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**KABULONGA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

**GUIDELINES TO THE ORGANISATION OF CHURCH WEDDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**The Family Tie**

The Family tie is the closest, the most tender and secret, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities”.MH356, 357

Gen 2:24, 25; Eph 5:25, 28; Col 3:19; Gen 24:67

**True Love**

“Love is a precious gift which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection is not a feeling but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love are neither unreasonable nor blind. Taught by the Holy Spirit, they love God supremely and their neighbors as themselves” MH358

“Let those who are contemplating marriage weigh every sentiment and watch every development of character in the one with whom they think to unite their family destiny. Let every step towards a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity and an earnest purpose to please and honor God. Marriage affects the after life both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not make plans that God cannot approve” MH358

**Seeking Counsel**

“If you are blessed with God- fearing parents, seek counsel of them. Open to them your hopes and plans, learn the lessons which their life experiences have taught, and you will be saved many a headache. Above all make Christ your counselor. Study His word with prayer”.MH358

Ex 20:12; Pr30; 17; Pr; 23:22; 1Tim5:1; Pr 6:20; Eph 6: 1

**Choice of Companions**

“Great care should be taken by Christian youths in the formation of friendships and in the choice of companions. Take heed, least what you now think to be pure gold turns to be base metal. Worldly associations tend to place obstructions in the way of your service to God, and many souls are ruined by unhappy unions, either business or matrimonial, with those who can never elevate or ennoble. Never should God’s people venture upon forbidden ground. Marriage between believers and non-believers is forbidden by God. But too often the unconverted heart follows its own desires, and marriages unsanctioned by God are formed” FE 500

Gen 28:1; Deut 7:1-4; 1 Kings 11:1-4; Jos 23:11; Ezra 9:12; Neh 13:23-27; Pro 1:10; 4:14; 13:20; Amos 3:3; 1Cor 15:33; 2Cor 6:14; Eph 6:13; 2Pet 3; 17

**PREPARING FOR THE WEDDING**

**Between members of the Church**

The church shall only solemnize marriages between consenting adults baptized in and are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For the avoidance of doubt, no marriage shall be solemnized in church where one party is not a member of the church.

**Payment of Bride price (Lobola)**

It is required that Bride price (lobola) be paid in full, where applicable, before the marriage can be solemnized. The marriage shall not be solemnized in the church if there exists some doubts concerning the union, either on spiritual or moral grounds or any other matter which ,if ignored can undermine, impair or weaken the marriage relationship.

**Chastity**

A couple who have had sexual intercourse together before marriage shall not have their marriage solemnized by and in the church.

**Notice to the Church**

The notice for marriage should be given to the Church/ churches of the bride and bridegroom at least six (06) months before it is due. Additionally it should be read three times at the Sabbath Main Service beginning at least 21 days before the marriage. Failure to fulfill the six months notice requirement may lead to the church’s refusal to have the marriage go through it, unless there is a very good reason for the failure.

**Counseling**

The officiating pastor should be approached six months in advance to ensure adequate spiritual preparation. The church’s Family Life Department also gives counsel as well.

Notice to the Council

Marriage laws require that a Notice is placed at the Civic Centre in the town where the marriage should be solemnized, at least 3 weeks in advance. This is intended for the members of the public to indicate their objections to the marriage, if any. Cap50, Law of Zambia.

**Registrar’s Certificate**

Before a Minister of the gospel solemnizes a marriage, he must be presented with the Registrar’s Certificate, which is issued by the Registrar of Marriages at the Council to the couple a few days before the marriage day.

**Licensed Places of Worship**

Except where a special license has been issued, a Minister is not authorized to solemnize a marriage except in a building or a church which is licensed for that purpose. Cap 50, Laws of Zambia.

**Licensed Ministers of the Gospel**

Marriages can only be solemnized by Ministers who are licensed and registered to solemnize marriages. Cap 50, Laws of Zambia.

**Marriages Solemnized by and in the Church**

It is intended that a marriage to be solemnized in Church, both parties to the marriage ought to be baptized members of the Church .The couple ought to have been counseled by the Church and it should be clear that they full understand the sacredness of the marriage relationship. Let it be made plain to the couple that marriage is not sustained by pomp, glamour and excitement but by commitment to God and each other while relying on prayer and study of His Word

**Marriages Solemnized by the Registrar of Marriages**

A marriage solemnized by the Registrar is just as valid and binding as a marriage solemnized by the Minister of the Gospel. Christians are however advised to prepare to have their marriages solemnized in Church and benefit from the fellowship and God’s blessings bestowed on such couples. Cap 50 Laws of Zambia.

