MISSION STATEMENT OF NATIONAL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

The mission of National Marriage Encounter is to promote and encourage marriage and family life by offering Marriage Encounter weekends and a support community. National Marriage Encounter enables people to discover God’s vision of marriage and family life and spiritual diversity, thereby leading them to a clearer understanding of their relationship with each other and with God.

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This resource manual is designed as guide for the regions and affiliates. The materials included are for the assistance of the regions and affiliates. It is not the intention of the National Board to require conformity in operations. This manual is designed to (1) give local affiliates some ideas to start the thinking process, (2) provide guidance for basic operations, and (3) enable a uniform understanding of terms.

Most of the materials included in this resource manual have been assembled from many different sources, both regions and local affiliates. There have been corrections of grammar and spelling, but each community submitting materials remains responsible to keep their documents updated. It has not been the intention of the National Board to edit the materials sent from the regions and affiliates.

National Marriage Encounter is a grass-roots organization. The board serves as a resource and attempts to respond to the needs of regions and affiliates.
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Appendices

Materials from this section included examples from various affiliates. These will be provided in an ongoing method in Microsoft Word format, because active affiliates not only have permission to print for their own use, but also permission to modify those documents as desired.
WHAT IS LEADERSHIP

A leader is a person who dreams and communicates those dreams and visions in a way that makes other people say “yes.” Leaders create a climate where others are willing to try.

A leader is a person who is better than most at pointing the direction, who tries to see where the whole movement is going.

A leader enables others to reach their potential. Leadership is enabling, not performing. Leadership searches for and discovers what motivates the members.

A true leader sets a challenging pace, not too slow or too fast. A leader sets realistic, but challenging goals.

A leader values diversity. A leader recruits a variety of kinds of volunteers with diverse skills and diverse viewpoints. A leader establishes an open atmosphere where members are truly free to contribute and participate. Creativity thrives in this atmosphere.

The final test: a leader leaves behind in others the conviction and the will to carry on.

A PRAYER FOR LEADERS & EVERYONE

God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me, which he has not committed to another.
I have a mission.
I may never know it in this life but I shall be told in the next.
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between person.
He has not created me for nothing.
I shall do good.
I shall do his work.
Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever, wherever I am.
I cannot be thrown away.
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him.
In perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him.
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain.
He knows what He is about.
He may take away my friends,
He may throw me among stranger,
He may make me feel desolate,
Make my spirits sink,
Hide my future from me -
Still He knows what He is about.

-Cardinal Newman
MEDITATION

You give little when you give your possessions; it is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

There are those who have little and give it all; these are the believers in life and its bounty.

There are those who give with joy; that joy is their reward.

There are those who give with pain; that pain is their baptism.

There are those who give as naturally as flowers breathe their fragrance into space... without pain not seeking joy nor thinking of virtue.

Through the hands of such as these, God speaks and from behind their eyes, He smiles upon the earth.

We are all also receivers in life. Receivers, assume no debt of gratitude which would burden you and the giver.

Do not doubt the generosity of God nor the lovers of God and your. Rather, let the gift be wings on which the giver and receiver rise together.

Adapted from Kahlil Gabrin, The Prophet
A PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

Come forth inhabitants of the earth.
From the meekest to the mightiest let your friendship encircle the world.
Bring water to the thirsting flower in the meadow.
Give refuge to the homeless animal.
Nourish the person seeking love in the middle of a crowd.
Remember to use your heart.
More than gravity bonds you to the spaceship earth.
Your common roof is the blue ether above.
Your sustenance is present within the sea and soil.
And in your blood there are universal elements of the ocean.
Show your affection for these things knowing that what is needed most is loved dearest.
Taken care of your precious environment.
From it you have ascended and to it you shall return.
Enjoy fully the fruits which grow from the womb of the earth.
Yet be certain to replenish twofold that which you harvest.
Realize that your every vibration can have profound and lasting effects.
Believe that your purpose here is to beautify and safeguard the earth.
Strive not to become oblivious to all that nature has created nor become obsessed with things man has made.
Know well your origin so that you may better know your destiny and place within the eternal scheme of things.
Believe in your own glorious being.
And live and grow in joyous harmony with all things.
In so doing you will bring the world nearer to peace.
For you are an integral part of the cosmos.
Surrounding you is what you are.

1976 Will Duggan
Taos, New Mexico
What National Marriage Encounter Is!

Many persons ask what National Marriage Encounter (NME) is. As an overview, Marriage Encounter is both a movement and a weekend process or lived experience. The history, philosophy, and purpose of Marriage Encounter are described in more detail in later sections of this manual.

As a Movement:

- We follow the philosophy of Fr. Gabriel Calvo and the couples who started Marriage Encounter.
- We follow the principle of subsidiary: decision-making is done at the local level, then at the regional level, then national. Authority is not from the top down, but rather from the bottom to the top. Local groups provide the direction; the top people serve.
- We are based on Judeo/Christian traditions, but interfaith in philosophy and purpose. Some groups are predominately Catholic, some Lutheran, etc., while others are not connected, in any way, with a church structure. Some affiliates depend on financial support from their parish or church; others work independently.
- We accept the movement as the means to an end. Fr. Calvo encourages couples to go back to their own parish/communities and give of themselves there, rather than create an entity separate from the parishes/communities. This is not to say that NME follow-up activities are not important, but no group should turn in on itself. It needs to serve others.
- We are a servant organization: communicational, educational, and supportive.
- We challenge others and ourselves to continue to grow as people, as couples, and as members of various communities.
- We recognize the uniqueness of each local group and region.
- We share strengths and weaknesses with other areas and groups.
- We create organization and structure only as much as is deemed necessary in any group or situation.

As a Weekend Process:

- We follow the Calvo Manual and the Guide for Teams published by NME.
- We invite couples to discover for themselves their own lived experience; the weekend is not a teaching process, but one of discovery.
- We speak of the concept of vivencia, that is, lived experience. The challenge given to encountering people is to discover their own past, present, and future (as couples and individuals).
- We speak of the concept of confianza, that is, total trust and confidence in each other and the Lord. The team couples/individuals share their vivencia and invite the spouses to do likewise.
- We invite couples/individuals to be open to the plan God (vision) has for them in their marriage/ministry.
- The goal of NME is for spouses to achieve unity through dialog in the Lord.
**BRIEF STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE OF NATIONAL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

National Marriage Encounter is based on Judeo-Christian concepts, beliefs, and morality. National Marriage Encounter invites and encourages married (i.e., male and female) couples of all faiths and those of no religious affiliation to share in this experience and to become an integral part of this movement.

The purpose of National Marriage Encounter is to assist a couple to discover their marriage through ongoing mutual trust and dialogue. This unique method of dialogue means prayerful, personal reflection and mutual sharing, which leads to the enrichment of the marital relationship and growth of the man and woman as individuals and as a couple. With the family as the fundamental cell of society and the married couple as the heart of the family, the Marriage Encounter experience strengthens families and communities.

Marriage Encounter respects and supports the couples as they discover their own dignity, uniqueness, and creativity. It is essential that married couples continually strive to discover the presence and action of God in their individual and family lives, according to their own beliefs. Marriage Encounter follow-up programs enable couples to continue their growth.

- Adopted for Web site publication by National Marriage Encounter Board of Trustees at the Annual meeting on July 23, 2003 in Romeoville, IL.

**STATEMENT OF SPIRITUALITY WITHIN NATIONAL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER**

“We believe it is essential that married couples continually strive to discover the presence and action of God in their individual and family lives.” (From National Marriage Encounter Roots and Visions Statement of Philosophy - February 12, 1988)

1. *Spirituality of Marriage* is our relationship with God as a couple. Its elements include a common belief in God and a shared way of communicating and trusting in God. It is an awareness that God is a third party in our marriage relationship and that He cares about us and has a plan for us.

   When we strive continually and daily to live in harmony with our spouse and with God, we are living our marriage spirituality. This involves couple dialogue and couple prayer, plus a lot of effort, perseverance, sacrifice, forgiveness, risk and love.

2. On a Marriage Encounter weekend we experience spirituality as we open ourselves (our hearts and minds) to the word of God through scripture and invite God to be present in our relationship through our dialogue. This is enhanced by the shared vivencia of the team and prayer experiences of the weekend.
3. As a result of our Marriage Encounter experience, we find family spirituality enhanced by our sharing, forgiveness, love acceptance and recognition of all family members.

4. We experience spirituality in our community by being mindful of God’s presence in all our dialogue, meetings and activities. We also experience God’s love through the fellowship of our Marriage Encounter community and the sharing of food.

The above statements are developed from Fr. Calvo’s *Manual*, the *Guide For Teams*, the Philosophy and Purpose Statement, the Inter-Faith Resolution, and the vivencia of those who have experienced a National Marriage Encounter weekend.

**INTERFAITH POLICY STATEMENT**

(In conjunction with Interfaith Structure adopted February 1988)
(Adopted: 7/22-24/97 – Board Meeting Twin Cities Retreat Center, MN)

As the Board of Trustees of National Marriage Encounter reflects on the 30th anniversary of Marriage Encounter in the United States, we are encouraged to prayerfully review the history and heritage of National Marriage Encounter.

In the beginning Marriage Encounter was developed to enrich the marriages of Catholic couples, but has evolved to include couples with diverse religious beliefs. In 1988 we adopted a statement of policy regarding the interfaith structure of National Marriage Encounter. As we look to the future, we believe we need to address the challenge to “encourage all affiliates and associates to be sensitive to the religious diversity of their geographic area.” To accomplish this we wish to add to the list of National Board recommendations the following:

1. That language sensitive to religious diversity be used in publicizing Marriage Encounter weekends and programs;
2. That team development include awareness of faith diversity among weekend attendees;
3. That weekend music, handouts, prayer and worship opportunities recognize the diversity of Attendees and team members;
4. That denominational worship services be optional and sensitive to attendees;
5. That team presentations reflect personal spirituality but are not intended for proselytizing;
6. That we recognize the gifts and contributions of people of diverse faith expressions in team and Leadership positions; and
7. That follow-up programs continue to honor and respect the diversity within the National Marriage Encounter family.
INTERFAITH STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER
(Adopted: 2/14/1988 – Board Meeting Ft. Worth, TX)

According to its philosophy and purpose statement, the roots of National Marriage Encounter are in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Since its inception, National Marriage Encounter has been open to Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and people from other faith traditions, and also to those having no religious affiliation. The National Board of Trustees affirms this openness and sees it as an opportunity for encountered people to share in the richness of one another’s faith traditions without diminishing or denying the importance of authenticity of anyone’s faith commitment.

Therefore, the Board recommends:

1. That common prayer and music at National Conferences respect the diversity of National Marriage Encounter.
2. That conference speakers be informed of this religious diversity.
3. That those in charge of conferences be mindful of this diversity, especially at general sessions, planning and in media presentation.

Additionally, the Board of Trustees encourages all affiliates and associate affiliates to be sensitive to the religious diversity of their geographic area.

FAITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

In keeping with the interfaith philosophy of National Marriage Encounter, the following leaders in nationally recognized church organizations agree to allow their names to be used in support of this organization.

