

FCBC WEDDING POLICY

INTRODUCTORY WORD FROM THE APOSTOLIC OVERSEER

I wish to address a vital issue that requires your understanding as well as your utmost support. It has to do with our policy on weddings. We do have some clear convictions and requirements for people who seek the church's blessing for their wedding. We have lots of problems over the years in administering these policies because of the large number of weddings we have each year and the fact that some resist these rules as they find them restrictive. However, I want you to know that these rules have been carefully thought through and evolved over the years. The pastoral staff stands firmly upon them and we are deeply convicted that they must be closely adhered to. The basic rationale for these rules is the conviction that it is not just our job to conduct weddings but to help members set up strong Christian homes. Therefore, if we observe that they are not serious about this important responsibility, or that there are serious problems in the relationship, we do not marry them unless something is done about the problem.

A. REQUIREMENTS

1. **Wedding Date**

The couple should **NOT** fix the wedding date or book the banquet until they have finished the Marriage Preparation Course (MPC) and have a personal meeting with the pastor who will be marrying them. Only after their pastor has certified their suitability for marriage can they then fix the date and book the time slot for their marriage solemnisation. No wedding shall be held on public holidays and churchwide events like walkathon, flag day, outreach events, etc.

2. **Wedding Ceremonies**

This can only be held on Saturday morning, from 9am – 1pm. Where the Saturday is a public holiday there shall be no wedding ceremonies.

3. **Solemnisation**

All solemnisations must be carried out by a ROM Licensed Solemniser from Faith Community Baptist Church, unless exception is given for a couple to go to the Registry of Marriage at Fort Canning Rise. No Licensed Solemniser from another church is allowed to perform the solemnisation ceremony.

All solemnisations will be carried out on Saturdays at the couple's designated church venue. Where the Saturday is a public holiday, there will be no solemnisation ceremony.

4. **Baptism**

Both the man and the woman must be baptised Christians, and at least one of them must be a member of FCBC. In the event that one partner is not a member and he/she belongs to another church, he/she has to obtain a written permission from his/her pastor before he/she can be enrolled in our MPC.
5. **Registration with ROM**

The couple must **NOT** have been registered with the Registry of Marriages (ROM). Those who have been officially registered and have consummated the marriage will forfeit a church wedding.
6. **Preparation Period**

The church wedding processing and preparation will take at least 10 months to complete. Therefore, couples should initiate the application as soon as possible to attend the MPC and other preparations such as meeting up with your pastor, booking of wedding venue and restaurant, invitation cards, guest list, etc.
7. **Commitment**

The couple must show seriousness and commitment in preparing for the marriage and not just for the wedding. Therefore, all requirements must be met and all assignments completed before the church will give consent to the wedding. The church is not obligated to give consent to the wedding in the event of a major concern regarding the preparedness of the couple for marriage. In such cases, a postponement of the wedding will be recommended.
8. **Re-marriage**

If either the man or the woman had been married before, divorced previously, or had his/her marriage annulled, it is imperative that he/she fills in the Remarriage Approval Form and advises his/her pastor accordingly. Copies of the official document certifying his/her annulment or divorce must also be submitted together with the MPC application form. Failure to do so will affect the church giving its consent to the wedding.
9. **Marriage Preparation Course (MPC)**

You will be required to attend **six sessions** of marriage preparation classes in two parts. Part One comprises four sessions conducted by TOUCH Family Services Ltd (TFSL). It is non-religious in nature and is conducted once a week. Completion of Part One is a pre-requisite to attending Part Two.

Part Two comprises two sessions conducted by the pastor marrying you. The contents will be Christian based using scriptural teachings to reinforce what has been taught in Part One.

The couple should faithfully attend **ALL** the six sessions scheduled for them. Should there be any session(s) missed for any reason, attending a make-up class is required. The rationale for this is that the couple must show utmost commitment in working on issues pertaining to the marriage. All assignments must be completed diligently before the wedding date can be set.

