



T H E C A R P E N T E R ' S C H U R C H
Greenville, Port-Harcourt
Nigeria.

Membership Handbook

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
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The Carpenter's Church Port-Harcourt: Membership Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

These membership guidelines are read to the Church quarterly. They also form the basis for the three Membership Classes for intending TCC members and therefore serve as general guides for the membership of the Church.

The Beginning

The Vision of The Carpenter's Church Ministry [formerly known as Royal Evangel Church Ministry] was given by God to Pastor Charles Omofomah with the purpose of achieving **excellence** through the message of **power, direction and integrity** to his generation and to generations yet unborn. This purpose is to be fulfilled through various arms, one of which is the local assembly, The Carpenter's Church. Other avenues of passing this message under the umbrella of the Ministry have been Freshdew [TornVeil Television] and BrokenWall Healing School.

The local assembly known then as Royal Evangel Church began in July 1990 in Port-Harcourt Rivers State, a week after Pastor Charles arrived in PH having left his previous appointment in Northern Nigeria. He arrived in PH with about N250(!) and with no idea where he would sleep that night, since he had not previously lived in PH. From that day on the story has been one of God's miraculous direction, provision and increase.

The Warri Church Is Born

In May 1998, The Carpenter's Church Warri [formerly known as Royal Evangel Church] was born after God ministered to Pastor Charles Omofomah to do this. It was indeed born out of the mind of God as Pastor Charles' personal opinion had always been averse to the idea of "Branch" Churches. Since then, he has said that he would always say what he "would do" and not what he "would never do"! That's something we can all emulate!

THE VISION OF THE CARPENTERS CHURCH

The Local assembly, The Carpenter's Church [both in Warri and Port-Harcourt] has a three-fold vision:

- **Maturing the saints for the work of the ministry through the systematic teaching of God's Word.**

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Col 1:25-28 (KJV)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 4:11-15 (KJV)

- **Restoration of the scriptural order of worship and praise.**

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

John 4:24 (KJV)

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

2 Chr 20:18-19 (KJV)

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

Ps 95:6 (KJV)

- **Developing and Maintaining a high sense of family.**

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Ps 133:1-3 (KJV)

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

Eph 3:14-15 (KJV)

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Eph 4:4-6 (KJV)

OUR DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

We believe and affirm:

1. In one God who is the Creator of all that ever was, that is, and all that ever will be. And that He is infinitely perfect and eternally exists in three persons: Father, Word and Holy Spirit.
2. In the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, death on the cross, bodily resurrection, ascension to the right hand of the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.
3. That God gave his only begotten son, Jesus that all could be saved and reconciled to God, but that this salvation and reconciliation becomes effective only at one's acceptance and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Redeemer .
4. That it is only by the cleansing blood of Jesus that a man experiences the forgiveness of sins. That the remission provides not only spiritual salvation for every one who believes, but bodily healing and material prosperity as well. That all these are, if we will walk in the light of the redemption with faith in God's word.
5. That the entire Bible is the inspired word of God, with special emphasis on the New Testament and the Prophets as an infallible rule of the faith and conduct.
6. That the true church is composed of all those who are born-again. Through this new birth we are united together in the body of Christ. He (Jesus) is the lord and Head of the Church.
7. In the ministry of and the baptism with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. In the manifestation of the nine gifts of the spirit and in the five-fold ministry gifts as stated in the scripture. In divine miracles including bodily healing and spiritual deliverance.
8. That water baptism and the Lord's Supper (breaking bread in communion) are ordinances to be observed by the church during this present dispensation, however they are not to be regarded as means of salvation.
9. Every born-again spirit-filled believer should live a holy life through the renewal of the mind with the word of God and maintain a consistent prayer life. This should be true both in praying with understanding and in the spirit (i.e. in tongues).
10. In the personal pre-millennial and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: "The Blessed Hope", has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
11. In the bodily resurrection of the dead: of the believers in Christ to everlasting joy with the lord and of the unbelievers to eternal conscious punishment.
12. In the institution of marriage: that marriage was instituted and ordained by God. It is honorable and the bed undefiled. Monogamy is the scriptural standard for marriage. Fornication, adultery, lesbianism, homosexuality, bestiality and all other forms of sexual immorality are forbidden in the life of a Christian.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES

Only a person who is born-again can be a member of The Carpenter's Church.

All intending members of The Carpenter's Church are expected to attend the seven lessons of the first course of Believer's classes as well as three membership classes. These classes hold for one hour after the Sunday Worship service. These classes are for both old and new Believers who are intending members.

Membership forms are to be given after completion of the **first course of seven Believer's classes and three Membership Classes**. Everyone has the option to become a member immediately (by filling out the form and submitting it), to become a member at a later date (by holding the form until when ready) or to decline membership (by returning the form).

