Celebrating The Gift of Marriage
and Honoring Couples Who Have Been
Married For More Than 50 Years.

Mike Coon recalled seeing a group picture when he was a child of couples in the Oakville Church family who had been married for more than 50 years. That memory prompted him to begin counting the number of couples in the current church family who had also reached that milestone—and he discovered there were quite a few!

Mike decided these couples ought to be honored. So, on September 15, 2024, we gathered 15 of the couples for a special group photograph.

Later, the idea grew into something more. We wanted to honor these couples in a special way while also celebrating God's gift of marriage. The couples, along with those in our church family who had lost a spouse after more than 50 years of marriage, were invited to share their wedding photographs, wedding dates and venues, a brief story of how they met, and their advice for younger couples about marriage. Their stories and photographs were compiled into a commemorative booklet, which was printed for each family in the church.

Sunday, August 23, 2026, was chosen for a special celebration honoring these couples and the gift of marriage. Providentially, the date fell during a sermon series on the book of Ephesians—and specifically on the Sunday devoted to Ephesians 5:21–33, with its focus on husbands and wives.

For the worship service, two large wedding flower arrangements in wicker pedestal baskets, beautifully arranged by Dona Coon, adorned the chancel. Two candelabras completed the setting and were lit by Allie and Ava Mitchell.

Following worship, the grand celebration began with a 1950s–1970s wedding reception theme. Everyone was encouraged to dress as people typically would have for a wedding during those decades. The honored couples' wedding photographs were displayed, along with several wedding gowns and cake toppers from their weddings. A couple of vintage wedding ring quilts from the Smith family were also on display.

The couples were escorted from the sanctuary into the beautifully decorated Fellowship Hall. Before taking their seats, most of the couples posed for photographs as they pretended to cut the four-tiered wedding cake made by Elle Coon. After the couples were seated, the rest of the congregation joined them for the celebration.

Mike Coon shared a few words and presented the couples with framed copies of the group photograph taken in September 2024. The microphone was then passed to several people who had been invited to share their wisdom and advice about marriage. Pastor John concluded the program with a prayer of thanksgiving for marriage and for the couples whose lives together offered such a meaningful testimony.

The Fellowship Hall had been transformed into a vintage wedding reception. Tables were covered with white linen tablecloths and decorated with flower centerpieces arranged by Dona Coon. Evie and Royce Leabo made cream cheese mints, while Mary Carpenter, Sarah Neuschwander, and Katy Harmon prepared trays of finger sandwiches. Party favors of candy wrapped in tulle were created by Mary Carpenter, Sarah Neuschwander, Allie and Ava Mitchell, and Kora, Lily, Paula, and Holly Pugh.

Katy Harmon prepared and served sherbet punch in vintage glass punch cups. Wedding cake was served on matching glass plates with cup holders, adding another special period touch to the reception. Heidi Yaeger served as photographer, with assistance from Gretchen Dickason.

Art and Charlotte Hall provided a 1955 Chevrolet complete with a "Just Married" sign, creating the perfect setting for memorable photographs.

It was a joyful occasion filled with fellowship, gratitude, memories, and laughter. The couples were deeply appreciative of the recognition they received, and the entire celebration served as a beautiful reminder of the blessing of enduring love and commitment.

Above all, it was a celebration of God's gift of marriage—and of the many years of faithfulness represented by these couples. It was a special day in the life of the Oakville Church family that will surely be remembered for years to come.

Email from Pastor David Douglass:

Greetings, Pastor John. I have been active in the church all of my life. Even as a youngster, I was engaged as was age appropriate. My view of the church was through the parsonage windows, as it were. And through my parents' eyes. In my 86 years on this planet, I have NEVER seen anything even close to what was done at Oakville Presbyterian Church to honor and celebrate marriage! Even if I could have a face-to-face with every single person who helped make it happen, I could not adequately express my gratitude for all that was done! It was beautiful! It was classy! It reeked of excellence! It was meaningful! It honored the institution of marriage and those of us who have been blessed to enjoy our mates for many years!

I know first hand the work - mental, physical and spiritual - that it takes to make something like that happen. Please know that Claudia and I are deeply grateful for all that was done. Our entire church family was blessed by and will benefit from today's celebration of one of God's incredible gifts to mankind: marriage.

God bless you, John! And again, THANK YOU!

Dave

P.S. When we arrived this morning, I was stunned to see the arrangements at the front of the sanctuary. Candelabras, wedding type floral arrangements and all. I was afraid I'd start bawling! It was so sweet to watch the twins light the candles, keeping track of each other JUST LIKE WE TEACH THEM TO DO AT WEDDING REHEARSALS! Yes, even their candle lighting added to the classiness and seriousness of the occasion. Please thank them for us.