10. **Marrying Pastors**

Couples are not allowed to choose their preferred pastor to officiate their wedding. The marrying pastor will be a pastor from the team that the couple comes from. Only Team Pastors and paid pastoral staff are allowed to give the Word of Exhortation or Wedding Message. Where exceptions are required, the Wedding Services (WS) must be notified. **Couples are not permitted to invite pastors from other churches to officiate their wedding.**

11. Parental consent is necessary for persons below 18 years of age.

B. PROCEDURES

1. The couple should first fill in the MPC Application Form and submit it to the Wedding Services (WS). After their Team Pastor has approved their application, the WS will contact them to arrange for a date to do either the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA) or Prepare/Enrich (PE) personality assessment. Please take note of the following:
 - a) Bring along individual birth certificates (original).
 - b) Course fees will be made payable to TOUCH Family Services Limited. Upon completion of attendance in all classes, \$70/- will be refunded through TFSL by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).
 - c) Collect the course materials.
 - d) The TJTA or PE personality assessment should take about two hours.

The date of the wedding should not be fixed though the couple may have an idea of the time period. If there is any problem with this, the couple must discuss with their pastor.

2. The couple will then be required to attend **six sessions** (Parts One and Two) of MPC. (See Marriage Preparation Course under Requirements)

3. After completion of **all six sessions** (Parts One and Two) and the marrying pastor is satisfied that the couple has shown commitment to the marriage and that no serious problems exist between them, he/she would give consent for a church wedding. ***IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT THE MARRYING PASTOR WILL HELP THE COUPLE TO FIX A DATE FOR THE WEDDING AND BOOK THE SOLEMNISATION SLOT. THIS WILL BE DONE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE WS WHO HAS THE MASTER CALENDAR FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH.*** The date will be no less than six months after the end of the MPC. Couples **should not** fix their wedding date and venue **before** they consult their pastors.
4. The couple may then proceed to make all necessary preparations for the wedding.
5. **Next, it is the responsibility of the couple to file the notice of marriage at least 21 days ahead of their solemnisation date with ROM, to obtain a marriage license. This license must be submitted to the Solemniser on their solemnisation date.**
6. The wedding will only be solemnised on **Saturdays** and officiated on the same day.
7. **Under very exceptional circumstances will the couple be allowed to go to the ROM for the solemnisation. If permission is not first sought, the couple stands to forfeit the church wedding.**
8. All wedding dates booked for the following year is tentative until the church's calendar is firmed up.

C. USE OF WEDDING VENUE

1. FCBC members may book Touch Centre Auditorium on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of every month from **8am – 12.30pm**. Alternatively, couples may also choose to host their wedding at Gateway Theatre's Sky Garden. For more details on Gateway Theatre's exclusive rates for FCBC members, please contact 6819 0781 or email sales@gateway.sg.
2. Couples may also seek other church venues for their wedding. Where there is genuine difficulty in booking a church, couples may approach their marrying pastor for permission to find an alternative venue. However we still strongly encourage using churches as there is a dignity and reverence that non-Christians give when they enter churches. Many of our relatives have never entered a church before and this is a good opportunity we should not let slip by.

D. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

1. **Witnesses' Names for ROM Marriage Certificate**
 - Two witnesses are required to sign the ROM marriage certificate.
 - Witnesses' ICs must be produced when you go to the ROM and on the day of the solemnisation itself.

E. SOME COMMON QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS

1. ***Why must the wedding date be fixed at least six months after the completion of the MPC?***

We have discovered that many couples going through the MPC while busy preparing for their wedding cannot concentrate on the materials presented in the classes. The classes become mere “requirements” which the couples mechanically go through. Also, six months is a good time for the couples to work through problems that are surfaced by their pastors.

Some possible problems are:

- a) One or more parent withholding consent for the marriage.
- b) Lack of ability of one or both partners to adjust emotionally.
- c) Refusal of one or both partners to respond spiritually.
- d) Failure to complete the classes and assignments.