<table>
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<th>Catholic Episcopal Moderator</th>
<th>Evangelical Lutheran Church of America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Gary D. Chapman</td>
<td>Bishop Robert F. Morneau</td>
<td>Rev. Robert Huff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 Country Club Road</td>
<td>PO Box 23066</td>
<td>3916 Ashwood Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston-Salem, NC 27104</td>
<td>Green Bay, WI 54305</td>
<td>Sarasota, FL 34232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>326-765-5542</td>
<td>920-437-7531</td>
<td>941-955-8035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>920-437-0694 (fax)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Dr. Milan F. Weerts</td>
<td>Rev. Dr. William P. Barker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1778 Presidio Drive</td>
<td>PO Box 116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clermont, FL 34711</td>
<td>South Wellfleet, MA 02663</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>352-243-4337</td>
<td>508-349-2826</td>
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</table>
The Spirit of Consensus

The Green Bay Community uses consensus rather than Robert’s Rules of Order to make all its decisions at its community night meetings. Consensus is discussing the issue until all can agree on it. The advantage of it is that when decisions are made there are no losers or winners.

The Quakers have perhaps studied what it takes to achieve consensus more deeply than any other group. Here is a list of fundamentals on “What Builds Consensus” from the Quakers’ Pendle Hill Center for Study and Contemplation in Wallingford, Pennsylvania:

1. An understanding of, and unity with, the ideals of the organization which make consensus rather than majority rule preferable.

2. An understanding of the individuals constituting the group and their idiosyncrasies.

3. A deep commitment to listening.

4. A clear sense of trust in the validity, even the divine validity, of each member’s contribution.

5. An openness to learn from those who may be better informed in an area of particular concern.

6. An acceptance of the fact that individual knowledge untempered by group wisdom is often very shallow.

7. A willingness to deeply examine one’s self, in particular, when a compromise between one’s own point of view and that of the group could lead to consensus.

8. A commitment not to compromise when the matter at hand involves a moral issue that appears to be in conflict with one’s understanding of one’s own moral code.

9. A commitment to search actively and openly with other group members for clarity.

10. The deep belief that earnestly laboring for moral clarity through the consensus process often results in profound leaps of personal growth.

11. A commitment not to view each issue before the group as having the potential to change the course of human events but rather to maintain perspective.

12. A commitment to actively support a consensus decision.

- From Family Business, October 1990
Copyright Guidelines

Guidelines for the Use of Copyrighted Material, especially Music

This guide does not presume to be a comprehensive summary of the Copyright Act of 1976. It does not attempt to deal with all the issues covered by the legislation, nor does it provide answers to legal questions.

It is intended as a guide to the basic premises of copyright, so that National Marriage Encounter leaders of affiliates, regions, and conferences will maintain a proper standard of ethics and protect themselves and NME from liability, embarrassment, or lawsuits. This is especially pertinent to the use of lyrics and music, but it applies to all copyrighted materials.

A complete copy of the Copyright Law of 1976 and further information regarding the Copyright Law may be obtained by writing: The Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 20559 or at www.copyright.gov/.

The importance of copyright is increasing with changes in technology. This is very apparent when a Google search results in over 4 million hits (January 2006). Some additional sites to check include:
http://fairuse.stanford.edu, which includes a list of about 90 links to other copyright websites.
www.copyright.com Assistance in obtaining “permission to use millions of works in print and digital formats.”

For details about music copyright, check out the following websites:
http://bmi.com/ Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI);
www.lib.jmu.edu/org/mla Music Librarians Association (MLA);
http://www.ascap.com/index.html The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP);
www.musicunited.org A group that unites all of the above groups and many more.
www.ccli.com/ Christian Copyright Licensing International;

For additional information, contact Church Music Publishers Association, P.O. Box 158992, Nashville, TN 37215 or call (615)791-0273.

For information about software copyright see www.spa.org.

Taking this one step further, we need to remind you that the duplication of any records, tapes, or CDs for use on a Marriage Encounter is prohibited. It is illegal to duplicate all of the music needed for the weekend onto one cassette unless you have obtained permission to do so by each copyright holder, or unless you have the original of each song and that original is taken with you on the weekend. This tape should then be destroyed after its use on the weekend. [or official statement adopted by NME Board, date?]

Embarrassment might be the only penalty for the first incident of copyright violation. However, the law provides for the owner of a copyright to recover damages for unauthorized use of copyrighted music. These damages include the loss of profits caused by the infringement, plus statutory damages ranging from $250 to $50,000 per infringement. In addition, prison terms are provided for willful and commercial infringement. Remember that not-for-profit organizations can be infringers too! Don’t take the chance!
**History of Marriage Encounter**

The Marriage Encounter movement dates back to the late 1950s. In Barcelona, a newly ordained Spanish priest was challenged by a young couple who wanted to find a way to serve God and man within their marriage. The experience impelled Fr. Gabriel Calvo to recognize the need today's couples have to deepen their relationship and to realize the tremendous potential that exists in every Christian marriage.

Shortly thereafter Fr. Calvo devoted himself to what was to become his special mission, the apostolate that is spread throughout the world as the *Marriage Encounter*. He developed a process whereby couples learned to reflect upon themselves as individuals, then as a married couple, on God's role in their marriage and their responsibilities to the world. The goal, in brief, was for couples to form an honest, trusting relationship and use that as a springboard to reach out to the community.

In 1962, 28 couples from poor, working-class families in Barcelona, spent a weekend together to try this experimental program. That was the first *Encuentro Conyugal*. (In Spanish, it must be realized, that the word has the implication of finding, recognizing, discovering, as well as meeting.)

Over the next few years, the movement grew rapidly in Spain, and first took on international dimensions when it was presented in Caracas, Venezuela in 1966 at the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (CCFM). Afterwards it spread quickly to other Latin American countries.

**CFM Brings M.E. to U.S.**

Again through the efforts of Christian Family Movement (CFM) *Encuentro Conyugal* was brought to the United States in 1967. In August of that year, the first English language version was presented at the National CFM Conference at Notre Dame University. This was the beginning of Marriage Encounter in the United States.

Pat and Patty Crowley, founders of CFM, were responsible for bringing Marriage Encounter (M.E.) to this country. Through their efforts, 50 couples and 29 priests from Latin America and Spain began giving Encounters throughout the U.S. in August 1968. This was the beginning of a rapid growth period for M.E. in this country, and also the start of a national organization.

In January 1969, a weekend meeting was held for couples and priests who had presented at least two M.E. weekends. Four couples and five priests attended, and they became the first National M.E. Executive Board. Jamie and Arline Whelan were elected the first Executive Couple.

**M.E. Breaks with CFM**

This first organizational step for M.E. also constituted a break with the CFM structure. In other countries, Encounter (*Encuentro*) was a part of CFM rather than a separate entity. At the CFM National Conference in 1969, the National Executive Board of M.E. passed the following resolution:

That CFM and Marriage Encounter are two separate and independent movements with different purposes but a common interest in families and the Church, and therefore a
liaison team will meet with the Executive Board of CFM when necessary on matters of mutual concern.

This basic relationship continued throughout the 1970s. By the end of 1969, 70 Marriage Encounters had been presented in the United States. It was at this same time that follow-up groups began to flourish. These groups encompass small numbers couples who meet periodically as a follow-up to their weekend experience. Now called Image Groups, Dialogue Groups, or Encountering Couples Groups, they have become an integral part of the M.E. movement.

**New York Splits Movement**

In the early 1970s M.E. also experiences some rather difficult growing pains. The root of this was an internal difference, which eventually led to the formation of a splinter group called New York Marriage Encounter (later changed to Worldwide) At the time of the split, the basic difference involved the concept of dialogue, with the New York Worldwide group taking a fundamentalist approach.

Most Marriage Encounter groups consider dialogue to be a deep communication between husband and wife, helping them to get in touch with one another's very being. Dialogue for them is no specific technique, although the written reflection and couple dialogue as used on the Encounter weekend is viewed as a very beneficial form of communication.

New York Marriage Encounter/Worldwide (NYWW) considers the weekend techniques of dialogue an absolute. This process, known as "ten and ten," requires couples to write no less than 10 minutes a day and then dialogue no more than 10 minutes a day. NYWW strongly urges couples to commit themselves to this technique for life. NYWW also maintains a rigid control over its affiliates, and does not allow non-Catholics to serve as team members on a weekend or participate in its organizational structure.

National Marriage Encounter (NME), as it was named in 1973, is interdenominational. In addition, NME is designed to provide assistance to its affiliates across the country, but in no way exerts any strong, doctrinaire control.

Armando and Barbara Carlo and Fr. Jake Buettner were elected Executive Secretary Team of NME in 1973. In August of that year, the first National M.E. "coming together" was held in conjunction with the CFM National Conference. This marked the beginning of a period of cooperation between these two movements, which exists to this day. In January 1974, *Agape* was designated as the national M.E. magazine and in October 1975 it also became CFM's official publication.

Marriage Encounter has held national conferences each summer since 1974. Jerry and Marilyn Sexton and Fr. Tom Hill, OFM, Cap. were elected as the third National M.E. Executive Secretary Team at the 1975 conference.

As of today National Marriage Encounter is a movement of many people and many programs and is affiliated with many other family apostolates. As it continues to reach out to engaged couples, to married couples and families, one goal remains constant: "That all may be one." In this it follows the directives of Vatican II on *The Church in the Modern World* and *The Apostolate of The Laity*, and Pope Paul's encyclical *On Evangelization*.

Editor’s Note: Much of this material has been digested from "A History of the Marriage Encounter in the United States," which appeared in *AGAPE* in February, 1976.
We in the Family Life Office are pleased you are interested in Marriage Encounter.

Marriage Encounter is a weekend experience for husbands and wives to help them deepen their communication and give their marriage an opportunity for further growth. It is not therapy or group dynamics. It is religious in flavor and Christian in attitude. It is an opportunity for a husband and wife to increase their love and understanding of each other. In a day when marriage is downgraded by so many, we see Marriage Encounter as a powerful force in strengthening marriage and family life.

There are two expressions of Marriage Encounter being offered in the Archdiocese of Detroit. One group is National Marriage Encounter. The other group is Worldwide Marriage Encounter. The weekends offered by both groups follow the same basic structure, but are unique in their approaches.

We would like to offer some comparisons that we hope will help you to be more informed and thus give you the opportunity to make a choice that will fit your individual needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Marriage Encounter</th>
<th>Worldwide Marriage Encounter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offers a basic technique of couple dialogue, while allowing the couple to decide the frequency which fits their needs.</td>
<td>Offers the couple a specific technique in communication that they are encouraged to take home and practice on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized at the local level and operates independently from the National Organization. Each local group follows a basic guideline and uses the central office for the purpose of communication and resources.</td>
<td>Is an organization, which has a central office that provides uniformity in the weekend format after input from across the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a couple-oriented weekend in a relaxed atmosphere, which encourages the couples to share deeply, according to their own individual needs.</td>
<td>Is a weekend, which is strictly ordered, so that the couples may enjoy the maximum of mutual and personal sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is presented by two or three encounter couples and a member of the clergy.</td>
<td>Is presented by three Catholic couples and a Catholic Priest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is presented by the team through personal experience of life and their relationship with God. Couples of all faiths are welcomed</td>
<td>Is Catholic and based on the theology of marriage as a sacrament of the church. Couples of all faiths are welcomed to the experience and may translate the theology into their own faith experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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How NME Is Organized

Local couples with an interest in Marriage Encounter decide to form a community, which will offer Marriage Encounter weekends. They then have an option to become affiliated with National Marriage Encounter (NME). Such affiliation means that they agree to pay the designated dues and conduct weekends in accordance with the *Calvo Manual* and *The Guide for Teams*.

