

Counselor's Corner: *Post-Marriage Prep*

by Steve Palmer, M.A., L.P.C., Westminster Counseling Center 612.332.7743 ext. 403, or spalmer@wpc-mpls.org

Summer is a time for weddings, it seems. Each year I find a new round of nuptials amongst my family and friends to attend. And if there's one thing these weddings and with my work in parish ministry and counseling has taught me, it's how in love we are as we get married and how difficult it can be to imagine the real work marriage turns out to be! Pre-marriage classes can only teach us so much—maybe that's just as well. So many of life's big projects—college or graduate school, raising children, really committing to follow Jesus—would give us pause if we knew beforehand just how much energy, effort, and change they require. By the same token, saying "marriage is work" cannot reduce the joy and satisfaction that come from a deeply loving union. Like so many of life's challenges, we can't really anticipate the rewards that come with the commitment.

At the Westminster Counseling Center we frequently work with couples who are trying to puzzle out the challenges of marriage. These are regular folks facing the realities of trying to forge a more perfect union—the work of raising children, money difficulties, trying to find a work-home balance, in-laws, challenges to sexual and emotional intimacy, communication problems, conflict. Through listening to these couples and reflecting on the real need for support to married couples after the wedding, we feel called to consider providing a marriage support ministry here at Westminster.

Toward that end, we're excited to announce a four-session marriage skills seminar to be offered this fall. On four Wednesday evenings (September 13–October 4), from 6:30–8:00PM, we invite married couples to join us for education, exploration, and conversation about the skills and strengths needed to deepen our marriage relationships and keep them strong. The seminar will be facilitated by Margaret McCray and Steve Palmer. Our focus will be on the prevention of problems, on exploring the skills couples need to keep their love alive, to protect themselves from the patterns and habits that can slowly erode a relationship. We will provide information and research on what helps marriages succeed, activi-

ties to guide conversation between partners—and childcare! We ask couples to come with a willingness to be open in sharing their own experiences, wisdom, humor, and spirituality. We hope to create a relaxed, supportive time for learning and reflection.

While there is room for growth at any stage in a marriage, of course, we are limiting this class to those who have been married ten years or less, in an attempt to keep a focus on the preventative work that can be done during those very important first years of being a couple. Also, as this group is not intended to provide marriage therapy, if you are facing significant struggles in your marriage at present, we invite you to check with us before signing up to see if this group is a good fit for your needs.

In the Catholic tradition I come out of, we call marriage a sacrament—a uniquely-graced experience of God's love active for our salvation and the life of the world. While the language of "sacrament" may not be used in all Christian traditions in regard to marriage, I think this deeply spiritual understanding is shared to a large degree. As Christians, we join with one another in committed relationships based on the image of God's love, empowered by the Spirit of God, and called to take up the work of Jesus Christ in our families and communities. All too easily, the grace-filled possibility called marriage becomes muddled by our weaknesses, the hurts we experience—or is simply neglected as we attend to the business of life. Perhaps some time apart to reconsider or rediscover the possibilities in front of you could be of assistance. We hope you will consider joining us.

You may register for this seminar by contacting Margaret McCray or Steve Palmer at the Westminster Counseling Center (612.332.7743; mmccray@wpc-mpls.org; spalmer@wpc-mpls.org). Please contact us if you have questions or comments as well. There is a cost of \$50 per couple for the seminar.



Steve Palmer

Coming Together Sunday

September 10

8:30 & 10:30AM Worship Services

Timothy Hart-Andersen preaching

9:15AM Education Hour for Children

& Adults; Adult Choir rehearsal;

Sr. High Parents Mtg.

9:30AM Open House for Church

School parents

9:30AM Chapel Communion Service

10:45AM Children's Church

5:45PM Sr. High Spaghetti Dinner

Best Wishes to Westminster's College Freshmen!

The Sr. High youth and staff wish the following graduates the best of luck this fall on their new adventures. We will keep you in our prayers and hope to see you over the holidays!!!

Jason Carter, University of Montana, Missoula

Laura Chamberlain, Macalester College, St. Paul

Lynn Fidler, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Andy Glennon, University of Iowa, Iowa City

Maddie Hart-Andersen, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA

Anne Janasz, DePaul University, Chicago, IL

Elisabeth Jones, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN

Eva Mitchell, Boston University, Boston, MA

Elizabeth Peitzman, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

David Sund, Westminster College, New Wilmington, PA

Maggie Wright, University of Wisconsin, Madison