

GUIDELINES AND RULES FOR CONDUCTING MARRIAGES IN IKOYI BAPTIST CHURCH APPROVED BY THE CHURCH IN CONFERENCE OF SUNDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2020

1. Preamble

Marriage was founded and ordained by God and should be entered into with necessary caution. To ensure that those who go into marriage know the implications of the vows they exchange at the altar, Ikoyi Baptist Church (IBC) has the responsibility to guide, lead and direct men and women who have made up their minds to enter into the holy institution of marriage. Therefore, IBC will consciously seek to help the Intending Couples and those who are already married so that there can be stability in families which will translate into a healthy Church.

2. DEFINITION / INTERPRETATION.

The following words where used in this document shall have the following meanings:

- Word - Definition/Interpretation
- “Church” or “IBC” - Ikoyi Baptist Church
- “Church Pastor” - Church Pastor of Ikoyi Baptist Church
- “ the Committee - Marriage Committee of Ikoyi Baptist Church
- “Intending Couple”- A man and woman who have expressed their intention to be joined in holy matrimony in Ikoyi Baptist Church.
- “LFN” - Laws of the Federation of Nigeria
- “License”- A certificate issued by the Registrar under Section 13 of the Marriage Act, authorizing the celebration of a marriage between the parties named in such license by a registrar, or by a recognized minister of some religious denomination or body.
- “Marriage” - Solemnized union between a man and a woman.

3. Marriage Committee.

This is the IBC's Standing Committee with the responsibility of all matters relating to marriages in the Church.

3.1 Composition.

- i. The Committee shall consist of 5 (five) members.
- ii. One of the members shall be a ministers of the Church, who would provide spiritual guidance.
- iii. 2 (two) members will be selected from the Diaconate and the Church in Conference respectively.
- iv. Membership shall take into consideration balance in gender.
- v. The representatives of the Diaconate shall be the Diaconate Chairman/Chairperson and the Deacon/Deaconess in charge of Youth Ministry.
- vi. Members of the Committee shall be men and women who are proven to be genuine Christians with exemplary Christian lives, balanced family life and whose homes are examples of good Christian Homes.
- vii. The Committee will report to the Church Pastor who will be an ex-officio member and can attend meeting(s) of the Committee.

3.2. Duration of Membership.

Members of the Committee will serve for a maximum of 3(three) years. However, the Diaconate Chairman/Chairperson will serve for 1 (one) year, which is to say, the duration when he or she is the Diaconate Chairman/Chairperson.

3.3. Duties

The Committee shall handle matters pertaining to preventive counseling measures, intervention counseling measures and sustenance counseling measures.

- Under Preventive Counseling Measures, it is expected that the Committee will carry out relational assignments that will help to prevent crisis in marriages. These include organizing regular programs for singles, scheduling interview with Intending Couples and seminars for married couples.
- Under Intervention Counseling Measures, it is expected that the Committee will quickly swing into action to intervene in matters that border on matrimonial disharmony. The Committee is to interface with the Church Pastor when they discover families that are experiencing challenges. They shall also visit such families with the permission of the Church Pastor.
- Under Sustenance Counseling Measures, it is expected that the Committee will work with the Couples Fellowship to help families in building Christian homes which will thrive in the atmosphere of love, peace and unity.

4. Conditions for Marriage in the Church. **Substantive conditions.**

4.1. There shall be notification of intention to marry by Intending Couples to the Church which shall not be less than 6 months to the proposed wedding date.

4.2. Intending Couples must be born again.

4.3. Save for the provision of section 9, either of an Intending Couple must be a member of IBC or Children of members.

4.4. Children of members who are resident outside Nigeria will be required to provide a letter from the Church he or she

attends. The letter will confirm that he or she is born again, has been baptized and is a member of the local Church.

4.5. Where one of an Intending Couple is not a member of IBC, the below appearing shall be required of such person prior to counseling sessions:

- Duly signed letter of attestation of membership from his or her Church, and
- Certificate of baptism confirming that he or she has been baptized in a Bible Believing Church.
- Undergo all other relevant conditions under this guideline.

Procedural conditions.

4.6. The 6 months' notice of intention to marry by Intending Couples shall be in writing and signed. Duly signed email notifications from the parents, or guardian of the intending bride/groom shall also be sufficient notice. The notice shall be addressed to the Pastor who shall refer them to the Committee.

4.7. The Committee shall upon receipt of the notice schedule an interview with an Intending Couple. If the Committee is satisfied with the outcome of its interview, it will report to the Church Pastor, who will schedule Pre-Marital Counseling sessions for the Intending Couple. The Committee shall device an arrangement for Intending Couple who are out of the Country.

4.8. Intending Couples shall be required to undergo some medical tests which shall include:

- HIV test to ascertain their status and genotypes at the beginning of the pre-marital counseling. Upon the receipt of the results by the Church pastor, a post-counseling session will be held with the Intending Couple.

- Intending Couples (females) will be required to undergo Pregnancy Test not earlier than Two weeks to the wedding ceremony at a Church specified Centre. The result will be sent to the Church Pastor. The Intending Couples shall bear the cost of the medical test. (What if they cannot afford church's prescribed clinic, would the church pay?)