The 50 states in the United States are divided into 6 regions. Almost 50% of all of the affiliates in NME are in the Heartland Region, which includes: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana (eastern), Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Wyoming (eastern).


A local affiliate hosts the regional meetings, which are open to anyone in the region. Some regions meet once a year, others twice, usually in the spring and fall. Each region elects a couple and a clergy person or couple to serve as officers of the region and as trustees on the NME Board. Eligible clergy include: priests, sisters, deacons, ministers, or rabbis from nationally recognized religious organizations. Because of its size, Heartland elects 2 couples and 2 clergy.

The NME Board consists entirely of the regional trustees and an Executive team consisting of one couple and one clergy/clergy couple. The Board members elect the Executive Team from the current trustees or those who served during the previous year. The Executive Team’s region/s then elect new trustees to the Board. One or more of the Executive Team attends each regional meeting, whenever possible.

The NME Board is organized into committees. Since 1979, the committees include: Management/operations, Publications/editorials, Spirituality, Weekend/follow-up/licensing, and By-laws (Ad-hoc). The national board meets twice a year, once immediately preceding the national conference in the summer and once in the first quarter of the calendar year. The summer meeting is held at the site of the national conference. The winter meeting, which is the official business meeting of the Board, is usually held in the south or the west.
The ME Weekend Process
(Additional details in Calvo’s Manual and NME’s Guide for Teams)

The basis of Marriage Encounter is the weekend process outlined in Fr. Calvo’s Manual and National Marriage Encounter’s Guide for Teams. According to Rev. Robert White, in The Origin and Vision of...Marriage Encounter, the weekend is:

...the instrument, the tool, developed by Fr. Calvo together with the couples of the Teams of Pius XII [in Spain] to introduce married people to a different way of living married life...[with] a definite methodology, form and interrelated parts, each having their own function and purpose...its form is the individual steps....But like any other tool, its capabilities, beauty and worth can only be fully understood and appreciated through an actual experience which is not possible to describe or explain in any way because it is specific and personal to each and every couple (p. 86).

Fr. Burt Pratt describes the thirteen steps in the following way as a document for volunteer team members to use in their preparation for presenting a weekend.

Roots and Vision - Fr. Burt Pratt

Role of the Team: Motivate from your own lives. Through sharing what living each step has meant to you - your strengths and your struggles.

Step 1. Introduction and Orientation: What do I want to achieve? What should the couples achieve? Basically, it’s what is happening in my life, in my marriage. this is not an ideal, or intellectual, but REAL. Help them prepare --it’s not our weekend - but theirs. Introductions, what is ME - then the two simple questions which begin the search. Why have I come? What do I hope to gain? We share our search, we give them freedom, liberate their energy. We do not manipulate.

Step 2. Encounter With Self: To discover who I am, not just my mask. Hard to go deep at this point. What has self-encounter done for me? What are good and bad points, potentials, hang-ups, with whom and why? How much fear is in me when I try to discover myself? I need to understand myself so I can understand you. (This is the basis of the weekend - P/R - which is the self encounter on each step).

Step 3. Marriage In the Modern World, Spiritual Divorce, Subjects for Understanding: These steps are approached from an attitude of self. Not looking at reality as a couple, but, as MY reality in the couple relationship. The purpose of these talks is to create discomfort and dissatisfaction with the relationship, that there needs to be improvement, and that things can change. There needs to be crises. Anything that doesn’t have crisis is dead. That’s the separation. How do we bring it together? What are the subjects in our life that we need to discuss? Where do I turn my spouse off? When do I use the symptoms? What topics do you want to discuss with me? What stops me from listening to you? How do we reach out to one another? Not by discussing what I want, but the topic you want. I invite you to discuss that topic. What has happened to your relationship when you reached out? What new insights did you gain? The heart of these steps is to realistically face each other. The
purpose is to reach out to one another on topics of married life that are keeping them separated because they haven’t been sharing them.

Step 4. **Openness to God’s Plan (Parable):** What kind of ground am I for God’s word? This step prepares for the next step. If I am going to listen to Marriage in God’s plan I have to first be OPEN to HEAR God’s plan. This talk requires a jump in faith. Do I believe in God’s word? Lots of hurt occurs in marriage - are we selfish and proud in relationship to God’s word? We as a team must share our personal experience of what this step means in our lives.

Step 5. **Marriage in God’s Plan:** What is God calling us to? What is God’s vision of marriage? In this step couples must listen to God’s word. We point to God in our experiences. How are we responding to God’s word in our life? Couples do this on the 3 events in their married lives when they felt closest together - so they can see that they have already experienced God’s vision in their lives.

Step 6. **Confidence and Dialogue:** How is it possible to live marriage in God’s plan? The human way is thru confidence in dialog-mutually confiding sharing. Team shares what it has meant to them to share. Not easy, the water gets muddy.

Step 7. **Cana:** Changing muddy water to wine. The couples show where confiding became muddy and where allowing God to come in - cleared the water.

Step 8. **Sacrament and Its Graces:** Sacrament, by calling us to become living witness of God. Christ gives up power--the grace of sharing healing, parenting. Many special helps. How has He worked in your life in a special way? These are the secrets of our marriage, how we have become the living signs of God’s image.

Step 9. & 10. **The Great Dialogue - 90/90:** During this step the couples are allowed to see the potential of their marriage.

Step 11. **Marriage Spirituality:** What are we striving to do to keep vitality in our marriage so we can live our marriage according to God’s plan.

Step 12. **Christian Commitment:** What are we going to do when we leave here? What are the things in our marriage that need to be discussed? How are we going to bring this to the children, the community?

Step 13. **Concluding Prayer:** Thanksgiving to God for His tremendous gifts.

- Rochester Marriage Encounter
QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEAM MEMBERS

Because we in Marriage Encounter believe we have a great responsibility to and for the couples making the encounter weekend, we have established guidelines for our team couples. We find that couples having or meeting these guidelines help to instill positive attitudes in working with other team couples and in giving an encounter weekend.

They are listed as follows:

1. A living spirituality is present, that is, the continual realization of God working through their marriage.

2. A mature marriage of emotionally stable individuals.

3. A commitment to continuing and living dialogue.

4. Willingness and ability to be honest, open and real in expressing feelings about self, marriage and God.

5. Realization that the primary goal of the team is to be of service to the encountering couples by providing the impetus for them to realize their marriage potential.

6. An enthusiasm about Christian marriage as their way of life.

7. A belief in the Marriage Encounter Ministry and a willingness to work in the Marriage Encounter Organization.

How do you see your relationship in regard to these guidelines?

THE PRIEST/Clergy/Religious on the Encounter Team

The role of the clergy/religious on a Marriage Encounter team is vital and varied. Many believe that the clergy/religious is a kind of “hanger-on” or “filler-inner,” that his/her role is strictly that of a liturgical functionary, that his/her part in the presentations is merely one of theologian or outside observer. The clergy/religious, however, is an integral part of the team and must see himself/herself as such.

The Marriage Encounter team is made up of couples and clergy/religious. This person, although not a team leader, can, because of his/her unique role, most easily be the focal point around which the sense of community experienced by the team revolves. Each couple on the team has their own unique character, different from every other couple. The clergy/religious can be the common denominator among the couples, a person with whom each couple has a common relationship. His/her priestly role as “leader of the assembly” in liturgy can be translated to the encounter team, since the team itself can be considered a community coming
together to praise God by its service to His people. Even though he/she is not the group leader, he/she can possess the role of moral leadership.

Moreover, his/her role on the team is a supportive one. His/her experience and expertise in apostolic endeavors should be able to be drawn upon the team couples. His/her critique of the presentations, positive and constructive, will usually be highly respected by the couples because of his/her homiletic background. His/her life of service as clergy/religious can be the bedrock of security for couples whose apostolic endeavors are of limited degree, and his/her presence is a constant reminder to the team couples that God is very important element in their task.

On the Marriage Encounter weekend itself, the clergy/religious again has a vital role. His/her participation in the tasks must, just as that of the team couples, be on the feeling and experiential level. He/she should give witness to his/her growth within himself/herself and growth within his/her relationships with others and with God. What is true of the couples as persons is true of the clergy/religious as a person; many things that pertain to the relationship of the couples can pertain to the clergy/religious relationships with friends. These elements, his/her own person hood and his/her relationships with others and with God, are the basic elements of the clergy/religious part in the talks. One of the side effects of the Marriage Encounter in the lives of many couples is the fact that they for the first time have seen the clergy/religious as a human being. And for many this has been the catalyst for a deepening spirituality for the couples, because they see the human Christ in the clergy/religious.

But the clergy/religious part on the encounter weekend goes beyond the presentations. Although, hopefully, the liturgy and the meditations will be the joint effort of the entire team, he/she will bring to those meditations and the liturgy his/her own unique gifts and talents, his/her own originality, his/her own fervor and enthusiasm. The liturgy on Sunday is the culmination; the integration of the entire encounter experience, but it will be this only if the clergy/religious feels a deep responsibility that it be such.

Suggested Responsibilities for Clergy:

1. To symbolize and protect the spiritual dimension of the weekend in accordance with the philosophy and purpose of NME.
2. To prepare for weekends in conjunction with the team couples.
3. To deal with problems (spiritual/emotional/psychological) when necessary on weekends and in the community.
4. To take responsibility for common worship in conjunction with the community.
5. To support and promote the ministry of NME.

Expectations of Clergy:

1. To have experienced a Marriage Encounter weekend.
2. Communicate spiritual values, which present God as part of daily life.
3. To be a model with the team couples of a spiritual community.
4. To share his/her humanity when making presentations.
5. To establish through sharing a warm relationship with couples.
6. To minister to team couples and community.
7. To be open to be ministered to by the team couples and community.
8. To support rather than dominate.
9. Married clergy and his/her spouse participate in the M.E. weekend experience.

**Weekend Questions for Priests/Single Clergy/Religious**

**Introduction**
1. Why did I come to the marriage encounter?
2. What do I hope to gain from it?

**Focus on feelings**
1. What do I like best about my relationship with the church? How does my answer make me feel (HDMAMEF)?
2. What do I like best about my relationship with other religious? HDMAMEF

**Encounter with self**
1. What are my good points?
2. What are my defects?
3. What are the masks I wear and how do these affect my relationships with other people?

**Parable**
1. What symptoms of personal selfishness can I discover in myself that cause me to withhold myself from others or not listen to others.

**Marriage in the plan of god**
1. What three specific instances have there been in my life where I felt close to people? What were my specific feelings at those times?
2. When I experienced this closeness to people, did I experience closeness to god and his plan for my priesthood or religious life?

**Confidence and dialogue**
1. Where or in what ways do I fail to show confidence with my fellow priests or religious – God? Am I close to anyone?

**Marriage spirituality**
1. What differences do I perceive between marriage spirituality and the spirituality of a priest or religious?
2. How has my spiritual life modified or evolved since leaving the seminary or novitiate?

**Open and apostolic**
1. What are my present commitments to the various forms of apostolic activities?
2. What special way do I see in which to share my love?
How to Write a Talk

Before we can write a talk we must realize the importance and purpose of all the talks in the Marriage Encounter process, including the flow of the weekend.

I. Content of the talk
   A. Purpose: read and re-read manual and guide
   B. Questions that will be asked of the couples (*answer these questions yourselves)
   C. Note the relationship to the previous and following talks.

