



## **Developing a Covenant Community with Fellowship Opportunities Relevant to the Unmarried Majority (An outline for a planned article on the “Singles F.O.R.U.M.”).**

### **1) Show alarming statistics**

- a. More than half of local adults are single
- b. The percentage of single adults has increased from only 5% of the population 100 years ago
- c. If current trends continue, 75% of adults will be single by year 2010
- d. Single adults have the lowest church attendance of any population group

### **2) Discuss how the church responds to the statistics**

- a. Show examples of how churches still include few or no singles on leadership teams
- b. Show examples of how church rhetoric frequently does not reach out to singles
- c. Show how the churches with singles programs in Indianapolis are all, with only two exceptions, dispensational and/or Arminian
- d. No reformed and covenantal church in Indianapolis has a singles pastor

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- e. No Indianapolis church is articulating how it invites the unmarried majority into a covenant community

### 3) Invite singles into a covenant community by relating Reformed and Covenantal theology (PCA theology!) to issues on the hearts of singles

- a. Review sermon topics of interest to singles (See appendix A)
- b. Review how the church community must change to invite singles
  - i. Not a “Sunday only” church
  - ii. Not a church of married leaders for married people and their kids
  - iii. Not a church focused on traditional pastoral care. Singles need pastors and lay people who can address loneliness, lust, discouragement, alienation, and emotional baggage from past relationships.
- c. Review how PCA churches are well suited to build a covenant community

### 4) Develop a Covenant Community with Fellowship Opportunities Relevant to the Unmarried Majority (“CC FORUM”). When developing all programs, realize that Singles want to meet singles meeting Christ.

- a. Phase 1: Planning and Communication
  - i. Identify which reformed and covenantal churches in Indy articulate a clear vision for uniting the unmarried majority in a covenant community.
  - ii. Look for which reformed and covenantal churches offer programs which singles say that they most want:
    - 1. Worship on Sunday evenings followed by small groups
    - 2. Prayer group and Bible study on Wednesday evening involving small groups
    - 3. Education opportunities to equip singles for pastoral care issues

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4. Social programs on Saturday evenings where singles can have fun while meeting singles that know Christ.
  5. Evangelism and mercy programs where singles can work together in meeting the needs of single moms and other disenfranchised people.
- iii. Develop a CC Forum web site with links to all reformed and covenantal programs for the unmarried majority in Indy. The web page should be the centerpiece of the CC FORUM communication for reasons listed in Appendix B.
- b. Phase 2: Administration
    - i. Hire an administrator who will
      1. Update the CC Forum web site
      2. Get to know singles and match them with appropriate fellowship opportunities
    - ii. Fund the administrator position with directed tithes and other donations
- c. Phase 3: Education
    - i. Develop training programs to equip singles with pastoral care skills
      1. Singles learn to deal with their own emotional, financial and spiritual problems
      2. Singles learn to minister to others until if/when pastors are equipped to provide this pastoral care
    - ii. Develop training programs focused on spiritual formation, spiritual mentoring, and life planning issues.
      1. These topics ranks among the most popular when singles are surveyed.
      2. Offer this training as part of an extension program from a respected seminary
    - iii. Fund education programs with user fees paid by participants until if/when churches contribute to the education costs.

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d. Phase 4: Pastoral Care

- i. Hire a part-time or full-time singles pastor with the experience and desire to relate reformed and covenantal teachings to issues on the hearts of singles.
- ii. Fund this position with directed tithes and other donations

e. Phase 5: at each PCA church in Indy, hire a paid pastor who has the experience and training to minister to the unmarried majority.

5) Respond to objections that churches give for not building a covenant community that actively involves the unmarried majority in the church membership, on church staffs, and on church leadership teams.

- a. Objection: If other churches do not talk about developing a covenant community for the unmarried majority, why should we?
- b. Objection: We are too busy to launch an initiative to reach the unmarried majority.
- c. Objection: We already have a community at our church, so why do we need to talk about building a covenant community involving singles?
- e. Objection: We serve married people and their kids because they comprise most of our church population
- f. Objection: Singles can participate in singles programs at other churches
- g. Objection: Our staff members, although all married, really do care about singles

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## Appendix A

# **SERMON TOPICS OF INTEREST TO SINGLES**

### ***KNOWING OUR LORD***

1. How the living God loves us more than any date or mate ever could
2. How the living God has a wonderful plan for our lives (Sermons on “God’s will for our lives” tend to draw the most interest from singles.)
3. How we should never be lonely because we can find fulfillment in Christ.
4. How the Lord forgives us for all our sins and makes us new creations (even if we are divorced).
5. How Christ's plan for Christian community insures singles that they can have a family.

### ***HEARING OUR LORD***

1. The power of prayer
2. Hearing God speak through prayer and accountability partners

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## ***SHARING OUR LORD'S TEACHINGS***

1. What the Bible teaches about marriage and divorce
2. What the Bible teaches about dating and courting
3. What the Bible teaches about lust and sexuality
4. What the Bible teaches about coping with worry, discouragement, and alienation

## ***OBEYING OUR LORD AND ENJOYING HIS BLESSINGS***

1. The importance of spiritual disciplines
2. How we can experience the blessings that come from being obedient
3. How our Lord blesses singles through rich relationships developed in church fellowship programs.

## ***BUILDING OUR LORD'S CHURCH***

1. Discussing how we can extend Christ's love to single mothers and their children.
2. Discussing how the church should reach out to the unmarried half of the population with new sermons, new programs, or other affirmative action programs designed to have singles adequately represented in the church body.
3. Discussing whether singles should build the church by marrying and starting families

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***OTHER TOPICS SUGGESTED BY SINGLES:***

1. Explaining the Biblical faith to people from legalistic denominations
2. Explaining the Biblical faith to people from liberal denominations
3. Explaining the Biblical faith to people influenced by the New Age teachings.
4. Reviewing the best ways to relate the Gospel message to issues on the hearts of singles; e.g., loneliness, lust, discouragement, alienation,
5. Explaining the true Gospel message and the essential Biblical doctrines
6. Explaining the Biblical role of women in the church
7. Explaining a Biblical understanding of Baptism
8. Explaining the Biblical view on charity and helping the less fortunate
9. Explaining a Biblical view on free will

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## Appendix B

### Data To Be Linked From the Above Article

[1] The article at <http://www.christianityonline.com/leadership/714/714065.html> discusses how pastors could more effectively preach on topics of concern to singles. This article uses the old 1980 statistic showing that 40% of adults are single, but the ideas are even more relevant as the number of unmarried people continues to grow.

[2] See <http://geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8392/heresy.html> for a discussion of sinful behaviors underlying the failure of churches to develop a community that fully embraces singles.

[3] Kay Collier-Stone, PhD, cites statistics indicating that 52% of adults are now single. She then urges church leaders to consider this fact when making staffing decisions. See her article at <http://www.liveit.net/ministry/mnst19981022.html>

[4] In SINGLES AT THE CROSSROADS: A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN SINGLES, Albert Hsu comments that as churches place a low priority on developing programs for singles, the alienation of singles grows worse. See [www.covenant.net/articles/hsu.htm](http://www.covenant.net/articles/hsu.htm).