**Marriages Solemnized Under Customary Laws**

There are times when church members may not manage to have their marriages solemnized in Churches in accordance with statutory laws for various reasons. There is no need to fret as our customs and traditions are very rich and provide for marital rites as long as those rites do not contradict the Word of God. Such marriages are as valid and binding as the ones solemnized in Church. Cap 50 Laws of Zambia

**THE CEREMONY:**

**The Wedding Party**

Care should be taken in the choice of individuals to include on the wedding party. It is required that all be members of the church. The reason is that church members understand the minimum standards expected of them with regard to their deportment and will not bring into the ceremony articles of or manner of dress unacceptable to and in God’s house or conduct themselves in a manner that may bring embarrassment and scorn to the church.

**Trifling Regarding Religious Things**

“….many… who professes religion does not have any knowledge of a change of heart. There is no transformation of character. They do not realize that it is a solemn thing to profess to be a Christian. Their life is entirely inconsistent with a religious frame of mind. If they were of those numbers who are indeed the sons and daughters of God, they would not be filled with nonsense and pleasantry and trifling; neither would the foolish remarks and conducts of other awaken the same in them”.

There is a great danger in indifference upon this subject; no folly is so subtle as thoughtlessness and levity. On every hand we see youth of the frivolous character. All… people of this class should be avoided; for they are dangerous. If they profess to be Christians, they are the more to be dreaded. Their minds have been cast in an inferior mold; and it will be far easier for them to bring you down to their level than than for you to bring them up to elevated and ennobling thoughts and a correct course of action. Let your companion be those who observe decorum in words and deportment”.

In order to do your best in showing forth the praises of God, your association must be such as to keep in your minds the sacred distinct from the common. If you would give broad views noble thoughts and aspirations, choose associations that will strengthen right principals. Let every thought and the purpose of every action bend to the securing of the future life, with eternal happiness”. YI Oct.8, 1896

2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 11:19; cor.3:10; Rom.12:2; Psa.51:10

**The Matron and Master of Ceremony**

The choice of the matron and Master of ceremony to a large extent determines the style and nature of the wedding. Mature and principled members of the Church should be chosen to undertake the said roles so as to provide the needed advice and guidance to the party on how to conduct the ceremony and themselves. The Family Life Department must approve the choice of the Matron and the Master of Ceremony, including the bridal party. The Matron and the Master of Ceremony are to be held responsible for any violation at the church and reception respectively

**Simplicity**

While it is important to express our joy and arrange and plan the ceremony well, paying attention even to the smallest of all things, simplicity should be observed in everything. Extravagance and pomp are not Christian virtues. Many spend too much money on the wedding which would otherwise help their new home better. The choice of the attire, furnishings, flowers and other ornamentals to beautify the occasion should reflect good judgment and glorify our Lord. In everything the glory belongs to the Lord, not to us. Ps 116:6; Rom 16:19; 2 Cor 1:12; 11:3.

**A Memorable Occasion**

It is important to organize the wedding well, paying attention to all detail in order to derive the maximum benefit. This is one of those times when we express our joy and happiness. Order should therefore be observed. Good time keeping reduces the inconvenience normally suffered by guests. It is important to respect the guests.

**The Wedding Ring**

In accordance with the Spirit of Prophecy Counsel, exchange of the wedding bands is discouraged.

“Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of the marriage ring----------- we need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would not be evidence that we were true ---------not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married. In countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have the marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously” TM,180-181. The wearing of a ring is however, not a requirement, nor is it imperative in Zambia. Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4, page 630, paragraph 2----------- “ That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a strong influence upon others ----------- ’’ (TC Vol. 4 p630 par. 2 ).

**THE CELEBRATION OR RECEPTION**

**The Choice of Music**

The music that should be heard where God’s people are gathered to celebrate the birth of a new marriage, should be elevating, inspiring and upon which you can seek a blessing from God. Only music which suits the occasion in conformity with Adventist teachings and beliefs must prevail. The music and speeches and entertainment shall be of Christian tenor in conformity with Bible principles. The Family Life Department will monitor rehearsals to avoid embarrassment on the day of the wedding.

The Choice of Attire

The church expects all to wear decent clothes, ie those that are properly fitting and are of appreciable length. The church shall also not allow the following:

* Painting of lips and nails
* Wearing of necklaces, earrings or bracelets (ornaments)

The attire to be worn is to be approved by the Family Life Department two (02) weeks before the wedding.