II. Writing the talk (really be you)
   A. Methods or techniques
      1. Before writing talks: write & dialog on the questions in the Guide For Teams,
      2. Discuss the talk together
      3. Discuss and write an outline together, using PR and CD
      4. Write parts of talk separately and then get together to see how they fit
      5. Write, discuss, rewrite...often you will write much more than you ever use
      6. Identify feeling words used in your talk (use a highlighter to mark them)
   B. Examples
      1. Understand the importance of the examples
      2. Keep them real to you, personal, short, clear, and to the point
   C. Meeting with the clergy
      1. Discuss talks with clergy
      2. Discuss services with the clergy
   D. Dress rehearsal (some teams prefer to go over entire weekend, some just fine tune.)
      1. For continuity
      2. For timing
      3. For refining, finalizing

III. Pitfalls in writing a talk
   A. DO NOT teach or share theory, but, share experience and feelings.
   B. Use many descriptive feeling words.
   C. Be aware that you may enter into Spiritual Divorce while working on a talk. Listen to each other, be gentle.

IV. How to set time aside to write a talk
   A. This is different for each couple, talk writing TAKES TIME, it’s necessary to plan for this time.

V. Each person must write own talk!!!
   A. Another cannot share your inner most feelings or personality.
   B. A talk is NOT real (is not you) unless you write it yourself.

VI. How do you feel about this talk?
   A. Have I grown from this experience?
   B. Do I understand myself and my partner better due to this sharing?

- Rochester Marriage Encounter
To Rewrite or Not to Rewrite Those Team Talks!

No doubt many of you have attended National Marriage Encounter conferences (or other conferences) and have come away inspired. Having reunions with old friends and making new ones, most all of them good and dedicated couples, certainly helps make the conference an uplifting experience.

Talks that help us experience ourselves and our lives in deeper ways are inspiring. Over the years I have heard a number of speakers whose talks had just about everything to make them great talks: humor, warmth, personal relatable stories, and rich insights. The underlying message running through the personal growth talks is that growth means a willingness to take risks even though a substantial personal cost is involved. I agree with that observation.

Yet, I have also experienced some keynote speakers who have been giving basically the same talk for years. For me a personal growth talk that proposes new responses and insights that are necessary to be fully alive loses some credibility when the talk itself does not give witness to change. One of the reasons for this is that the audience changes so the talk will be new to some of them. Another is that a worthwhile message bears repeating. While these points are true and the talk is good, it does seem to be playing it safe. We all know that a lot of effort and serious work goes into writing good talks. Once we have something we feel good about, it is hard to put it aside and put in the intense effort it takes to write a new talk.

I brought up this point when sharing with a local Marriage Encounter group some time ago. A good and sincere couple who I’ve known for some years then said: “But we only have one vivencia.” This could mean, I suppose, that most of us have a very limited number of meaningful experiences to draw from. These experiences may have been turnkey points in our lives. These experiences have significantly contributed to making us who we are today. My thought on this is that it is not the experience but the choices we make as the result of the experience that can be the deciding factor in who we are and who we are becoming today. Hopefully, we should never reach an end point but will always be changing and becoming.

Yet, when couples share the same talk on weekends over a considerable period of time, it seems to infer that no new growth has taken place. Maybe another possibility is that the new experiences are not nearly as traumatic or dramatic as the ones they are now sharing. That seems to be the “cheers and tears” approach to weekend talks. Because the talk gets such a good response for the presenting couple, they may strongly resist writing a new talk. However, the focus of the weekend is not the talks given, although they are an important catalyst. It is not even the couples making the weekend, although that is better. It is recognizing and dealing with how God can and does work through your marriage.

Remember the apostles who were on their way to Emmaus, when Jesus joined them, but they didn’t recognize him until he shared a meal with them. When they realized who he was, they understood their life in a whole new way. To me it is critical that Jesus was recognized only when He broke the bread and blessed it as He did at the Last Supper. This was when He told them He was preparing to sacrifice Himself because of His love for them. That says to me that whenever love and sacrifice is present, Jesus’ presence is recognized.
There are two main approaches to talks given on the weekend. One is the *performance* talk, and the other is the *God sharing* talk. The performance talk gets a lot of oohs and ahs and many compliments for the couple presenting it (and who doesn't enjoy that?). The performance talk leans heavily on the experience, which is usually quite dramatic and involves strong emotions. The attending couples are frequently left dwelling on the powerful experience and the person of the couple who gave the talk.

The God sharing talk on the other hand may or may not have a heavy emotional experience. The critical difference, however, rests in that the focus the attending couples are left with is not the experience or the couple who presented the talk, but *how God can work within the experience to deepen and enrich their marriage relationship. God’s action within the couples’ marriages is the core of the weekend.* The purpose of the team and their talks is to bring them to this point!

One of the tests of a good sharing for me is not what the team couple experiences (although that is a necessary starting point). It is rather a growing awareness of God’s formative presence in their marriage. Sometimes it may be in dramatic ways, but more often it can be in very ordinary everyday experiences that can lead to profound changes.

God speaks to each person according to his/her capacities. For some who are strong and rely heavily on the Lord, deep painful experiences can result in great personal spiritual growth. For others who do not have that strength as yet, God can give them understanding and insights through ordinary everyday experiences in their marriage.

We all know we can limit our capacities for things of the Spirit by limiting our openness to the new experiences the Lord is constantly presenting to us. The apostles were challenged often that the understandings they presently had were not static or the last word, but were to be stepping stones to new ones.

We have frequently heard the expression, *hang-ups,* and all of us have our share of them. It means we can get so locked into some experiences, even though they have been very meaningful, that we lessen or lose our sensitivity and ability to experience new ones. It can lead to arthritis of the spirit. Our repeated use and reference to old experiences can become like old wineskins, smothering the new wine and the messages that the Lord has in mind for us and the couples to whom we minister.

Scripture tells us that the Lord can make all things new. That power speaks to all of us. It makes no difference whether it is a keynote speaker or a team couple or clergy sharing on the weekend. We need new experiences to reflect on so we can become closer to each other and to the Lord.

Based on remarks from Fr. Bob Lexa (NME - Executive Clergy, 1985)

- Rochester Marriage Encounter
GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUE OF TALKS

Some affiliates include critiques the talks of new team members in their team preparation sessions. Some people critique all the talks before they are used on a weekend. The following guidelines might prove helpful in this process.

Responses
1. What feelings does this talk create inside of me?
   For example: Does the talk cause me to feel defensive, or open; afraid, or at peace with the material and the speakers? Do I feel invited to grow, or pressured to change; accepted and understood, or rejected and misunderstood; free and trusted, or bound and inadequate; guilty, or forgiven; bored, or interested?
2. What do I like most about the talk?
3. What do I find most difficult about the talk?
4. Does the talk cause me to look at myself and my relationships and the life of the speakers?

Contents
1. How well does the talk accomplish its main purpose, according to Calvo’s Manual and NME’s Guide for Teams.
2. How well does the talk stick to its own purpose and objectives?
3. Does the talk build upon the previous talk and prepare the foundation for the talk that follows? Are there tie-in references?
4. How well does the talk develop and flow?
5. What do I think about the presentation of the material? Is it clear without being too repetitious, is it long enough to properly fulfill its purpose or is it too long?
6. What do I think about the supplementary material used with or in the presentation? (The quantity and quality of the readings, poems, scripture, songs, etc. - Do they confuse of complement the content?)
7. How well am I able to understand the content? the theory, vocabulary, etc.?
8. How well is the content covered in the suggested time?
9. What do I think about the examples?
   Some considerations are: Do they include feelings? Are they descriptive? Are they concise (to the point)? Are they too wordy (seem rambling) Are they personal? Are they relevant?

Delivery
1. Do the speakers speak “to” the listeners or “down at” them?
2. Do the speakers sound real and believable?
3. Do the speakers sound as though they feel what they are saying?
4. Do the speakers speak clearly and loud enough?
5. How well do the speakers make contact with their audience?

- Rochester Marriage Encounter
**Personal Reflection (PR) and Couple Dialog (CD)**

1. Let the Holy Spirit work.
2. Don’t worry about the time, we will watch it for you - We will ring bells.
3. The team is in charge of the schedule - don’t try to anticipate the next step.
4. Your weekend is unique - don’t compare with others.
5. This isn’t meant to be a weekend solving problems. It’s just beginning!
6. Notebooks are personal!
7. Consider your notebook also as a love letter. Use pet names and expressions in your writing.
8. Be open and honest in your writing.
9. Begin writing immediately. **Write the entire time you are allotted!**
10. Use separate, predetermined rooms or places for writing personal reflection (PR).
11. Use time wisely.
12. Stress your feelings, not your thoughts. **Feelings are neither right nor wrong, neither morally good nor bad --they just are!**
13. Go directly from PR into CD
14. Maintain a mature attitude of silence. Respect others and their reflections when going to PR and CD time.
15. Begin CD by reading each other’s notebooks. Sit close and touch.
16. Read your partner’s notebooks twice, once with your head and once with your heart.
17. Dialogue with LOVE.
18. Be open to receiving your partner’s notebook as a love letter. Be accepting and understanding.

**How to Dialog**

1. Face each other and exchange a sign of affection: kiss, hug, and/or touch.

2. When you don’t seem to know where to go in your dialoguing ask these questions?
   - How does my written reflection make you feel?
   - How do I feel about the feeling you have written?
   - How do you feel about the feelings we are now hearing and revealing?
   - Which of my feelings do you feel the most concern about?
   - Do you still feel the same now as you did?

3. Explain your feelings more...tell me more about this feeling...
   - What mood does the feeling put you in?
   - How do you feel about having this feeling?
   - How do you/I physically feel when you/I have this feeling?
   - How intense is this feeling on a scale of 1 to 10?
   - What colors would you/I associate with this feeling?
   - How do you/I feel about sharing this feeling?
   - What do you need from me when you have this feeling?
   - What increases this feeling?
   - When did you feel that way before?
Guidelines for Dialog

1. We can all improve our relationships; no one is perfect.
2. The beginning of solutions to mutual problems is always found in sincerity and goodwill, searching to understand feelings.
3. Listen; don’t make judgments. Listen for the person being revealed to you. Listen with the heart more than the head. Listen more to meaning than to words.
4. Mutual trust can develop and grow. But NEVER use confidence as a weapon, for to do so is to build barriers and walls.
5. Finding fault or placing blame solves nothing; it only causes hard feelings.
6. It is not always easy to accept a differing point of view, but that is the goal of couple dialogue. Reach out to understand the view of your partner.
7. Be open to receive confidences from each other. Listen attentively and lovingly to each other and be ready to confide in each other.
8. No one else can be responsible for my feelings. Others can only simulate the emotions that are already in me.
9. Kindness without honesty is sentimentality: Honesty without kindness is cruelty. The genius of communication is the ability to be both totally honest and totally kind at the same time.

Some Thoughts on Dialog

Dialog, that little 10 minutes a day, is so difficult! Conjugal dialog is the married conversation between husband and wife after reading each other’s written reflection. There are many ups and downs with dialog. Perhaps the following ideas can help.

Dialog is a way of life, a call to love. It’s very difficult and requires discipline...“all the love you can give every day of your life for as long as you live.” Aim for 10 minutes every day. Unfortunately, it is easy to fall short, and Saturday nights can be particularly difficult!!

