



## **Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania**

### **STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE,** **WITH RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES**

*“...From the beginning of the creation, ‘God made them male and female’. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ‘Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate...’ [St. Mark 10:6-9].*

We, the member churches of **Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania**, wish to affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant and of Christian family life, in that:

- ✝ Marriage is holy because it is a gift from God and has been ordained by God;
- ✝ Marriage is a font of God’s grace;
- ✝ Marriage is blessed by Jesus Christ to be the foundation of church and society;
- ✝ In marriage, through the seeking and doing of God’s will, husbands and wives are called to be “*leaven for society*” and the “*light for the world*”.

#### ***We affirm that:***

- ✝ In the vocation of married life, the commitment of man and woman is life-long and exclusive;
- ✝ The sexual union of a man and a woman has its proper place only within marriage dedicated to the doing of the will of God;
- ✝ The marital union fosters the union of the couple in mind, heart, and body;
- ✝ The marital union provides the best possible environment for the begetting, nurturing, and upbringing of children;
- ✝ An authentic marriage is marked by complete, self-giving love, in the image of Jesus Christ and His love for the church;
- ✝ From the same image of our Lord Jesus Christ, husbands and wives are called to commit themselves to a shared life of faithfulness, chastity, and every Christian virtue.

*In upholding our Christian vision of marriage,*

*we join together in declaring that:*

- ✝ We will encourage and assist our churches in providing and requiring a period of thorough and comprehensive preparation for every marriage;
- ✝ We will encourage and assist our churches to give active support to marriage and family life;
- ✝ We commit our churches and our energies in preaching, teaching, and ministry to the fostering of marriage and family life.

**RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES**

For the encouragement of Christian marriage:

- ✝ A time of marriage preparation is essential; where a church has no other required time period, we recommend a minimum of four months;
- ✝ Marriage preparation should include at least:
  - the Scriptural teaching of marriage and family;
  - spirituality, prayer and worship;
  - Christian sexuality and intimacy;
  - finances and household management;
  - communication and conflict resolution, and
  - other ways to strengthen the marriage and family relationship.
- ✝ We expect people to live chaste lives, including the maintaining of sexual abstinence prior to and outside of the marriage covenant;

✝ Effective marriage preparation programs include:

- consultations with clergy and/or other persons authorized by the Church;
- formal programs designed to help prepare engaged couples for Christian marriage;
- married couples who can serve as models and who are trained as mentors, to assist in marriage preparation.
- we expect that at least one of the persons being married has a genuine connection with and membership in the church in which the wedding is taking place;
- we encourage churches to provide ongoing pastoral care for marriage and family life, and we encourage married couples to avail themselves of the support which the Church can offer,
- we encourage clergy to exercise a leadership role in helping couples to bond for life by:
  - a. participating in and promoting programs to enrich marriage and family life;
  - b. preaching on the theology of marriage;
  - c. modeling healthy relationships;
  - d. cooperating with the clergy of different churches during interchurch marriage preparation;  
and
  - e. cooperating with the clergy of different churches to foster continued ministry to inter-church couples.