

Don't live together before marriage

FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. TIMOTHY F. BABCOCK

There are certain packages that are required to carry a warning notice something like: "Contents of this package may be hazardous." Today I would like to write about a human experience and decision that should have such a warning label attached to it. The experience I speak of is the cohabitation prior to (or in place of) marriage. I realize that this experience has become quite common in our time, and is even considered by many to be harmless and "normal." This perception needs to be challenged, however.

First of all, since I am writing from the perspective of "Beliefs and Values," cohabitation apart from marriage is contrary to the values of virtually every religion. Such a decision is spiritually unhealthy both for each partner and for the relationship. Since many will reject this statement as "old fashioned," however, I intend to spend most of this article focusing on the numerous significant reasons, apart from beliefs and values, why this is not a sound

Cohabitation prior to marriage is proving to be one of the more destabilizing choices a couple who intend to marry can make. Now that the pattern of cohabitation has been around long enough that it can be studied and evaluated, many studies are finding that people who live together prior to marrying have significantly higher rates of divorce (about 33 percent more likely) than those who do not. Cohabitation may seem like a good "trial run" for a solid marriage, but exactly the opposite is true.

In addition to this finding, there are increasingly stronger indications that cohabitation carries other major risks. Non-married partners are more likely to be abused than spouses in committed marriages. Young adults who move in together, especially if they are not engaged or married, are more likely to find substance abuse in their relationship. Finally, families of non-married cohabitants can be less stable in the long run due to unplanned pregnancies leading to decisions to marry soon-

er than they are ready for.

Marital relationships in which sexual intimacy enters into the relationship at too early a stage often find that communication, especially pertaining to problems and conflicts, is not as fully developed as it is in relationships where sex waits until there is a permanent commitment. People who desire a lifelong marriage need to take time, before physical intimacy, to evaluate their own understanding, and that of their future partner, about commitment, covenant, faith, roles, finances, family and children and, of course, love, intimacy too early, and too frequent, can actually cover this evaluation process, giving a false sense of closeness and compatibility.

The actual decision to marry, after or during cohabitation, may often not be as free as it would be if people were not living together. Each individual's freedom to choose not to enter into marriage can be compromised when they are already together. Marriage can happen out of sense of duty, rather than of choice. Outside forces (change of job, family pressures, etc.) can also force a decision before the individuals are ready to make it.

Often times, couples will make this choice simply out of financial considerations. We will need money later, and we are now living together. In fact, this can be one of the most expensive choices a couple can make. Dealing with the potential effects of the cohabitation experience may prove far more costly in the long term.

There are numerous other facts that space does not afford me the opportunity to address here. The decision to marry is a very serious decision, one that is intended to last for life. Couples who choose to cohabit before marriage often deny themselves the appropriate setting and opportunity to make this decision properly. If this is a choice you are considering, and if you are going to be possibly interested in marrying the person, do yourself a big favor. Don't live together beforehand. The choice of this practice may be hazardous to a sound marriage.

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BELIEFS & Values

Temple dedicates sculpture, pavilion

BY RENA FOLKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Just a stone's throw away from Temple Israel's new Edith and Alvin Wasserman Pavilion, in the midst of a garden brimming with fragrant flowers, saplings and sprawling evergreens, sits a bronze man playfully embracing two young children.

"The sculpture is an effort to depict generations," explained Rabbi Harold Loss of Bloomfield Hills. "In essence, the name of the garden is the L'Dor V'Dor Generation to Generation Family Garden. Our goal is to expand on that theme with the concept of family, which is how we view ourselves as a congregation."

On Monday, Sept. 1, the temple family will dedicate its "Generations" sculpture and the newly installed pavilion during its seventh annual Labor Day picnic. The public is welcome to attend the noon dedication and the free day of activities, which runs from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The American Red Cross will be on temple grounds from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the blood drive sponsored by the Temple Israel Brotherhood. Last year's blood donations totaled 180 pints.

The picnic features a petting zoo, moonwalk, 22-foot inflatable slide, clowns, pony rides, face painting and music by Star Trax. Storyteller Maureen Schiffman of Novi will appear at the pavilion at 1 p.m. followed by the Flying Aces Frisbee Team at 2 p.m. A West Bloomfield Township fire truck, police car and canine unit will be on display throughout the day. Picnic fare for the expected crowd of 2,000 includes hot dogs, popcorn, watermelon, ice cream, cookies and candy.

"It's almost like a country fair in terms of atmosphere," said Cindy Kandel of West Bloomfield, picnic committee co-chairwoman. "Picnic is almost a misnomer for it."

Though they've held outdoor picnics for decades, it wasn't until seven years ago that the Oakland County congregation



STAFF PHOTO BY COLLEEN BOCKEN

Outdoor sanctuary: Congregational President David Tisdale, Rabbi Harold Loss and Facilities Manager Pat Blackwell will be on hand for the Labor Day dedication of the Edith and Alvin Wasserman Pavilion.

decided to host the event on site to showcase its growing facility at 5725 Walnut Lake Road. "The yearly picnic gives us the opportunity to dedicate major physical improvements done here during the year," said David Tisdale of West Bloomfield, president of the 3,000-family congregation.

The dedication ceremony will be officiated by the temple clerical team, which includes in addition to Loss, Rabbi M. Robert Syme of West Bloomfield, Paul Yudwab of Commerce Township and Joshua Bennett of Birmingham, and Cantor

Harold Orbach of Bloomfield Hills and Cantorial Intern David Katz of New York.

The 6,000-square-foot pavilion, named in honor of congregants Edith and Alvin Wasserman, was designed by Stuart Fine and Associates of West Bloomfield and installed by Soulliere Brick Pavers and Decorative Stone Co. of Utica. It was built as an extension of the half-acre L'Dor V'Dor Generation to Generation Family Garden, which was created to offer a set-

See TEMPLE, B10.

Jews help Focus:HOPE

The Jewish community donated more than \$13,000 to help rebuild Focus:HOPE after the devastation caused by the July 2 storms.

The money raised will help Focus:HOPE restore its facilities and return to its valuable work of aiding the community. This special fund was established by the Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit and Jewish

Federation of Metropolitan Detroit and the Southfield-based Detroit Jewish News.

It represents contributions by hundreds of individuals and fund-raising initiatives by area synagogues and Jewish organizations.

In presenting the funds, council president Howard Wallach said: "The Jewish community recognizes the importance of an organization like Focus:HOPE and the work it does for the Detroit area."

The Jewish Community Council looks forward to working in coalition with Focus:HOPE for many years to come.

Together, the two organizations have donated many mitzvot (deeds of loving kindness). By extending a helping hand in rebuilding Focus:HOPE, the Jewish community is ensuring that our special relationship will continue to thrive."



Helping hand: Jewish Community Council President Howard Wallach (left) presents storm relief funds to Eleanor Josaitis, executive director of Focus:HOPE.

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