Dialog questions can be on everything and anything at all, some silly, some serious - from - “What’s the nicest thing you did this week?” to “How do I really feel about one of our children?” Dialog could be done on a passage from scripture or an idea from a book. Do the written reflections after reading the questions or the passage of scripture or book. You can use questions from your weekend Matrimonial Evaluation sheet or on how you feel about your growth in dialog. This particular type of dialog is the most rewarding.

Every couple finds their own special time - some in the morning before the kids are up, others in the evening. The biggest problem (and the most likely cause of failure) is selecting (or not) questions ahead of time., so decide on the question the day before or choose several for the week. Do your written reflections separately. During dialog, be specific, relate how your feelings on the subject affect your unity, but don’t use this as a problem solving session by listing solutions. Don’t excuse your feelings, but aim for acceptance and understanding of each other’s feelings. It’s okay and only human to argue as long as it is not done in anger, rage or bitterness. Remember to use “I” statements.

Dialog is like putting money in the bank. You can always draw from this reserved strength of understanding your feelings to solve any problems that come up. The rate of interest varies - sometimes 30, sometimes 60, and sometimes 100 fold!

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Dialog Questions

Here are some suggested couple dialog questions, which can be used during your dialog to make it richer. You may want to try using several of these suggestions during any dialog to help you get started.

1. Tell me more...
2. “Is it like...” (Describe how you interpret his/her feelings:)
3. How does that feeling make you feel, physically?
4. What helps you to describe your feelings more fully?
5. What other feelings do you have?
6. How does it feel to feel the way you feel?
7. Have I ever described a feeling like yours to you? Tell me how you remember that feeling of mine. How does it compare with your present feeling?
8. Have you ever felt this way before? How does it compare with those other times?
9. What have I said or done in past dialogs that helped you to get out your feeling more?
10. What intensifies your feelings? What lessens them?
11. How do you feel about revealing this feeling? Is there a difference in feelings expressed in your personal reflection and our dialog?
12. Let your partner know where you are- in reaching out to his/her feelings.
13. Tell what helps you to respond better, to comprehend more.
14. Tell whether you are prejudiced toward him/her at this moment and what causes you to become more prejudiced and helps you to be less prejudiced?
15. Tell whether you have any real desire to feel his/her feelings now and what helps your desire to understand your partner’s feeling.
16. Your partner should tell you how he/she feels about your questions or your feelings.

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**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**

*Continuing Dialog Groups*

Following a Marriage Encounter weekend, couples often need encouragement to keep up the level of dialog that they experienced during the encounter. Continuing dialog groups serve this purpose; however, they go by many different names in various areas of the country. Some are simply called Continuing Dialog; others are: IMAGE (I, me and God encounter), Spiral, Circle, and perhaps other names.

The essence of each group/session includes:

- Monthly (or other regular) meetings
- A host couple and home to hold the meeting
- A couple who presents a brief talk on the topic for the meeting
- PR/CD (10/10, or as decided by the group)
- Group sharing
- Prayer
- Music, singing, snacks and social time (optional)

Couples from the same ME weekend make up some continuing dialog groups, couples from similar geographic areas or with similar interests (parish or church, children or not, ages, etc) make up others. Some groups change membership frequently; others work together for years. Some couples attend more than one group. Options are limited only by the wishes of the group. See Appendix F for details of the organization and procedures of some groups.

**Beginning IMAGE**

Green Bay Marriage Encounter developed a series of three sessions similar to continuing dialog above designed specifically for couples to attend shortly after each ME weekend. The first session deals with the individuals and the weekend experience itself, the second with couple and family relationships, and the third with God in the marriage. Couples are encouraged to continue as a continuing dialog group. However, arrangements to attend another established group are also an option after these three sessions. (More in Appendix F)

**Reunion Evening**

Many Marriage Encounter communities hold a special evening following each ME weekend or at some time during each year. This event has some similarities to continuing dialog sessions. The main difference is that everyone who encountered at any time or place is invited to attend, which means that the location is usually a church or large meeting room. It might include a brief worship or prayer service, an icebreaker, plus the remainder of the continuing dialog components. It also provides another opportunity to share details about community events, continuing dialog groups, and the national conference. (Appendix F)
The best idea in our community this past year was our Family Campout at Camp Gray, Baraboo, Wisconsin. It was held on a weekend, (Friday evening until Sunday afternoon), in August.

Camp Gray is a youth camp owned by the Diocese of Madison and available on some weekends throughout the year for use by groups such as Marriage Encounter. We were allowed to use cabins and a dorm at the camp for those who did not have camping equipment, as well as camping area for those with their own tent or camper. Since we scheduled our campout just at the end of the youth camping season, the camp staff was still available to assist us with activities and provide our meals. Besides the meals prepared by the camp staff, we had an elegant dinner catered on Saturday evening, which was preceded by a BYO family social.

In planning our activities for the weekend, we emphasized family. These activities ranged from a group bonfire to Family Olympics to a Family Liturgy. There were also a few events scheduled for various age groups of children and teenagers, such as a trip to a water park at nearby Wisconsin Dells on Saturday afternoon via the Camp Gray bus. A copy of our schedule of activities is attached.

Publicity for our campout was begun well ahead of time, by releasing an article with registration form in our May newsletter. We required payment with registration, so we had very few cancellations. This early pre-paid registration process helped immensely in planning our meals and activities.

We think that the Family Campout was a super event of our year because it helped build community spirit and enabled us to include our families in a Marriage Encounter activity. So many times our children feel left out when we go to other Marriage Encounter activities. The weekend was an enjoyed time for all who attended.
SPECIAL WEEKENDS

There are a variety of weekends that some affiliates use to expand the Marriage Encounter program to special groups or for unique circumstances. These include Marriage Renewal, Parish Weekends, Prison Ministry, Recovery Weekends, Family Encounter, Sons and Daughters Weekends, and several follow-up weekends. Each of these options is described briefly in this section and Appendix H contains detailed examples from a variety of affiliates.

Marriage Renewal is a one-day program that is held in a church, often under the auspices of a local parish or congregation. The detailed example in Appendix H describes preplanning activities and the committee, presentations, and a closing service. The presentations come from the Connecticut National Marriage Encounter and include the following four topics: Self; Communication; We, God, and the World; and How We Came to God as a Couple.

A Parish Weekend is basically the same as a regular Marriage Encounter Weekend except that it is held in a church or similar facility and the couples return to their homes at night. The benefits of offering a parish weekend include lower costs, reasonable distance, and familiar surroundings. Some groups use this weekend as a catalyst in the development of greater parish unity and participation. The example in the appendix comes from Saginaw Marriage Encounter. Palatine Marriage Encounter offers one parish weekend each year. Couples from Palatine presented a workshop on parish weekends at a recent NME summer conference.

A Recovery Weekend is the same as a Marriage Encounter weekend, but it is designed for couples with either or both spouses who are recovering from some addiction. Because of this, the team is made up of all "Recovering" couples and clergy if possible. This is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL if this weekend is to be attempted. Recovering couples relate with recovering couples as they share a common bond. When the addicted person and their spouse enter a Recovery Program, they practice individual programs of recovery. Recovering Marriage Encounter is designed to help couples apply the principles of their individual programs to their marriage relationship. This special weekend has reached many recovering couples, who otherwise would not have attended a Marriage Encounter weekend.

The Prison Ministry segment of the National Marriage Encounter program has been growing rapidly. More volunteers are needed to meet the demand. Individuals and affiliates are encouraged to join this branch of NME.

In the early 80’s the leaders of NME of Greater Cincinnati saw a need for a special type of M.E. weekend adapted for inmates and their spouses in Federal prisons. Over the years the program techniques have been developed, and the requests from chaplains keep increasing. The number of Prison Encounters given now stands at 113 with over half of these given in the last 3 years. This ministry spans the whole U.S., including Hawaii. With 75 Federal institutions operating and 25 more being planned, not to mention the state facilities, the need for increased M.E. support in this ministry is becoming critical.
It sounds like a major undertaking for local ME affiliates to adopt a prison as a community, but is really rather simple since the Prison Encounters require a lot less support than weekends given "on the outside." We DON’T need arrangements, recruiting, publicity, follow-up, etc. We will do all the contacts with the prisons and supply all materials you will need. We also provide the schedules, outlines, and guidelines you will need. All we ask from the local areas are:

- Two or three team couples and their ME community support
- Prayer support-Prayer cards from the local community CD groups, board, church, etc.
- Paper banners-We supply the artwork, your community enlarges and colors them.

We ask communities to give this their prayerful consideration. If you would like to inquire more, please contact Jack and Jane Katenkamp at (513) 385-0222 or National Marriage Encounter Prison Ministry Inc., P.O. Box 53583, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45253. Thanks and God bless you all.

**Family Encounter**

The purpose of the Family Encounter is to give the opportunity to each family to make a deep and intimate loving dialog in the Lord. It focuses on the renewal of the family as an individual unit rather than the renewal of the family life in the United States or the Church. In renewing the individual unit, the secondary result may be a new life and consecration within the Church by families dedicated to living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Though this may be a slower process, we believe it is a more lasting approach.

The family has the chance to make a deep intimate and loving dialog in the Lord. "Dialog" is not used in the sense of the written feeling, the daily 10/10 of Marriage Encounter. In the Family Encounter sense, it is a critical and insightful reflection on my own life and is to be shared with other family members. The key to the Family Encounter is the personal reflection, rather than the "dialog." The more members of a family discover themselves, the more they have to share with each other. So self-reflection is shared, received, and accepted by the family. Then and only then can real talking or communication take place.

The rhythm of the weekend is very familiar to those in Marriage Encounter. First of all there is a presentation by the team, which is a sharing of their personal life experiences. The idea is to open the way for those listening to explore their own life and vivencia during the personal reflection. It is learning through observation, perhaps, letting others peek into our lives in the hopes that they may see something of themselves in our experience. The presentation helps them search their own life rather than simply give information and experiences.

The second aspect to the rhythm is the personal reflection or the discovery of our own vivencia in the written form. (Writing is the reason for the age limitation: Only older children can handle the written reflection.) This is a critical and discerning type of reflection that is the crucial element for the experience. There can be no communication with another, no reconciliation, no unity, unless there is an awareness of self and life. It is also the same base for "teens" or sons and daughters to understand their own lives.

The "Dialog" would, of course, be the third aspect of the rhythm. But "Dialog" is not used in the same way as in the Marriage Encounter. The "dialog of Marriage Encounter" is built upon the Covenant or commitment of Marriage. In the Family Encounter, the sons and
daughters do not have that same type of covenant relationship. Sons and daughters will eventually move on to form their own covenants and commitments. So the "Dialog" is different, because the type of commitment is not the same as in Marriage. But, "Dialog" is the same as in the Marriage Encounter in the sense of sharing of two interior worlds that are received and accepted. So again, it is a two-way street – each freely sharing. This is an important realization, especially for parents. The two-way relationship is the total reality.

The last part of the rhythm is the moderator. At the end of the family meeting, the family as a unit summarizes what took place in their meeting. The last few moments of their sharing are taken for this summary. Then a representative of the family is chosen to share that summary with all other families for mutual support. This summary, or use of the moderator, is important from two aspects: first, to check out what really went on in the family meeting, and second, to help other families be freed of isolation.

This summary is one way for a family to evaluate what was helpful and not helpful in the family meeting. Notice it is not the summary of one person, but of the whole family. Hearing another summary can also encourage other families.