Everyone who decides to become a member of the Church will be encouraged to go through the Membership Handbook of the Church. Copies of the Membership Handbook are available for members to read in the Library of the Church Office Complex.

GENERAL WORKERS GUIDELINES

Departments

Every member of TCC, having finished the Believers Classes and completed a membership form is expected to belong to at least one and at most two departments.

The List of Departments in alphabetical order are:

- Children's Church Teachers
- Evangelism Team
- Follow-Up Department
- Maintenance Department [Decorating Team, Cleaning Team, Gardening Team]
- New Wine Choir
- Praise and Worship Team
- Prayer Squad
- Public Address Department – Light [Lighting, Generators Maintenance]
- Public Address Department – Sound [Console, Audio / Video]
- Publicity and Protocol [Ushering and Greeters Team, Security Team, Publicity Team]
- Teenage Church Workers

The Praise and Worship Team and the Teenage Church are the only Departments that are by appointment only. The Presiding Pastor and the Associate Pastor screen applicants desiring to become Teenage Church Workers because we prefer the Workers to see this department as an area they feel convinced about working in.

To become a member of any Department, a member needs to have been **consistent as a Christian for at least the last one year**. Consistency as a Christian includes having the victory over sexual challenges [adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, paedophilia, oral sex, masturbation etc.].

A member indicates by picking an Application Form for any Department that announces for new members. Members attend a Screening and Orientation Exercise conducted by the Superintendent of the Department before commencing their work in any Department.

Members of the New Wine Choir are not permitted to belong to the Follow-Up Department because of the hectic nature of these two departments. Also every music minister in the Church should be a member of the New Wine Choir first. This is in line with our belief that excellence is operating in the area of your greatest strength. Married music ministers **may** be considered as an exception to this.

Musical Instruments and PA Equipment

Musical instruments and Public Address equipment belonging to The Carpenter's Church will not be given or hired out for use by members or other people outside the Church premises.

Prayer Chain

The Prayer Chain is a system whereby 96 people minimum pray throughout the day for the Church. Two people are assigned to thirty-minute slots every day. The Chain is open to everyone and people maintain fixed slots. The Chain is updated every Quarter.

FAMILY OUTREACH GROUP SYSTEM

With the growth of the Church, the Family Outreach Group System is the means through which:

- We fulfill the great Commission and evangelize those around us, reaching out to them with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ
- The third aspect of our vision [Developing and Maintaining a Sense of Family] is fulfilled. To maintain a sense of family, members are advised to stay in their assigned family groups rather than cross-carpet to any Family Outreach Group of their choice.

Members are advised to be a part of FOG meetings so they can experience the sense of family touch. Family Outreach Group meetings hold for one hour from 5pm to 6pm in people's homes. Several criteria are taken into consideration before homes are selected as venues for FOG meetings. These include:

- At least one of the homeowners should be a committed member of TCC
- Location of the home
- Space available in the home to accommodate a meeting
- Ability of the homeowners to stand as good ambassadors of TCC and the Body of Christ (e.g. no domestic violence, no alcohol/tobacco in the home, etc). Members are free to report of any FOG Home, which does not exhibit good ambassadorship.

A Family Outreach Group leader is in charge of each FOG meeting. The leader could be a Family Outreach Group Head, an Associate Family Outreach Group Head or an Assistant Family Outreach Group Head. The homeowners stand as ordinary members of the FOG during the time of the meeting. If a FOG leader is assigned to his/her own home, his/her spouse stands as an ordinary member of the FOG during the time of the meeting. If a FOG leader is not assigned to his/her home, his/her spouse is expected to be assigned to and to attend the nearest FOG to their home. He/she is not expected to go with his/her spouse to the venue of his/her FOG meeting.

All FOG leaders are expected to use a Church guideline so there is uniformity across meetings. In the absence of the FOG leader in any FOG meeting, the visiting FOG Coordinator or any member of the FOG that has been previously assigned to run the meeting could run the meeting.

Family Outreach Group assignment is done after membership is indicated: by filling the Membership Form. However, Family Outreach Group meetings are open to members, to intending members and also to invited visitors.

Please note that Family Outreach Group meetings are not to be seen as primary sources of finances for members. FOG Leaders are advised not to impose taxes on members in order to raise funds for people. Members are free to aid other members in their times of adversity but this should be done freely and on an individual basis.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS

Tithe Paying

Tithe paying is an expectation of every member of the Church.

Tithe paying is a pre-requisite for any worker (in any department) and for any level of leadership in the Church.

The Church will take the Tithing record of a member found in any adverse situation, into consideration, in the rendering of assistance to that member.

Pledges And Offerings

Pledges and offerings are an expectation of every member of the Church.

