



UK National Marriage Week 13th – 19th May 2019

Evening for Couples

Suggested dates: As it's designed to be a special evening for couples to forget about the busyness of the week and focus on each other, we'd suggest the Friday (17th) or the Saturday (18th) of Marriage Week. However, it can be held on any evening during the week.

Purpose: An evening for couples to spend time with each other to invest in their relationship.

Format: Members of the church to provide a meal for couples attending and using the theme of the UK National Marriage Week - 'Recipe for a Healthy Marriage', couples are encouraged to talk to each other about the key ingredients that help a relationship thrive. The six that Marriage Week have focussed on are commitment, communication, kindness, forgiveness, intimacy and friendship. The talking cards available on the Marriage Week website can also be made available to couples, either electronically, or the church/facilitators can print them and hand them out.

Who: All couples from the church and those that are connected to the church through community groups such as parent and toddler groups, youth and children's clubs, homework clubs, CAP, Foodbank etc. Both married and unmarried couples who want to invest in a lasting relationship to be invited. By inviting everyone, the church has an opportunity to demonstrate that it values the six ingredients referred to above.

To do list:

1. With plenty of notice prior to the evening, ensure you have sent out invitations to couples and promoted the event at the various church groups offered to all in the community. This would need to be a ticketed event so that you know how many you are catering for.
2. Decide where you will hold the event and how many people you are able to cater for. Ask for volunteers to organise the evening.
3. You will need a team of people within your church to provide food. This can either be cooked/prepared by church members, or you can arrange for catering. This can be as simple as buffet or a sit-down meal.
4. Arrange the room that allows the best opportunity for each couple to talk comfortably with each other. If you have shared tables, you can remind couples that they will be focussing on their partners and not the whole table!
5. Provide copies of the list of the six 'Recipe for a Healthy Marriage' ingredients – there needs to be one list per couple.

Arrival:

- Couples are greeted and offered a drink – this could be a relaxed start with couples mingling together before they sit down at their tables.
- Once everyone has arrived, a short introduction from the facilitator about the evening, MW 2019 theme and the importance of caring for your relationship (please

refer back to the Marriage Week website for ideas for content). At this point it can be explained that although it's Marriage Week, as a church you're encouraging everyone to invest in their relationship.

- Suggested additional activity: Ask a married couple to share a story about their personal experience of marriage referencing some (or maybe all) of the six ingredients. Have fun with this but also use stories of overcoming and dealing with challenges within their marriage give a sense of reality, demonstrate the value of a committed marriage and encourage listening couples to keep caring for their own relationship.
- Food is then served, either a buffet or food is brought to the tables.
- On the tables, each couple will have the MW ingredients list to chat about along with the talking cards. Encourage couples to go through the list and discuss what they think they are doing well and what they think they need to improve on. This isn't meant to be heavy, but a relaxed time for some honesty. The talking cards might be a fun way to start the conversation before going straight for the list.
- At the end of the evening, if you currently run any marriage and relationship courses, you can let couples know about them or direct them to the ones on our website. Remind couples that marriage courses are for all married couples who want to improve their relationship – whether the relationship is going brilliantly or when there are issues.
- Social media opportunity. Ask couples with social media accounts to join in with the social media campaign by taking selfies of themselves and sharing on a social media platform and using #marriageweek. As a church, please also share pictures from the evening on social media using #marriageweek

N.B. If you have been running the prayer room with prayer stations at your church (see other Marriage Week resources), you could encourage couples to visit before the end of the evening and invite them to the Sunday community 'wedding feast' which is for families and people of all ages to join in with.