



Faith-based initiative aims to salvage marriages

September 5, 2008

By Christie Campbell
Observer-Reporter

Don O'Hare has seen the pain that results when a marriage dissolves.

Too often, noted the associate pastor at Central Assembly of God Church in Houston, people reach out to the church or seek counseling following a divorce or after the decision has been made to divorce. Had the couple reached out at the beginning of the conflict, it may have been possible to salvage the relationship.

Central Assembly is one of 40 churches in Southwestern Pennsylvania taking part in a faith-based initiative designed to strengthen marriages and family units. Friendship Baptist Church in Washington also is taking part.

TWOgether Pittsburgh is a consortium of churches and other nonprofit groups that have joined forces to strengthen marriages in the region. It is headed by Family Guidance Inc., which wrote and received a five-year, \$8 million grant for the project.

TWOgether Pittsburgh is now in its third year. It serves Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington and Westmoreland counties.

Central Assembly is offering its second course on strengthening marriages at 7 p.m. Wednesday. The marriage enrichment classes will be facilitated by a couple from the church, Jerry and Linda Seaman, with assistance by O'Hare.

Today's divorce rate is more than 50 percent, O'Hare said. Many couples spend more time preparing for the wedding day than learning such skills as conflict resolution, communication or intimacy, he added.

"We know that marriage is a foundation block of society and if that's weak, the whole foundation is weak. If we can do something to strengthen that, let's do it," O'Hare said.

The enrichment classes will run for six weeks. There is no cost to attend, although those who do are asked to commit to the weekly classes. Child care will be available.

The program is open to anyone. The last class at Central Assembly included a couple that had been married for 44 years.

Other courses being offered through TWOgether Pittsburgh include pre-marriage preparation, marriage sustaining, high school relationship and family education and couple-to-couple mentoring.