



Marriage Policy

Revision Table

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Table of Contents

1	Preamble	5
2	Marriage Preparation.....	5
3	Faith Commitment	6
4	Premarital Sex	6
5	Remaining Celibate	6
6	Divorce, Remarriage and Separation.....	6
6.1	Divorce.....	7
6.2	Remarriage	7
6.3	Separation.....	8
7	The Mentoring Couple.....	8
8	The Wedding.....	9
9	Note on Traditional Marriage Counselors.....	9
10	Exclusions:.....	9
	Annex 1: Premarital Counseling.....	10
	Annex 2: Affirmation sheet	13

Revision Notes

Statement of Approval

This Marriage policy is prepared to provide administrative guidance concerning preparation and administration of marriages for members at Chilenje Church of Christ. The policy is in line with the mission of the Church; *To Glorify God and Make Disciples of Jesus Christ*; and recognizing God's intent for marriages to reflect the relationship between Christ and His Church, *Ephesians 5:21-23*. The principles in this policy are aligned with the Bible but in the event of any conflict, the Bible shall take supremacy at all times.

Signed for and on behalf of the Church:

Mr Adale Mukemu
Elder

Dr Ceylone Mudenda
Elder

Mr Emmanuel Muzukutwa
Elder

Dated.....

Definitions

Believer - This is person who has gladly received the word of God (Romans 10:14), believe the Word of God (Hebrews 11:6), repented of his/her sins (Acts 17:30), confessed the belief in Jesus Christ as the son of God (Acts 8:36-37), baptized by full immersion in the name of the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, Matthew 28:18-19) and live faithfully as a Christian (1 Peter 2:9)

Unbelievers - This is any person who doesn't meet the definition of a believer.

Desertion - This willful abandonment of one's spouse without consent, in violation of legal (as prescribed in the Laws of Zambia) or moral obligations as per Biblical scriptures.

Elders - These are ordained men of God fulfilling the qualification in 1 Timothy 3:1-6. Elders are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation, while deacons are seen as responsible for the non-spiritual needs of the church who are assisted in the administration of various works by Deacons.

Deacons - These are ordained servants of God fulfilling the qualification in 1 Timothy 3:1-6. Deacons are responsible for the non-spiritual needs of the church and serve under the supervision of the elders who are assigned to direct specific ministries

Church of Christ Chilenje - This is a self-governing congregation of Christians registered as a society in the republic of Zambia and is overseen by elders whose Headship is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church of Christ Chilenje is associated with other Churches of Christ worldwide through common beliefs and practices.

Premarital Sex - Premarital sex is sexual activity practiced by people who are not married.

Mentoring Couple - These are married couples that are more extensively trained or experienced so that they are qualified to deal not only with couples who are preparing for marriage, but also married couples who are seeking assistance in sustaining their marriages.

Member of Church of Christ Chilenje - Is one that meets the definition of a believer above and is registered with the Church.

1 Preamble

In keeping with our commitment “to glorify God and make disciples for Jesus Christ”, and recognizing God’s intent for marriages to reflect the relationship between Christ and His Church, Ephesians 5:21-23, the elders shall provide instruction and guidance concerning sexual purity, beginning with the youth and encompassing the entire church body;

- marriage preparation based on God’s Word to all engaged couples;
- encouragement and opportunities for existing marriages to be strengthened;
- help for marriages that may be experiencing difficulty;
- Encouragement and opportunities for families to succeed in having strong marriages.

It is the desire of the Church that marriage be the happiest relationship possible, and that it be all God intended it to be. God created man and woman and from the beginning intended that they be joined in marriage so that each might give what the other lacked alone. Since God designed the marriage relationship, it makes sense that He knows best how to build a happy marriage.

As we read His Word, we are able to discern basic principles which must be understood and applied if we hope to experience joy and fulfillment in marriage. Ignoring these principles could result in failure and frustration in the marriage relationship. Because we are committed to building strong marriages, we want to share the following guidelines. Our purpose is not to condemn or reject anyone, but to comply with God’s principles for marriage.

2 Marriage Preparation

In order for the church to better prepare couples for a life-long marriage, all couples who desire to be married at Chilenje Church of Christ will agree to a minimum of four (04) months of marital preparation, which will include:

- premarital counseling with the elders/mentoring couple
- taking a premarital inventory,
- Participating in the inventory follow-up with the elders and/or mentor couple.

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. Proverbs 24:3-4”

3 Faith Commitment

Couples who wish to be married at Chilenje Church of Christ must have a personal relationship with Christ and be committed to establishing a Christian home.