This is particularly important in TCC because we expect to get the funds for the running of the Church primarily from our members.

Pledges and offerings are an expectation of a committed member.

27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

Matt 17:27 [NKJV]

This is particularly important in TCC because we expect to get the funds for the running of the Church from our members [the fish we have caught!]

Church Attendance

Members of TCC are expected to take all Church Meetings seriously and attend them regularly.

These meetings are:

- Sunday Worship Service.
- Tuesday Intercessory Prayer Meeting,
- Thursday Bible Teaching Service.
- Family Group Meetings.

Christian Character

Faithfulness and Teachability are expectations of every member of TCC. A Member who is faithful and teachable: submitted to the counsel of the Word of God will have his/her mind gradually renewed and will increasingly reflect true Christian character thereby standing as a worthy ambassador of Jesus Christ and of TCC.

Every member is expected to keep his/her eyes focused on Jesus Christ / the Word of God as we all run together to fulfill the vision of The Carpenters Church.

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MARRIAGES

New Members

Any person, who already has a relationship with a member of the opposite sex before becoming a member of TCC, should inform us of the relationship after becoming a member. We will get involved in a wedding between two new members at least six months after one of them became a member of the Church.

Proposals

A brother in TCC should let the Pastors know if he has intentions towards any sister (inside or outside TCC) before he proposes to her.

Likewise a single sister in TCC should let the Pastors know once any brother inside or outside TCC has proposed, if she wants to give the proposal consideration. She is expected to speak to any of the Pastors before she gives the brother a positive response.

These are for several reasons. Some of them include:

- To avoid a situation where a brother proposes to an already engaged or married sister.
- To avoid a situation where a brother who is not ready for marriage proposes to sister.
- To avoid a situation where a sister who is not ready for marriage gets distracted.

Courtship

When the period of courtship [when the brother is seeking the attention of a sister, proposing to the sister and getting a response from the sister] begins to get too long then the couple should give some space from each other to avoid drifting into an undefined "boyfriend" and "girlfriend" relationships.

Brothers should have plans to get married before proposing to sisters. We don't advocate "girlfriend" and "boyfriend" relationships.

When a brother and a sister have agreed to marry, they should inform the Pastors of the Church as well as their Family Outreach Group Head with evidence of parental consent. Any case without parental consent will be treated on the merits of that case. Informal counseling can then occur from time to time.

Fiancé / Fiancée Relationship

We strongly advise that Fiance / Fiancee Relationship periods be from 6 (six) months to 1 1/2 (one-and-a-half) years.

This is a period when a couple discovers each other's characters and not each other's bodies.

God created the spirit of Adam and Eve **first** before he created their bodies. They got to know their real selves, first, before they got to see and know each other's bodies.

Valid Wedding

In TCC we consider a couple's last wedding as their valid wedding.

White Wedding

If a couple plans to have a "white wedding", the Church does not consider traditional wedding valid and therefore does not consider the couple married. The marriage should only be consummated (the act of sex) after the "white wedding" because we strongly denounce pre-marital sex. The couple should see their traditional wedding as just an "engagement" and a step towards the valid wedding.

However, if a couple does not plan to have a "white wedding" the Church should be informed ahead of time as to their decision to have either a court wedding or a traditional wedding [see below].

Court Weddings

A couple intending to do a "white wedding" in TCC, does not need to go to court to get married because TCC has a Government Marriage Register which does not require you to go for a separate court wedding.

If they intend to do a "white wedding" in another Church that does not have a Government Marriage Register, then it is **compulsory** that a court wedding hold within a month **after** the "white wedding". In this case the white wedding is the valid wedding and the court wedding becomes a mere formality.

However, if a couple does not plan to have a "white wedding" and desires to have just a court wedding then the Church should be informed ahead of time and the court wedding becomes recognized as the valid wedding.

Traditional Weddings

If a couple plans to have a "white wedding", the Church does not consider traditional wedding valid and therefore does not consider the couple married. The marriage should only be consummated (the act of sex) after the "white wedding" because we strongly denounce pre-marital sex. The couple should see their traditional wedding as just an "engagement" and a step towards the valid wedding.

However, if a couple does not plan to have a "white wedding" and desires to have just a traditional wedding then the Church should be informed ahead of time. In this case, a traditional wedding becomes recognized as the valid wedding. The traditional wedding only stands alone as a valid wedding when the couple and their families can testify that the husband-to-be has been released from all the requirements expected of him and the wife-to-be has been fully handed over to him.

In such a case it is **compulsory** that they do a court wedding within a month of the traditional wedding.

