The trauma of divorce is real. The pain can be traumatic to the spouses, the children and the extended families. Divorce can divide churches and ruin family businesses. Research shows that the already high divorce rate continues to increase. It does not seem to matter what you background is, how much money you make or what your race is, Divorce hurts.

Even among Christians, divorce continues to climb. Research shows that Christians divorce at the same rate as non-Christians. A recent study by The Barna Group, of Ventura, California shows that among all adults 18 and older, three out of four (73%) have been married and half (51%) are currently married. Among those who have been married, more than one out of every three (33%) has also been divorced. The average age at which people first dissolve their initial marriage tends to be in the early thirties. Among Baby Boomers, the median age of the first divorce is currently 31.

The research revealed that Boomers continue to push the limits regarding divorce. Whereas just one-third (33%) of the married adults from the preceding two generations had experienced a divorce, almost half of all married Boomers (46%) have already undergone a marital split. This means Boomers are virtually certain to become the first generation for which a majority experienced a divorce.

It appears that the generation following the Boomers will reach similar heights, since more than one-quarter of the married Baby Busters (27%) have already undergone a divorce, despite the fact that the youngest one-fifth of that generation has not even reached the average age of a first marriage.

So an important question emerges: How do we respond to the hurt of divorce? The Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health reported that certain common events of midlife such as divorce create mental health problems (not necessarily disorders) and that the issues can be addressed through a range of interventions from support groups to therapy. Unfortunately, the report also shows that care and treatment in the real world do not conform to what research determines is best. For many reasons, at times, care is inadequate. Barriers of access exist in part because of lack of insurance such as a psychologist or psychiatrist for issues ranging from the stress of divorce to sever illness. Almost half as many seek support services for mild issues such as grief support, stress, and emotional growth from social service agencies, church groups and support groups. Yet critical gaps exist between those who need service and those who receive service.

One way to bridge the gap or to supplement other resources is through the use of divorce support groups. Typically support groups are inexpensive and bring together people experiencing the same issues. An expert in the area of divorce usually leads the groups. While support groups have been around for decades, their use is increasing due to their effectiveness, flexibility, and their ability to meet in evenings and weekends.

"When it comes to divorce and coping, single parents often feel especially isolated and they might not have the time or money to join support groups," said Todd Smeltzer, Small Groups Pastor at Fairfield Christian Church. "That's why we are sponsoring this support group during the evenings and keeping the cost minimal."

The nationally recognized DivorceCare support group will be offered in Lancaster, beginning April 5th 2007. The group will meet at 7:00 on Thursdays for 13 consecutive weeks. It is sponsored by Fairfield Christian Church, and led by Michael Wayland, a local divorce mediator with CDC Ohio LLC. Details at 740-654-0089 or www.Fairfieldcc.com.