So the rhythm of the Family Encounter is: presentation by the team, personal reflection and sharing by the individual, the family meeting, and summary of the moderator. This is the rhythm that is repeated through the topics just as in the Marriage Encounter. The topics have come from the experience of real families. Then this flow is passed on to other families as one way of unity for families. Again it is a process of life, rather than a weekend program.

**Sons and Daughters Encounter**

For many young people today there would seem to be a need for a weekend experience that would enable them to sort things out, to relate to God and to connect the Bible with life. Fortunately, today there are a great number of opportunities available. Many of them help the participants to discover that they are loveable and are capable as well. So we may ask why another? We answer that the encounter of sons and daughters goes beyond the intended scope of most weekends. In fact, it is not even called a weekend for teenagers, but rather, as the title indicates, it is an experience in relationships and interpersonal communication in the family.

The participants are given the opportunity to look at their relationship to their parents, their brothers and sisters, even extending their concern to their grandparents. Throughout the weekend each young person, who are between the ages of fourteen and twenty, is also asked to encounter himself or herself as a free and responsible person, as a child of God, as an active and conscious member of one family and as future creator of a new family. Two boys and two girls, who have experienced the Sons and Daughters Encounter previously, give the presentation for each of twelve steps, which comprise the weekend. The rhythm of each step is an orientation, a motivation, an encounter with oneself followed by small and/or large group sharing. One of the steps is called "loving" and this step enables the young people to see the beauty of love as well as the various levels of love. Another step is entitled "committing oneself" to be a conscious and responsible person, a child of God, a member of one family, a future creator of a new family in their everyday life. This step is a challenging
one as they strive to live out these ideas in their everyday lives. In fact, these four aspects just alluded to are woven in and out of the presentations as they are important and very basic. To experience the weekend means not only exploring relationships within the family, but also opening up the whole area of interpersonal communications as well.

The encounter is open to all faiths and cultures. Sons and daughters of single parents are also encouraged to attend. It is conducted by, with, and among youth, with a few adults attending as guides and helpers. One of the highlights of the weekend is the closing session of "Thanksgiving." The parents, grandparents and brothers and sisters of the participants are invited to it. Here they witness testimonies of their sons and daughters, their brothers and sisters. Here, in this atmosphere, parents often respond to the cries of their children. In this setting healings in families happen. The whole experience gives promise to the exciting task of creating new families through this powerful bridge-builder called the Encounter of Sons and Daughters.

You may be asking at this point, "After Encounter, what?" Well, Father Gabriel Calvo, who formulated this weekend out of his experience with families, would first insist that its discoveries be taken back to ones own family and lived. However, by way of supplementing the family experience, he has written a manual that can be used by a group of sons and daughters who desire to come together periodically to reflect on their lives as persons, family members and creators of new families.

**F.I.R.E.S AND YOUR FAMILY**
Fr. Gabriel Calvo ([www.familyexperiences.org/](http://www.familyexperiences.org/))

We live in an age where communication techniques improve at a very fast pace, but at the same time millions of human beings feel the anguish of loneliness and isolation. Why? Human beings have a need for relationships and communication as persons, just as fish have a need to swim, and birds have a need to fly.

The FAMILY is the essential and basic relationship of all humanity.
The FAMILY is the first and fundamental school of personal intercommunications.

What is happening within a great majority of families today?

The scholars say, "A great majority of personal problems have their origin in families with non-existing or deficient intercommunications within the family unit." DRUG ABUSE, alcoholism, suicide and delinquency are obvious symptoms of the lack of relationship and intercommunication within the family structure.

We search outside for whatever we find inside. This is a useless effort. The basic personal intercommunication must start IN the family structure as such and not outside of it. Millions of human beings search outside their families because they do not find it inside.

F.I.R.E.S. is born with this purpose: *To serve each family, giving them the opportunity to make real, in their own home, the experiencing of intercommunications, and of a deep, intimate and loving relationship in the Lord.*

F.I.R.E.S. firmly believes that this relationship and personal intercommunication within the members of each family is in accordance with GOD'S PLAN. F.I.R.E.S. wants every family
to be a FIRE of GOD, to experience family intercommunications to build relationships and to enjoy a living interpersonal relationship in the Lord. This is the purpose of GOD'S FIRES! F.I.R.E.S. stands for Family Interpersonal Relationships Experiences Services.

*Marriage and Family, though a fundamental human reality from the beginning of creation, it STILL only in it's early stage of development: almost in it's infancy!

*Marriage and Family (inseparable) are part of CREATION...and creation is a continuing process in which we participate.

* Creation itself - the created universe - is still only the raw material from which the feature is continually being fashioned by the Creator and His creatures, and the end of this world (our part of creation) is a long way off.

*Marriage and the Family have such a POTENTIAL for future development that in the next millennium the New Community of Families will have such a creative, innovative role in society and in religion that "Family Energy" will bring about a higher form of civilization than the world will have seen since the beginning of modern times.

*The beginning of human experience for the vast majority of mankind throughout history has always begun with the experience of a CHILD'S RELATIONSHIP with it's mothers and father, and of their RELATIONSHIP with each other.

*Marriage, the union of man and woman in a family relationship, is part of man's very nature; it comes from the CREATOR and is part of God's Plan: carried out by the Creator since the beginning of humanity.

Similarly there must be in the FAMILY the relationship between parents and children and between brothers and sisters and with each other. It is in these relationships that the energy (human thermonuclear energy) of the marriage and of the family are SEEN; where the potential is released according to the capacity of the partners.

In the same true marriage relationship, which is open to every couple, the partners have the energy to enable each other to express their innermost nature as human beings, to relate to themselves and to others, and to develop their potential as human beings. In a union such as this the children are born into a loving environment and from their first moment of existence they begin to know life as the experience of being loved, nurtured and valued in a way that rarely, if ever, can be equaled by any but the children's own parents.

It is marriage and marriage alone, which has this unique capacity and energy for the truly human development of the married couple and their children. This energy that is part of the very nature of marriage is largely a latent energy that is suppressed, frustrated or inoperative because of a number of circumstances, the fault of either or both of the partners; social, economic and cultural pressures; an environment hostile or indifferent to marriage and family life development.

This energy must be released from within each of us. This energy is the foundation upon which the family unit will grow...it is the foundation of God's plan.

If we release the energy within each of us, the family cannot die!!
FOLLOW-UP WEEKENDS

Deepening Weekend

Background:
Father Merle Kollasch returned from Belgium in 1979 bringing with him the Deepening Weekend. We have offered several of them in the Sioux City diocese and the participating couples have all responded enthusiastically to them.

Description:
The Deepening Weekend is for all encountered couples who wish to go deeper as spouses and as couples. In a particular way it is geared to help couples improve their dialog and sharing skills. It will especially help those in leadership roles in the M.E. community because it will strengthen them for their important apostolate. It gives encountered couples a chance to deepen their commitment to daily 10 and 10, to mutually support couples who are working at their marriages, and to learn how to establish sharing communities.

Structure:
Each of the presentations given during the M.E. weekend is shortened into a 30 to 40 minute presentation (we use two couples for team and always have a sister and priest to be with them during the presentations). This presentation ends with a "how do you feel" question for the spouses to dialog about. (We call this part A.)

Dialog time is provided. There is time to write and time to be alone together. This is time for the spouses to deal with their feelings and attitudes on the particular topic presented. (We call this part B, and would make it a 20/20 time frame.)

Sharing time is also provided. We join in a circle and share on a question related to the presentation. This time is very important and would never be sacrificed. It gives the couples the opportunity to grow and to learn from each other. During this time we have found the concept of "little church" develops quite naturally, probably because we have both a priest and a sister or two there. We learn from each other, and are greatly strengthened in our love for each one's contribution to--and gift from--the church. (NOTE: We sometimes go A, B, C, and again we go A, C, B because it keeps the couples from "preparing" for the sharing.)

We do a reconciliation ceremony on Friday night; a morning mass together on Saturday, and a prayer time together on Saturday night; and, at the closing liturgy we ask the couples to write and recite marriage renewal promises (Which is followed by a sign of peace).

Additional Information:
The best way would be to join us at one of our deepening weekends, but since we do just two per year, and like to keep the number of participants at about 30, registration might be a problem. I would send you the notes if you ask for them, or if we can get together for a date and place, I could bring a team and do one in your area for costs

Fr. Merle Kollasch
Marriage Re-Encounter: the Second Step

Father Gabriel Calvo writes: I have said many times that Marriage Encounter is a never ending process of discovery - like a spiral of life and love. And, the Marriage Encounter weekend is just the first step - the starting point of that mysterious spiral. This is part of my vision, which has developed over the past years.

For nearly thirty years I have been invited to visit various M.E. communities throughout the world, and I became concerned. I discovered that sometimes the original essence of Marriage Encounter had been misunderstood. Some groups deviated slightly, and some radically distorted the original spirit or purpose of Marriage Encounter. Consequently, several different "expressions" of M.E. have come into existence...most of the time in competition with each other. I believe this brings about division and confusion, but that is really a topic for another essay.

During this same period of time, I have also been invited to attend and to share about M.E. at many M.E. conferences and conventions. And, I came to the realization that many M.E. communities were growing as closed circles rather than spirals of love and life. They were disconnected from children, home life, neighborhood and community. Then I began to ask M.E. couples, "Where are your sons and daughters?"

So, because of my vision of the essence of Marriage Encounter and encouraged by my experience in marriage and family ministry, I became concerned and challenged by the various misunderstandings. I began to create a series of programs to develop, to deepen, to enlarge and to promote the powerful concept of "encounter." I am trying to relate it to individuals, couples, families and communities. This is what F.I.R.E.S. is all about. F.I.R.E.S. is an acronym, which stands for: Family; Intercommunication; Relationships; Experiences; and Services. F.I.R.E.S. has become my ministry and now offers twelve different programs to all those who are interested in experiencing them.

As a matter of fact, each and every service we offer has been conceived to fill a very real need in today's families. We at F.I.R.E.S. are trying to listen to leadership of youth, marriage and family movements and organizations in all the communities we visit throughout the world. We listen to the searchings and needs of people, and then we do our best to design a program to serve those needs. The first such program has become a wonderful and hopeful experience for couples. It's call Marriage Re-Encounter. This special program prompted me to write the F.I.R.E.S. manual, for those teams trained to "animate" the weekend.

The purpose of the marriage re-encounter weekend is to give each previously encountered couple the opportunity to deepen their M.E. experience. We try to do this with the original vision in mind and in light of the "signs of the times." Further, it's a chance for each couple to rediscover where they have been, to evaluate where they are now, and to plan where they want to go, not just as a couple, but as a family, too.

To achieve this purpose, the weekend consists of 14 steps, which are presented in a 44-hour weekend away from home...similar to M.E. And, as with M.E., each step is related to all the other steps...they build on each other. They help the participants look at themselves as individuals, and examine their relationships with their spouse, with God, with their sons and daughters, and with society.

The "animating" couples make presentations, which illustrate each of the steps of the weekend. Then, they invite the participants to have a personal reflection on the subject. Next, each person shares their whole self (reflections) with their spouse. This sharing may
include: ideas and thoughts; beliefs and convictions; memories and fantasies; feelings; sentiments and resentments; attitudes and behaviors; aspirations and dreams; intentions and goals; desires and wants; hopes and fears; strengths and weaknesses; efforts; victories and failures; expectations and frustrations; illusions and disappointments; joys and pains; temptations and experiences; and including their personal relationship with God.