2. ***If a couple has some extraneous reasons for having the wedding earlier than specified, what must they do?***

The onus is on the couple to make an appointment with their marrying pastor in order to seek special permission for an earlier date. However, almost all of the time, it was discovered that the reasons are not as extraneous as the couple has thought them to be. The commitment to prepare adequately for the marriage must take precedence over all these reasons.

3. ***If the plan of the couple does not fit in with the requirement of the church, is it acceptable to ask a pastor from another church to officiate or solemnise the wedding?***

The answer is a clear “NO”. In fact, it is unthinkable that a pastor would do a wedding or solemnisation for members of another church without seeking the permission of the couple’s pastor first. It is totally unethical and it frustrates what the church is seeking to do for the couple. When this takes place, our policy is that no staff or leader of the church should take any role in the wedding or reception other than just attending it since we are not in a position to give our blessing to the wedding.

4. ***What about being married by the pastor of one of the partners who is not a member of FCBC?***

The key here is which church the couple wants to be serving in after the wedding. If FCBC, then they must seek the blessing of our church by submitting to the requirements. The couple should seek the blessings of both churches if it is possible.

5. ***The Housing and Development Board (HDB) wants the couple to produce their Certificate of Marriage upon the collection of keys, but the wedding is some months away. What should the couple do?***

In such cases, the couple should first present their problem to their marrying pastor who will then decide in consultation with the WS to appeal to the HDB for a delay in producing the Marriage Certificate. Only when the appeal fails, then the couple is allowed to go to the ROM. ***On no account should the couple go to the ROM first without seeking permission.*** After the registration at the ROM, the couple is now legally man and wife. The church will still allow a church wedding provided the couple does not stay together, does not consummate their marriage, ***and the church wedding date does not exceed six months from the ROM civil marriage date.***

6. ***Some church members have lamented that the requirements are rather burdensome. Why is the church imposing such rigid rules?***

- a. There is a major difference between a wedding and a marriage. A wedding lasts for an hour or so but a marriage lasts for a lifetime. Most couples spend hundreds of hours preparing for the wedding but hardly any time preparing for the marriage.
- b. The task of the church is not just to conduct weddings. The Registrar of Marriage is fully capable of doing that. The task of the church is to help couples build Christian homes. The church's blessing presumes the fact that the couple understands the teaching of Scripture concerning the marriage covenant and has seriously sought the mind of the Lord on this important decision.
- c. The pastors of the church are responsible before God for the welfare of the sheep. They are answerable to God for the lives of the people. This is why God says in Hebrews 13:17, "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, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." We believe that when it comes to marriage, the couple must seek both the permission of their parents as well as their pastors. It is not possible for the pastors to give such a blessing without going through a process of preparing the couple for the marriage. Our wedding requirements indicate a high sense of responsibility on the part of the pastors towards the sheep.

The church's involvement with the couple does not end at the wedding. In fact, the pastoral staff and the cell leaders continue to help them throughout their married life as long as they remain with the church.

God has given the pastoral staff and cell leaders the awesome responsibility of caring for the sheep. They must do so with great diligence. As pastors and cell leaders, they are to watch over and be shepherds to the flock God has entrusted to them (Acts 20:28).

7. ***Is it true that the church does not want us to apply for a flat (e.g. bid for a BTO) until we have completed our MPC? What if there's a BTO coming up that we look forward to apply as it is near my mother's place?***

Given the recent changes in HDB policy that couples are required to make a 5% (if you are on deferred payment scheme) or 10% deposit upon selection of a flat, the church is concerned with the substantial financial commitment that couples have to make. To young couples, 5% or 10% is no small sum considering the average purchase price of a flat. And if the couple's relationship is unstable, it really complicates matters due to the financial entanglement when there is a break up.

It is important that you speak with your Team Pastor if you plan to bid for a BTO that is coming up. They should be able to determine the stability of your relationship as a couple. Even if the estimated completion date or collection of keys for the new flat is after your intended wedding date, it is still advisable to seek clearance with your Team Pastor.

~ *The End* ~