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”
2 Corinthians 6:14

4 Premarital Sex

Premarital sex has no moral grounds, it is against God, and it is unsafe physically and emotionally. Although sex is pleasurable, it is designed by God to be enjoyed by two married people. In case of premarital sex either resulting into pregnancy or not, the marriage may or may not be performed depending on the maturity of the persons involved and other considerations. The Church requires all persons intending to marry to remain celibate before being pronounced man and wife. To protect the integrity of the Church, a couple intending to marry will be required to testify before the elders and a mentoring couple that they have not engagement in any premarital sex. And if they have, they will be required to confess their sins as prescribed by the scriptures before a marriage is commissioned. The final decision to perform the ceremony will be determined by the elders.

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy and not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Hebrews 13:17

5 Remaining Celibate

Once a couple has entered into premarital preparation with Chilenje Church of Christ, they will agree to remain celibate and not live together at any time prior to the wedding ceremony. The elders will not perform the ceremony if the couple is living at the same address or not remaining celibate. It is God’s will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

6 Divorce, Remarriage and Separation

This section deals this the issue of divorce, remarriage and separation.

6.1 Divorce

The Church of Christ Chilenje, realizing God's position on divorce, (*"I hate divorce" says the Lord God of Israel. Malachi 2:16*), and that God is forgiving (*As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Psalms 103:12*). The Church will take all necessary steps to have the couple reconcile their differences. Where all means to reconcile a couple has failed, the Church will not issue a Divorce Certificate.

6.2 Remarriage

The Church of Christ Chilenje realizes that re-marriages are just as valid and sacred to God as first marriages. The desire of Chilenje Church of Christ is to help marriages with every opportunity to succeed. Therefore, divorced persons may be considered for marriage at Chilenje Church of Christ should they meet one of these Biblical criteria:

- a) Divorce occurred prior to conversion: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17*
- b) Divorce occurred because of sexual unfaithfulness by spouse: *"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." Matthew 19:9*
- c) Desertion by an unbelieving spouse: *"But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace." 1 Corinthians 7:15*
- d) Former divorced spouse is deceased: *"So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man." Romans 7:3*

If a divorced person answers negatively in all cases, acknowledging that other extenuating circumstances often relate to divorce, the elders will determine if the wedding should take place. In realizing God's position on divorce, (*"I hate divorce" says the Lord God of Israel. Malachi 2:16*), and that God is forgiving (*As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Psalms 103:12*), the elders will include in the determination process the following criteria:

- a) Reconciliation with the former spouse is not a possibility: *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18*
- b) The divorced person has repented and displays a changed heart and attitude: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psalms 51:10, Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 1:18*
- c) The divorced person has sought forgiveness from God and his or her former spouse: *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13*
"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your

brother has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."
Matthew 5:23-24

6.3 Separation

To help ensure the time needed for healing and possible reconciliation, no remarriages after divorce of a spouse will be performed until at least two years has passed from the time the divorce is finalized.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29"

"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom".
Psalms 90:12

7 The Mentoring Couple

It is a requirement that any couple getting married at Chilenje Church of Christ Chilenje is assigned a mentoring couple. The elders will identify mentoring couple from the Church in consultation with the couple intending to marry and assigned them for at least 4 months. The mentoring relationship will be extended for one year after commissioning of the marriage. Mentor Couples will support couples as they begin a new life. A mentoring couple will:

- a) Willingly shares what they know and their personal experience
- b) Represent skill, knowledge, virtue, and accomplishment because they have gone before the couple they are mentoring
- c) Takes a personal and heartfelt interest in the other couple's development and well-being
- d) Offers support, challenge, patience, and enthusiasm while guiding the mentees to new levels of competence
- e) Points the way and represents tangible evidence of what the mentee couple can become
- f) Exposes mentee couple to new ideas, perspectives, and standards

Couples who are not members of the Church of Christ Chilenje and intending to have their marriage commissioned at Chilenje (having met all the requirements to have their marriage commissioned at Chilenje) may not be required to have a mentoring couple from Chilenje. The elders will encourage such a couple to get a mentoring couple from their local congregations or from within Chilenje.

8 The Wedding

The Church shall conduct the marriage ceremony at Church or any venue determined appropriate by the couple in consultation with the elders. The wedding reception shall be the responsibility of the couple.

9 Note on Traditional Marriage Counselors

The Church has recognized traditional marriage counselor. Where a couple chooses to use a member of the Church as a traditional marriage counselor, the traditional marriage counselor shall be subject to the church policy on marriages. In the event that there is a conflict between tradition rituals and Christian values, the Chilenje Church of Christ marriage policy shall prevail. The traditional marriage counselor shall read out the policy to the families' representatives of the couple who shall consent to a Christian marriage process. This is at the beginning of the four months period.