Marriage Counseling Sessions

Formal pre-marital counseling will commence twelve weeks before the date of the valid wedding for any couple. These sessions are made up of six classes and they will last for six weeks. Formal post-marital counseling will hold twice after the couple is married. One class will hold three months after the valid wedding date and the second and final class will hold nine months after the valid wedding date.

Banns Of Marriage

Banns Of Marriage are done on Sunday Services in TCC as long as either the bride or groom is a member of TCC. They are done even for weddings that will be conducted in a different Church. The Banns run for the three Sundays before the wedding date. The couple is expected to submit their wedding card to their Pre-Marital Counsellor before the banns begin. We expect that both the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be will be present for the banns of marriage.

Couples wedding in TCC are required to submit their passport photographs to the Church Office six weeks before their wedding date. The Office will then use the photographs to process their Banns of Marriage at the Government Registry. This is the requirement of the government law.

Wedding Dates

Weddings hold in The Carpenter's Church Greenville on the second Saturday of every month. On these dates, multiple weddings may hold.

Wedding Reception

It is not mandatory that a couple holds a wedding reception when wedding in TCC.

For couples who desire to hold a wedding reception, use of the Children's Church Tent and accompanying PA equipment is on a first come, first serve basis. The second couple to book the date will have the Teenage Church tent made available to them for the Reception but they will be required to book their own sound system for the Reception. If there is a third couple or more for that date they will be required to book an external Reception Hall for their wedding.

Church members are advised not to "harass" other members into joining their "Committee of Friends". A Committee of friends is purely an individual social affair and no one should be "invited" or "coerced" into becoming a friend at the time of a member's wedding. A member who has been faithful and committed in his/her Family outreach Group or Department is likely to find that members of the FOG or Department will make themselves available during his/her wedding preparations.

Pastors of The Carpenters Church do not attend wedding receptions in an official capacity.

Weddings outside TCC

Pastors of The Carpenters Church will not attend weddings of TCC members that hold outside TCC in an official capacity. They are not expected to carry out any ministerial / clergy role at any wedding outside TCC.

General Issues

Family Outreach Group members are encouraged members to give gifts to the every new couple when at least one of them is a member of the Family Outreach Group.

Membership will be granted to a man who got married properly to more than one woman before getting born-again. However, he will be unable to hold certain leadership positions in the Church.

Any member who had more than one spouse before getting born again is required to bring their case to the Pastors for counseling.

Church will not conduct a wedding for a brother and a pregnant sister.

WATER BAPTISM

Water Baptism will be conducted for members of the Church only. Members intending to be baptized must attend the Water Baptism Class.

BIRTHS

Parents can bring their newborn babies to Church as soon as the baby and the mother feel strong enough to come. They do not have to wait for a dedication to be done first or for any other specified time period.

Church will encourage members to give gifts to a new baby.

BABY DEDICATIONS

Baby Dedications in TCC are our way of thanking God for the precious gift of a baby and affording the parents an opportunity, in the presence of witnesses, to declare their intention to bring up the baby in the fear and nurture of the Lord. In Baby Dedications we dedicate the baby to God asking Him to take care of the baby for us thereby indicating that the baby will not be dedicated to any other god(s).

Baby Dedications are not Infant Baptism Ceremonies.

We will dedicate a baby in Church if at least one of its parents is a member of TCC.

Note:

It is not mandatory that parents throw a party when dedicating their baby in TCC.

SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Single parenting is classified as:

- One whose spouse is dead.
- One who had a child/children outside wedlock.
- One who is separated from their spouse and parenting alone.
- One who is divorced from their spouse and parenting alone.

Single parents should keep themselves pure and holy (abstain from sex). They should (except in the case of separation) look unto God for a spouse.

TCC does not have any extra responsibility to single parents. Members who are joining TCC, as single parents are encouraged to inform their FOG Heads so that they can be guided by their Pastors.

DIVORCE

Cases concerning divorce will be treated on a case-by-case basis within the context of the Word of God.

Note:

Divorce is very undesirable yet it is not the unpardonable sin.

WIDOWS

A widow will have the status of widow in the Church if she is 60(sixty) years old and above with no one to cater for her. In this case the Church will bear full responsibility for her upkeep.

Note:

If a sister who is a member of the Church loses her husband and she is not yet of widow status (i.e. she is less than 60 (sixty) years old, the Church could decide to help her for a while to stand on her feet again.

This decision will depend on the peculiarity of each case.

DEATHS

We will give a decent Christian burial to our members. However this will be to the extent to which the nuclear family allows us.

TCC will not participate as a local assembly in wake-keeping services for our members – i.e. individuals who wish to attend may do so on an individual basis but we will not attend as a Church. We will also not hold wake-keeping services for our members.

In general, for deaths in a member's nuclear family, or of a member's parent we will encourage members to visit and help out one another.

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