4.9. The Church shall be interested on the results of the prescribed tests accordingly:

- If the result of the HIV/Genotype tests is adverse, the Pastor shall point out to the Intending Couple the consequences of the result as it relates to their relationship as husband and wife. It is would be optional to them to choose to go ahead with the marriage plan if other requirements are satisfied.
- If the result of the pregnancy test is positive, the Pastor will immediately recommend that the wedding ceremony be suspended. Intending Couples involved in pre wedding pregnancy shall be disciplined in the manner prescribed by the Church's constitution.

5.0. Additional conditions:

5.1. The wedding date shall be determined by families of the Intending Couples in consultation with the Church Pastor.

5.2. Any Intending Couple who desires to use the Church premises for their wedding reception shall apply in writing to the Church contemporaneously with their original notification of marriage.

5.3. Traditional marriage shall be a condition precedent before the Church marriage or marriage blessing shall be approved by the Church pastor.

5.4. The Intending Couple shall present to the Church Pastor the certificate issued by the Marriage Registry permitting the Church to conduct the wedding.

6. Checklist for the Marriage Committee during and After the Interview.

6.1. To ensure that the Intending Couples are of marriageable age of at least 18 years before wedding.

6.2 To examine the relationship between Intending Couples to ensure that there is no premarital carnal knowledge existent between them.

6.3. To carry out all necessary background checks on Intending Couples.

6.4. To inform the Intending Couple of all Church requirements in terms of policy and practices that guide the conduct of a wedding in IBC.

6.5. To encourage the Intending Couple to have a means of sustenance.

6.6. In love guide the Intending Couple, during courtship and after the wedding ceremony as much as practicable.

6.7. Ensure an Intending Couple visits the marriage registry to do the necessary things prelude to marriage under the Act. The wedding ceremony will not be conducted unless the certificate from the Marriage Registry is presented at least 21 days before the day of the Church wedding.

6.8. Advise an Intending Couple to make available the clothing sought to be worn by them and their Bridal Party a week to the wedding for close examination to ensure that it is modest and decent.

6.9. Emphasize to an Intending Couple the need for entertainment provided by them at their reception to conform to the Church practice as it relates to abstinence from alcohol.

6.10. Further advice an Intending Couple to:

- make sure the programme of service is made available in the Church at least 24 hours before the wedding ceremony;
- arrive on time on the wedding day, at least 15 minutes before stated service time;
- hold rehearsal a day before the wedding so that an Intending Couple is aware of the sitting, processional, recessional arrangements, order of signing the marriage certificate; etc

7. Pre-Marital Counseling.

Upon the successful completion of the interview with the committee, the Committee will hand over an Intending Couple to the Church Pastor for counseling to ensure that the Scripture is obeyed and expected behaviors are adhered to.

8. Conduct of Wedding (Liturgy, Decorum,).

8.1. The Church service is a service unto God and as such the liturgy will be determined by the Church.

8.2. Intending Couple will hold rehearsal a day before the wedding in order to be conversant with the sitting, processional, recessional arrangement and order of signing the marriage certificate; etc.

8.3. Conventional gown for the bride and groom shall ensure that no part of the body is exposed. This dress code shall cover all members of the bridal party.

8.4. There shall be exchange of rings between the intending couple.

8.5. The Church will keep to the time stated on the programme. The Church will not delay the service to wait for Intending Couple who comes late.

8.6. The Church being a recognized place of worship for celebration of marriage under the Nigerian law will issue a Marriage Certificate during the wedding ceremony.

9. Use of Church Auditorium by Non-IBC Members for Marriage.

9.1. The Church may consider an application from a believing non-member of the Church and or another Bible believing Church which may wish to use IBC auditorium to conduct wedding or marriage blessing. Such wedding or marriage blessing shall be subject to the approval of the Pastorate and will be subject to IBC's marriage guidelines on dress code and entertainment.

9.2. For such weddings or marriage blessings, the Church basement shall not be used for wedding reception.

10. Marriage Blessing.

This category covers persons who are already living as husbands and wives but have not complied with the requirements stated above before cohabiting and probably having children. It also contemplates situations where traditional marriage rites had been performed. In this case, the Church membership requirements will be applied.

10.1. The applicants shall apply to the Committee not less than 1(one) month to the period the ceremony is scheduled to take place and all other medical tests other than pregnancy test will be necessary for approval. (They are already living together and maybe have children. Of what need would the tests be? Could the church encourage them to split and abandon child of the marriage under any circumstance?).

10.2. The interview session will be applicable as in the case of a wedding.

10.3. Mode of dressing will be normal decent outfit also devoid of undue exposure as shall be determined by the committee/Church pastor.

Appendix

Order of Service

1. We Process into His Court with a Hymn.
2. We invite His Manifest Presence (Invocation).
3. We Declare His Praise (Hymn).
4. We Witness the Beginning of a Godly Home:
 - ✦ Through Exhortation, Charge and Declaration
 - ✦ Through Exchange of Vows and Rings
 - ✦ Through Proclamation
 - ✦ Through a Hymn of Prayer
5. We Consecrate and Dedicate the new Family unto the Lord
6. The Lord Speaks through the Reading of His Word
7. We Hear the Message in Song (Choir Ministration)
8. God Speaks through His Messenger
9. We Sign the Marriage Register
10. We Give our Thanksgiving Offering to the Lord