10 Exclusions:

We will not conduct marriages for people of same sex.

When God acknowledged that it was not good for man to be alone, He could have created for Adam a male companion. But the union of two beings of the same sex was not divine design. Instead, God created a woman, and said that for this reason shall a man leave his family and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18,24, 25).

We do not marry couples if either person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs (other than those prescribed by a doctor) before or during the rehearsal and/or wedding.

Note: Any member of the wedding party who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be permitted to participate in the wedding ceremony being conducted at Church of Christ Chilenje. There is to be no smoking or alcoholic beverages on the church property at any time.

Annex 1: Premarital Counseling

Chilenje Church of Christ desires that every couple married at our church or married by one of our elders are exposed to the important building blocks of a Christian marriage. We want the young couple to know what a healthy Christian marriage looks like and to evaluate whether God would have you marry your partner at this time

The premarital classes have been designed to be challenging, fun and practical. The focus of these classes is upon marriage, not the wedding. "A wedding is a day...a marriage is a lifetime."

Topics include:

- Marriage Myths
- God's Purpose for Marriage
- Leaving and Cleaving
- Who Wears the Pants
- What is Love
- Personality
- Family Background
- Communication (2)
- Conflict Resolution (2)
- Boundaries in marriage

It is our desire that you enter into marriage well informed about each of these important topics. Each weekly session will combine small group interaction, one on one with your partner and in depth teaching about these topics. These sessions will give you time to reflect upon and evaluate your relationship. You will discover that you are not alone. There are other couples living through similar stress and apprehension as marriage is approached. The time you put into these classes will show your future spouse how much you care about them. It will also show them how much you want what God desires for your marriage.

The principles you will learn in this curriculum apply equally to all couples even if this is not your first marriage.

For couples who live outside Lusaka, the elders will make arrangements with elders living in that area to counsel the couple

In addition to the premarital classes, we also require all couples married at Chilenje Church of Christ to complete a premarital inventory.

The inventory is a secular, diagnostic tool we use to help engaged couples evaluate potential areas of strength and growth. It consists of a written inventory that both persons complete individually. Important insights into your views on a variety of issues are gained through the use of this inventory. The mentoring couple assigned to you, or the elders performing your ceremony, gives this inventory to you. The inventory is required at no additional cost to you.

Premarital Classes	Issues for Discussion
Class 1: Myths of Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are taught about myths such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ We expect exactly the same things in marriage.◦ Everything good in our relationship will get better.◦ Everything bad in my life will disappear.◦ My spouse will make me whole.
Class 2: God's Purposes for Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Couples are taught that marriage is a covenant and a commitment.• Couples are taught about oneness and what God wants for marriage.
Class 3: Leaving and Cleaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic reasons why it is difficult to leave• How couples should leave• What cleaving means and what hinders it
Class 4: Who Wears the Pants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Husband and wife biblical roles• Key responsibilities
Class 5: What is Love?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sexual intimacy in marriage
Class 6: Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How different personalities relate to each other
Class 7: Family Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How our families affect us and our relationships
Class 8:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are boundaries?

Premarital Classes	Issues for Discussion
Boundaries in Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laws of boundaries• The misuse of boundaries
Class 9: Communication I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is communication?• Levels of communication
Class 10: Communication II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How different types of people communicate<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Sensing people versus intuitive people◦ Visual, auditory, and feeling people◦ Amplifiers versus condensers• Reflective listening
Class 11: Conflict Resolution I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why most conflicts occur• Understanding anger
Class 12: Conflict Resolution II	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five styles of dealing with conflict• Steps to resolving conflict• Forgiveness
Class 13: HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issues concerning HIV/AIDS in marriage

Annex 2: Affirmation sheet

Chilenje Church of Christ Marriage Policy Sign off Sheet

The church leadership has brought to my attention the importance of my compliance with the Chilenje Church of Christ Marriage Policy. I understand that this Policy Sign off sheet will be placed on file and one copy retained by myself.

I have read the Chilenje Church of Christ Marriage Policy and agree to abide by the provisions set out in this policy at all times.

Sign Off by the couple intending to marry:

Name Please print			
Signature		Date	

Name Please print			
Signature		Date	

Sign off by Family Representative (where applicable):

Name Please print			
Signature		Date	

Sign off by Church Representative:

Name Please print			
Signature		Date	

Name Please print			
Signature		Date	