding date.
2. Four counseling sessions: Provide a minimum of four (4) counseling sessions to help the couple evaluate the maturity of their relationship objectively. At least one session will include a premarital test, such as PREPARE, Myers/Briggs or Taylor-Johnson, and at least one session will be devoted to instruction on the biblical understanding of marriage and divorce.
3. Marriage seminar: Encourage the couple to attend an “Engaged Encounter” weekend or other similar seminar to improve their communications skills and to help them establish a Christ-centered marriage.
4. Mentoring couple: Provide a mature healthy couple to mentor the newlyweds. The mentoring couple is expected to meet with the engaged couple at least one time before their wedding and two (2) times within the first year of the marriage. (This most likely will include some type of training for the mentoring couple so that they can effectively serve as role models and counselors to the engaged/newly married couples.)
5. Healthy Christ-centered marriages: Commit ourselves (pastors) to establishing and maintaining healthy Christ-centered marriages in our churches through teaching, training and counseling and by encouraging times for couples to renew and refresh their marriage by attending retreats and seminars that focus on their relationship.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE COVENANT

Church: _____ City: _____

Pastor: _____ Date: _____

The following clergy drafted this covenant and the ACMA approved the final draft on March 12, 1999.
The ACMA approved a revision for grammatical and clarity purposes on November 9, 2007.

Rev. John BouquetBethel Baptist Church
Dr. Thomas C. GibsonFirst Christian Church (DOC)
Rev. Jon Hall.....Grace Brethren Church
Dr. John ShultzAshland Theological Seminary
Rev. Tom Snyder.....Christ United Methodist Church