Then, the couples return to the conference room, and they are each invited to share whatever they wish with the group, if they wish to share at all.

The 13th step of the weekend is called "Thanksgiving Celebration," and it is a family event. This is the closing ceremony of the weekend, and the families of all participants are invited and encouraged to attend. Here, the couples build a bridge between themselves and their sons and daughters, becoming not a "circle," but a wonderful spiral of love. You might wonder what happened to step 14? That happens next...the follow-up of this experience is at home.

**Anniversary Weekends**

An Anniversary Weekend is designed for previously encountered people as a vehicle for enrichment of the individual and the married couple, in relationship with one another and with God. Written reflection in the form of a love letter and couple dialog is part of the weekend process.

During this weekend, the couples and religious are strongly encouraged to go beyond feelings to explore and share with partner their expectations, judgments, beliefs, values and attitudes, with an emphasis on attitudes. The object is to try to discover what causes us to feel the way we do and how our feelings and attitudes affect our relationships.

The flow of the weekend follows the original Marriage Encounter Weekend: I, We, We and God, and We, God and the World. It's a natural progression and a reinforcement of the original weekend. However, the presentations and PR/CD vary to create a new process of discovery. In addition, the talks are shorted and the reflection and dialog times are longer than in a regular ME weekend. Some group sharing is often included. Affiliates are encouraged to design their anniversary weekends to meet the needs of the participants.
**Publicity and Advertising**

This section is meant to give any affiliate a basis to get ideas that were used by other affiliates in other regional areas. If additional information is needed, contact the affiliate from which it came or your regional trustee. These ideas come from different affiliates and by no means are the only ideas that can be used for promotion National Marriage Encounter. Credit will be given to the sponsoring community whenever possible.

Announcements for church bulletins or newspaper calendar announcements (Milwaukee ME)

1. Is your marriage blooming or wilting around the edges? Put new life into your relationship and let your marriage blossom. A getaway Milwaukee Marriage Encounter weekend will put the bloom back into your marriage. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

2. We are all aware that divorce is on the incline - that not enough time is spent on family. We all feel helpless and would like to do something to change that. But what? Why not show that marriage is worth working at and make yours stronger. Attend a Milwaukee Marriage Encounter weekend. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

3. Don’t just share a house with your spouse, share yourself! Milwaukee Marriage Encounter can help you bring a new depth and closeness to your relationship. We’re making good marriages better! Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

4. Even the BEST marriages need maintenance to smooth out the rough spots. Milwaukee Marriage Encounter invites you to do just that on one of our weekends. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

5. Milwaukee Marriage Encounter is a weekend for married people of all faiths and all ages. It is for the newly married to the golden jubilarians. There is always room for improvements and reassurance of the good things you have going for you. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

6. Marriage is a God-given gift of love and joy. If you want to use your gift to the fullest and make it a richer and more satisfying experience, come to a Milwaukee Marriage Encounter weekend. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

7. (October) This time of year we count the many blessings God has bestowed on us and our families. Marriage is a gift from God, a gift to each other. Isn’t it time we enriched it to the best it can be? Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.

8. (November) Make this the best Christmas ever, give a gift of yourself. Enjoy a special get away weekend - relax, share, renew the closeness that made your marriage special. Call Milwaukee Marriage Encounter - 769-3333. Weekends available (list dates). Gift certificates available.
General Publicity Suggestions

- Have one couple whose job is solely publicity.
- Put public service announcements on radio and TV.
- Return all phone calls.
- Send a couple to visit parishes.
  - Short bulletin announcements
  - 15 to 20 minute visit
  - Host church could provide coffee, donuts, etc.
- Find a parish contact couple in each parish/church.
- Go to bishops/leaders of other denominations.
- Add a Marriage Encounter contact person to the local speakers bureau.
- Contact priests or ministers and deacons or lay ministers of parishes.
  - Offer a free weekend to them.
- Exchange weekend dates with other community newsletters.

- Advertise:
  - On billboards.
  - On Christian radio stations and TV.
  - By word of mouth.
  - On bus benches.
- Hold information sessions
  - At night at someone’s home.
  - In the evening for lovers with intimate dinner & info talk after dinner.
  - For counselors (Green Bay).
- Send Marriage Encounter information and brochures to local churches.
- Ask couples making a weekend how they heard about M.E. to determine what type of publicity is working.
- Contact clergy and ask them to view video (Green Bay).
- Use publicity videos on cable TV.
- Write articles for Christian newspapers.
- Set up a booth at fairs and shows.
  - Home improvement show (Milwaukee)
  - Bridal Fair (Milwaukee; Twin Cities)
- Put M.E. magazines in professional offices or church libraries.
- Some parishes have handbooks for new members. If they do, get M.E. listed.
- Contact your local Chamber of Commerce.
- Brochures in floral shops around Valentines Day.
- Offer a free weekend to a church group, if they are comfortable.
- Set up a table at parish awareness day or other special day.
- Provide donuts after worship service sponsored by M.E. Put out a basket for donations.
- Find out if there is a specific week or weekend dedicated to marriage in your church.
- Search for the longest married couple in your local community. Press release to paper, renew vows at mass, add to homily.
- McDonalds has tray placemats with information - contact corporate or local franchise.
- Get a couple from your community on a local talk show.
- Get a realtor involved - they deal with couples all the time. Give a gift certificate to every couple who buys a house from the agent.
- Don’t restrict weekends to anyone - don’t judge them.
- Have a publicity or activity couple who plans family activities and promotes community involvement to help with follow-up and recruiting. Couples can invite non-encountered couples to see who we are.
• Have a Marriage Encounter float in local parades.
• Send a picture of new teams or board members with press release to local paper.
• Include a brochure in your next newsletter so everyone on mailing list has one to share with friend or family.
• Send a gift certificate to an editor of your local paper.
• Talk to hospital administrator about gift certificates.
• Keep Marriage Encounter visible to other - anything physical at home (bricks, banners, etc..) will help keep M.E. in the limelight.
• Contact Pastor Associations - meet for lunch and give presentation.
• Personal touch is best - have applications with you wherever you go!!
• Place information about Marriage Encounter
  - In Welcome Wagon packets for families moving into your community.
  - In doctor offices, dentist offices, etc.
• Promote Marriage Encounter as the next step at an Engaged Encounter.
• Stress the importance of Marriage Encounter earlier in second marriages.
• Use a license plate frame with Marriage Encounter and local phone number.
• Take out a 1/2 or 1 page ad in a newspaper with signatures of couples who encountered (Green Bay).
• Show a short slide show after romantic movies at the local movie theater (Green Bay).
• Church pulpit talks by M.E. couples and/or clergy.
• Open some events to non-encountered couples.
• Consider holding weekends in different sites - religious site may be a turn-off for non-Catholics.
• Use Image groups to help publicize.
• Local sport event: get in the program or on the scoreboard. Example - “Score one with your spouse, go on a Marriage Encounter weekend.
• Put brochures or flyers on cars in store and church parking lost. Put a code on your handout so you know where it was distributed if it comes in as a registration. Get permission to do this. Get permission to park in parish parking lot.
• Emphasize that ME weekends are not for troubled marriages.
• Have one couple who has made a weekend give a personalized invitation to another couple.
• Leave subscriptions to “Marriage” magazine in back of church.
• Wear sweatshirts and t-shirts to advertise M.E.
• Listing in telephone books under “Marriage Encounter.”
  - List in both white and yellow pages.
  - Bold listing costs a little more but will catch the eye.
  - The disadvantage of yellow page listing under Marriage & Family Counseling is the possibility it will attract couples who need more professional counseling.
• Sell registration coupons at three for $25; each coupon is worth a $25 registration for a friend ($75 worth of registrations for $25). Coupons can be in take-home packet at the end of the weekend or in newsletters or other mailings.
• Use 800 number on brochures so couples can obtain information for weekends for friends and family outside their local area - 800 number gives credibility to organization. (This option is in the process of being replaced by Internet access.)
Sample Press Release

The 2006 National Marriage Encounter Conference, “Color ME Love,” was held July 20-13, on the Drake University campus in Des Moines, Iowa. Hosted by Central Iowa Marriage Encounter and encountered couples from around Iowa, the conference offered a variety of topics presented by keynote, featured, and workshop speakers.

Attending from this area were ____________________.

The mission of National Marriage Encounter is to promote and encourage marriage and family life and spiritual diversity by offering Marriage Encounter weekends and a support community. National Marriage Encounter enables people to discover God’s vision of marriage and family life, thereby leading them to a clearer understanding of their relationship with each other and with God.

National Marriage Encounter grew out of a weekend enrichment experience for married couples designed in Spain by Fr. Gabriel Calvo. The first Marriage Encounter weekend in the U.S. was conducted at Notre Dame University in the summer of 1967. Since that time the experience has spread to virtually every part of the country and embraces literally thousands of married couples of all religious denominations.

For information about National Marriage Encounter in your area, call 1-800-367-0343 or check the Internet at www.marriage-encounter.org.

Phone Coverage

For many years N.M.E. of Greater Cincinnati had a dedicated phone line. This gave us a listing in the phone book, and brought us couples who were cruising the white or yellow pages looking for help. We subscribed to ‘call waiting’ so the line could be switched to another couple’s home when the ‘Information Couple’ was out-of-town. This cost for this service was $34 per month.

One day, when we tried to change the ‘call forwarding’ number while the couple at the base location was out-of-town we found it was not possible to make the change in their absence. After this experience, we investigated options. We settled on a voice mailbox service. We like it much better for several reasons:

• It allows an extended announcement message that gives the caller more information about our services.
• It screens out calls from people looking for something else. (Previously about 40% of the calls were for a marriage license, justice of the peace, counselor, and even one guy trying to get a date!)
• It no longer rings at someone’s home. This means no more interruptions while in the shower, or a drunk waking you up at 3:00 a.m. Now, we call the voice mailbox computer at our convenience. (A real blessing)
• It is high quality. The system is digital not tape. The fidelity of announcement is excellent.
• It is more flexible. To change couples, just give the new couple the code number, and they can take over service to the voice mailbox instantly. There is no telephone line to switch-over.
• It is less expensive. We pay $15/month for the voice mailbox and $3/month for the listing in the white pages. The yellow page listing is free since we are a not-for-profit organization. $18 vs. $34 is a nice saving.

[If three similar organizations subscribe, we can get our own (more appropriate) heading in the Yellow Pages]

If a caller wants a call back, they get it within 24 hours. Otherwise, we send a brochure, then wait two weeks and call them. On the follow-up call, we ask if they received the brochure, and if they have any questions or concerns. Frequently this gets into a discussion that helps them make a decision. (We have recently shifted our practice to more readily recommend Retrouvaille, if we sense or are advised of a serious problem in the couple’s relationship.)

The text of our message varies somewhat depending on conditions. Usually it goes like this. (Words in brackets [ ] indicate where affiliates would want to inset their own specifics.)

Hello. You’ve reached the voice mailbox for National Marriage Encounter of [your affiliate name]. Marriage Encounter is a program to help married couples improve communications on a deep, personal level.

We are a non-profit, Christian based organization operated by volunteers. We are non-denominational, and welcome people of any faith, including those with no religious affiliation. We do not provide 1:1 marriage counseling, but rather use trained couples to demonstrate and help you develop unique ways of communicating on intimate and important topics.

We give weekend encounters in this area [ # ] times a year. Our next program starts Friday evening [ date ] and extends through Sunday afternoon. To participate, your reservation information and [ amount ] check must be in our hands by [ time ] on [ date ].

