

OPEN BIBLE STANDARD CHURCHES OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO INC.
MARRIAGE POLICY

PREAMBLE

The Open Bible Standard Churches of Trinidad and Tobago Inc. upholds the view that marriage was instituted by God and that the divine intention and ideal is that marriage be a healthy and permanent relationship (Matt 19:6). In light of the existing state of marriages and the alarming rate of marital failure in the wider society in general and the church in particular, ministers/marriage officers must make every effort to ensure that persons contemplating marriage are adequately prepared. The current policy seeks to assist ministers/marriage officers in determining the suitability of persons contemplating marriage, as well as serve as a guide for counsellors involved in the premarital counselling process. Ministers/Marriage officers must be reminded that their primary function is not to perform a wedding ceremony, but as far as possible, to help couples in establishing healthy families. In light of the principles mentioned above, we encourage all ministers/marriage officers to act in accordance with the rules and spirit of this policy.

1. All churches and credentialed ministers should model (if married), teach (even to youth and adult singles) and encourage as much as possible the divine intention for marriage as a life long, covenanted union of companionship between a man and a woman.
2. All churches and credentialed ministers should take all possible steps to encourage and facilitate restoration and reconciliation of strained or broken marriages.
3. Where Christian couples have divorced for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness, the parties should remain single or be reconciled to their spouses.
4. Open Bible Ministers shall not perform or in anyway encourage the performance of a wedding ceremony for anyone who has a former married companion living unless:
 - (a) He is confident that there are sufficient Biblical grounds to support this union
 - AND**
 - (b) He has received the written permission of the National Board of Directors after due investigation of the circumstances regarding the proposed union.
 - (c) No marriage officer must agree upon a date for a marriage of divorced persons unless he is in receipt of written permission from the National Board of Directors.
5. Ministers retain the right not to perform a ceremony if it conflicts with their understanding of the Scriptures.
6. Ministerial service pertaining to marriage should not be rendered to members of another church without the knowledge and consent of the minister of the church (per existing Bye-laws).
7. Open Bible Ministers shall not perform a wedding ceremony for persons who have not completed the Pre-marital Counselling Programme entitled “Before They Say I Do” or any other approved Pre-marital Counselling Programme.
8. There shall be an official six month minimum counselling/engagement/courting period before and Open Bible Minister can perform a wedding ceremony involving members or non-members of his church. In the case of non-members who are in a common-law relationship, the minister may use his discretion with respect to the counselling period.
9. Counsellors/ministers may require couples to be tested for HIV/AIDS prior to the commencement of pre-marital counselling. The individuals should be encouraged to share the results with the other partner, since it is an offence to knowingly infect someone else.

10. Wedding dates shall not be confirmed without the approval of the respective Ministers/Marriage Officers.
11. Ministers shall not perform engagement ceremonies unless the following conditions are evident:
 - (a) At least fifty percent of the pre-marital counselling programme has been successfully completed.
 - (b) In the opinion of the counsellor/minister(s), it is very likely that the proposed marriage shall take place.
 - (c) That the persons are told that the fact that an engagement ceremony has taken place is not to be construed that the minister has given an undertaking that he will eventually perform the marriage ceremony for the persons involved.
 - (d) That the minimum six month pre-marital counselling period can be extended if the Minister/Marriage Officer deems it necessary.
12. Pre-marital counselling inventories must be kept confidential. They must also be stored or disposed of in a manner that preserves confidentiality.
13. The Marriage Officer shall have access to the pre-marital counselling inventories completed by the persons to be married at least one month before the possible date of the wedding and shall conduct at least one pre-marital counselling interview with the persons involved.
14. Wedding bans are only to be posted after the respective ministers and the Marriage Officer have approved the arrangements.
15. All confirmed marriage arrangements must be announced at least two (2) weeks preceding the wedding ceremony. These announcements shall be made in the respective churches of the persons to be married.
16. Open Bible Ministers shall ensure that all members of the wedding party (bride, bridesmaids etc.) are dressed in a manner becoming Christian practice. Persons attired in outfits with revealing, plunging necklines, enticing slits and other immodest apparel shall not be allowed to be part of the official wedding party (N.B. This matter shall be addressed early in the pre-marital counselling process).
17. Ministers shall ensure that the wedding reception is not dominated by worldliness as evident in the type of music being played or the kind of drinks being offered or any other ungodly practice.
18. Photographers shall be properly attired. Coats or dress shirts with neck ties must be worn by photographers who are desirous of being on the platform during the ceremony. The official photographers must discuss their movement on the platform with the Marriage Officer prior to the ceremony.
19. Wedding fees shall be paid to the church's treasury as per the local church's practice for the following:
 - (a) Janitorial services
 - (b) Organist and other musicians
 - (c) Marriage Officer(s)
 - (d) Pre-marital Inventories and other matters pertaining to the pre-marital counselling sessions.
20. The design of the wedding brochure must be approved by the Pastor prior to printing.

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Rev. Dr. Andy Homer
National Elder/Director