The Family Life Department to have representation at wedding committee meetings in an advisory capacity

**Dancing**

While our traditional ways of expressing joy at such occasions as weddings, in song and dance, have their place at the reception, care must be taken not to let the occasion degenerate into worldly amusement,levity,frivolity and a situation upon which we cannot ask the blessings of God.

“----dancing, as conducted at the present day, is a school of depravity, a fearful curse to society “RH Feb, 28, 1882.

What we have seen in recent times, is the inclination and desire for professed Christians to indulge in in dancing and dances crafted by the world. Such alluring and suggestive dances have been imported into wedding celebrations on grounds that it is but mere expression of joy and therefore innocent

To those who plead these diversions, we answer. We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth “, Ibid

Col 3; 2; Tit 2:12; James 4: 4; Mt 13:22; Ex 23:2; Mt 24:38; 2 Tim 3:1-7

**Amusements**

“The desire of excitement and pleasing entertainment is a temptation and a snare to God’s people and especially to the young. Satan is constantly preparing inducement to attract minds from the solemn work of preparation for scenes in the future. Through the agency of world lings he keeps up a continual excitement to induce the unwary to join the worldly pleasures “CTPS 325

“The standard of piety is low among professed Christians generally and it is hard for the young to resist the worldly influences that are encouraged by many church members. The majority of nominal Christians, while they profess to be living for Christ are really living for the world. They do not discern the excellence of heavenly things, and therefore cannot truly love them. Many profess to be Christians because Christianity is considered honorable. They neither do nor discern that genuine Christianity means cross bearing, and their religion has little influence to restrain them from taking part in worldly pleasures”

“Some are constantly leaning to the world. Their views and feelings harmonize much better with the spirit of the world than with that of Christ’s self denying followers. It is perfectly natural that they should prefer the company of those whose spirit will best agree with their own. And such have quite so much influence among God’s people. They take part with them, and have a name among them; but they are a text for unbelievers, and for the weak and unconsecrated ones in the church. In this refining time, these professors will either be wholly converted or sanctified by obedience to the truth, or they will be left with the world, to receive their reward with the world ling”

“God does not own the pleasure seeker as His follower. Those only who are self-denying, and who live lives of sobriety, humility, and holiness, are true followers of Jesus. And such cannot enjoy the frivolous, empty conversation of the lover of the world “Ibid

Dangers of Social Gatherings

“-----there are social gatherings of a different character, where pride of appearance, hilarity, and trifling are too often seen. In their desire for amusement, those who attend are in danger of forgetting God, and things take place that make the watching angels weep. The scene of pleasure becomes, for the time being, their paradise. All give themselves up to hilarity and mirth--------“

Marriage is sacred; all preparations leading to the wedding day should be done in accordance with the will of God. Those intending to marry should not allow:

* Professional drummers/ dances at kitchen parties and wedding receptions
* Spirits, beer and any other intoxicants.
* Dances or any worldly songs
* Inappropriate dress (transparent, short or tight
* Opening the floor i.e. asking people to dance

**MARRIAGE: A BLESSING:**

The marriage institution was designed of Heaven to be a blessing to man; but in a general sense, it has been abused in such manner as to make it dreadful curse. Most men and women have acted in entering the marriage relation as though the the only question for them to settle was whether they loved each other. But they should realize that a responsibility rests upon them in the marriage relation farther than this. They should consider whether their offspring will possess physical health, and mental and moral strength. But few have moved with high motives, and with elevated considerations which they could not lightly throw off that society had claims upon them that the weight of their family’s influence would tell the upward or downward scale” SA 63,64

**COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT:**

The church wishes to encourage those who wish to have their marriage solemnized by an Adventist Minister at this Church to, reverently and prayerfully, honor their God by following and abiding by His counsel as laid out above and in His word. While we have not been to be hermits, we should not pitch our tents towards or in Sodom. Our mingling with the rest of the world is intended for us to emit the radiance of a diffuse the beauty and efficacy of Christianity and Adventism in particular, to the world. Our heritage and genius is only effective as it is manifested in our daily lives. Our inclination and propensity for the pleasures the world enjoys weakens our witnessing and thus our claim that the gospel can change lives. Therefore in order for us to uphold God’s standard, by His Grace, non compliance or adoption of a different standard from the above, will, inevitably remove the Church from participation and involvement in the intended wedding plans

**CONCLUSION:**

“True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse and which suddenly dies when severely tested. It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial and manifest kindness, courtesy and Christian sympathy. Thus love will be kept warm in the heart, and he who goes out from such a household to stand at the head of a family of his owns will know how to promote the happiness of her whom he has chosen as a companion for life. Marriage instead of being the end of love will only be its beginning” PP176