We usually check this voice mailbox once a day about suppertime. If you would like more information, please leave your name, address, and phone number. We will call you to answer questions and offer you a brochure with a reservation form. Now, we don’t write very fast, so please speak slowly, and help us with any tricky spelling. Thanks.

- National Marriage Encounter of Greater Cincinnati

Summary of Chicago Marriage Encounter’s Marketing

The marketing approach to recruitment means that the first question we ask when we are developing a plan is, "What do potential encountering couples need and want?" A marketing approach means that we concentrate on our potential "customers" needs and motivations first, and not first on our own needs - knowing that the more we are tuned to their needs, the more CME will flourish and grow.
Marketing means:

1. Knowing the needs, wants, and values of potential encountering couples, not only white, middle and upper middle class couples but others who could be drawn to ME as well.

2. Adapting or diversifying our "product" or services, so they are a natural fit, matching the needs of various groups of couples.

3. Placing our services before the "customers" in such a way that they can see how these services will satisfy their needs.

There are two basic steps in a well-planned marketing strategy. The first is the selection of target markets. The second is the development of effective marketing programs to attract these target markets.

Market segmentation can be based on (1) geography (particular neighborhoods or areas), or (2) demographics (age, income, occupation, education, family status, religion, racial or cultural background) or (3) personal characteristics (life-style, personality, values, etc.).

Once the potential market has been segmented into such groups, the field can be narrowed down. One or more of these groups can be selected as a target market to be reached with a specific marketing program. This doesn't mean that other kinds of couples would not be actively recruited and welcomed as well. It does mean that we'd give some concentrated thought to specific groups we could appeal to and how best to reach each group.

For each target market selected we would design a marketing program to fit the particular needs, wants and values of the target group. There are at least four elements to think about in drawing up a marketing program, called the "four P's" of marketing.

1. Product of service: The ME weekend. (Are there also other "products" besides the weekend, which CME could provide to certain groups of couples who won't make a weekend? What other ways could we "assist married couples in discovering and living God's plan in sacramental marriage, which is unity"?)

2. Place: Retreat houses, parishes of various denominations, fraternal organizations or service clubs?

3. Promotion: Publicity, advertising, talk shows, personal recruiting, etc.

4. Price: As low as possible? Or more of a sacrifice for this target group without blocking them from coming?

The marketing approach has obvious possibilities for improving our recruiting results. If we are to begin with our potential "customer's" needs, rather than our own, we may be led into various adaptations of the weekend and into more diversity in the products or services we provide. It may enable us to more forward with enthusiasm and creative energy to take advantage of the challenges of the new decade.
Fundraising

This section is meant to give any affiliate a basis for new ideas that were used by other Marriage Encounter affiliates in other regional areas. If additional information is needed, contact the NME affiliate from which it came or your regional trustee. These ideas come from different affiliates and by no means are the only ideas that can be used for National Marriage Encounter. Credit will be given to specific affiliates if known (see parentheses).

Fundraising ideas:

- T-shirt and sweatshirt sale.
- A dance with donated raffle* items - contact local businesses.
  - Dance with silent auction (Milwaukee)
- Bake sale, yard sale, candy sale, pizza sale.
- Car wash.
- Bingo and pull-tab bingo - rentals from schools who run bingo games.
- Silk screen tire covers and magnetic sign - counts as fundraiser & recruiting.
- Entertainment books.
- Lingerie parties - invite couples.
- Hire out talent - Hold a talent show to find out local talent.
- Christmas caroling as a small group - carry money basket for donations - hand out brochures as you leave.
- Sing-O-Grams - ad in local paper or Penny Saver that non-profit marriage group will deliver your love message for $35 and give telephone number.
- Some pizza places will allow you to bus table for a percentage of the night’s profit - you can pass out brochures.
- Sell ads in your newsletter.
- Salary deductions to United Way can be designated to Marriage Encounter - check with your United Way office to get on list as designee.
- Giftnet - a telecommunications network which promises the lowest rate no mater where you call and that will donate 10% of your charges to Marriage Encounter (Contact region representatives for more info).
- Christmas Basket Raffle - Team and board members donate three items for basket (Christmas ornaments, wine, cheese, crackers, candy, etc.) and sell raffle tickets to friends and co-workers at $1 each. Have drawing just before Christmas and present basket to winner.
- Attend filming of television shows where audiences are paid for attendance and door prizes are awarded to attendees (prizes can be raffled or used as door prizes at M.E. functions).
- Sell Marriage Encounter items developed by local community:
  - Gold pendants
  - Coffee mugs with logo & “I survived an M.E. weekend”
  - Sun catchers with Marriage Encounter logo
  - Heart shaped magnets with “Love is a daily decision”
  - License plate frames with Marriage Encounter & local phone number
- Contact local entertainment establishments (comedy clubs, night clubs, etc.) that offer fundraisers (dinner and show at low cost and community sets ticket price).
• Offer space in newsletter for encountered people to place their business card for $30 for one year - offsets cost of printing and mailing newsletter.
• Bus tables at local restaurant and pass out brochures to diners.
• Raffle* donated restaurant meals or weekend at local hotel.
• Valentine Dinner/Dance – raffle* donated items.
• Birthday party for Marriage Encounter - couples bring presents for Marriage Encounter (i.e., coffee, notebooks, pens, candles, money, etc).
• Christmas party for Marriage Encounter - same as above.
• Look for way not to spend money - have support couples bring two notebooks and two pens to replenish supplies.
• Ask couples to donate supplies.
• Casino Party - solicit donations, sell play money, play casino games, sell hot dogs and beer, and auction prizes at end of evening.
• Valentine Serenade - sign up for three-song serenade on violin, bouquet and Polaroid picture for $35 (have party afterward for all those who worked on project).
• Flea Market at Swap Meet - father donations from everyone in community, sell clothes 3/50 cents, price larger items, at end of swap meet sell bag full for $1.00.
• Have payment book with 20 coupons available on weekend for those who want to make donation over period of time. Couple decides amount of payment. Can put book with monthly bills and make donation on monthly basis.
• Appeal for a specific cause. Annually we submit a letter out in our newsletter with a self-addressed envelope to the M.E. treasurer appealing for funds to support our newsletter. Our newsletter was a costly part of our program, this appeal more than offsets our newsletter cost.
• Host a national conference and/or join other communities in hosting a national conference.
• Write a grant.
• Some corporations give matching funds for couples (employees) who make a weekend.
• Approaching wealthy persons is not good.
• Fund raising letters to vendors M.E. deals with.
• Money talk on the weekend is important. If you can give more, please do so.
• Fund corporation, foundations.
• You need to have 501(c)3 designation to raise funds and/or get them from foundations/corporations. That is the charitable designation, and you must be incorporated to apply.
• Taste tests for new products coming out on the market. They get paid $5.00 per person and need 40 people per session and hold 3 sessions (St Cloud, MN).
• Square dance (Chicago).
• Brat fry (Lakeshore, WI).
• Sponsor people through Image groups to attend weekend. Fond du Lac takes $1.00 per couple collection at their meetings and gives a gift certificate.
• Community dollars – 1% grocery receipts.
• Sell Entertainment Books-your group gets a % of the cost of the book

* Be sure to check your state laws concerning raffles. They are changing in many states!

See also Twin Cities website http://marriages.org/donations.htm for more ideas.
Some communities found their couples supported an annual fundraiser such as flea market or Valentine serenade, while other communities found couples were more likely to work hard to support a fundraiser when their treasury was small not as supportive when assets were higher. It was also felt communities should support other communities fundraisers if at all possible.

**Madison Fundraising Appeal Letter (1994)**

Dear Friends,

Whether your Marriage Encounter Weekend was recent or several years ago, you will recall the enriching dimension it added to your marriage and to your personal life. The time and talent of many couples helped make that encounter weekend a success. You were introduced to many of the couples as they greeted you on Friday night or served the Saturday night dinner, others worked behind the scenes, preparing the rooms and writing prayer cards. The willingness of couples volunteering their time without seeking payment is one reason why the Madison Marriage Encounter Program continues to be both effective and affordable. The other reason is your support and generosity in responding to our annual fund appeal.

In order to maintain the program, the Madison Marriage Encounter Council must raise approximately $5,000 annually. This is in addition to the registration fee paid by the participating couples. Income from registration fees simply does not cover all the necessary expenses to operate the program. Fundraising efforts are necessary to:

* Supplement each couple by charging less than the full cost of the weekend.
* Room rent, linen service, meals and weekend materials.
* Secretarial support through the Office of Family Ministry to handle registration materials, correspondence and other ME functions.
* Publish the *Covenant*, our main source of communication, keeping you in touch with the happenings of the ME program.

Your contribution is an investment in the future of Madison Marriage Encounter. Schedules, distance and other obligations prevent many “Encountering” couples from participating on teams, helping with meals or hospitality, cleaning rooms at Holy Name Seminary or become involved in the many ME activities. The annual fund drive appeal offers everyone an opportunity for the ministry to continue to grow.

Thanks to the generosity of many contributors we raised approximately $4,500 last year. We would like to obtain our goal of $5,000 this year. We greatly appreciate your gift of any amount. Please consider a contribution of $25 or more. We’re counting on you to help ensure this ministry will be available to generations of married couples to come.

May you share abundantly in the graces and blessings of the holiday season, as we look forward to a new year of opportunity to serve and support Madison Marriage Encounter.

God’s Blessings,

[Signature]
Appendix A: National Marriage Encounter Board

National Marriage Encounter Executive Teams

1972  Armando and Barbara Carlo - Chicago, IL
      Fr. Jake Buettner - Chicago, IL

1976  Jerry and Marilyn Sexton - So. St. Paul, MN
      Fr. Tom Hill - St. Paul, MN

1978  Paul and Marge Tepper - Norristown, PA
      Fr. Korby Thielen

1981  Noel and Jo McCracken - Peoria, IL
      Fr. Bob White - St. Bonaventure, NY

1984  Allyn and Joy Smith - Ithaca, NY
      Fr. Bob White - St. Bonaventure, NY

1985  Chuck and Sandy Ogg - Orlando, FL
      Fr. Bob Lexa - Appleton, WI.

1988  Chuck and Sandy Ogg - Orlando, FL
      Fr. Mike Klarer - Madison, WI.

1990  Ed and Linda Wagoner - Del City, OK
      Fr. Peter Chepaitis - St. Bonaventure, NY

1992  Ed and Linda Wagoner - Del City, OK
      Fr. Phil Schmitt - Iowa Falls, IA

1994  Jack and Betsy McCool - Green Bay, WI
      Fr. Phil Schmitt - Iowa Falls, IA

Elections shifted to the end of the summer Board meeting from here on:

1996  Jack and Betsy McCool - Green Bay, WI
      Fr. Bob Rhyner – Green Bay, WI

1998  Tom and Sue Johnson – Watertown, WI
      Fr. Bob Rhyner

2000  Tom and Sue Johnson
      Fr. Phil Schmitt

2002  Gene and Mike Vander Heyden – MN
      Fr. Phil Schmitt

2004  Gene and Mike Vander Heyden
      Fr. Bob Rhyner

In 2005, the Board changed the Bylaws to allow for three two-year terms, rather than two.
2006  Gene and Mike Vander Heyden  
         Fr. Bob Rhyner

2008  Harry and Cecilia Hentges – Jefferson City, MO  
         Fr. Bob Rhyner