

**BELIEFS, POLICIES**

**AND**

**PRACTICES**

*OF THE*

***NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION***

**2015**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|      |  |         |
|------|--|---------|
| I.   | INTRODUCTION   | 3       |
| II.  | ARTICLES OF FAITH  | 4 – 7   |
| III. | CHURCH COVENANT  | 8       |
| IV.  | CHURCH ORDINANCE   | 9       |
|      | A.    Baptism  |         |
|      | B.    Lord's Supper                                      |         |
| V.   | CHURCH'S SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS                              | 10-14   |
|      | A.    Marriage   |         |
|      | 1.    Premarital Counseling                              |         |
|      | 2.    Engagement and Traditional Marriage                |         |
|      | 3.    Wedding  |         |
|      | 4.    Marriage Blessing                                  |         |
|      | 5.    Divorce  |         |
|      | B.    Burial   |         |
|      | 1.    Service of Songs                                   |         |
|      | 2.    Burial/Interment Day                               |         |
|      | 3.    Treatment of Widows/widowers                       |         |
|      | C.    Dedication of a Child, Church and House            |         |
| VI.  | CHURCH LIFE  | 15 - 22 |
|      | A.    Church Environment                                 |         |
|      | B.    Church Council                                     |         |
|      | C.    Church Leadership                                  |         |
|      | 1.    Calling a Pastor                                   |         |
|      | 2.    Full-time Pastor                                   |         |
|      | 3.    Interim Pastorate                                  |         |
|      | 4.    Induction Service                                  |         |
|      | 5.    Bi-vocational Ministers                            |         |
|      | 6.    Full-Time Pastor doing other Part-Time Jobs        |         |
|      | 7.    Multi-Staff Ministry                               |         |
|      | 8.    Appreciation Service                               |         |
|      | 9.    Retirement Service                                 |         |
|      | 10.   Conflict between the Pastor and the Church         |         |
|      | 11.   The Role of the Pastor's Spouse in the Church      |         |
|      | 12.   Criteria for Approving Non-Baptist Based Ministers |         |
|      | D.    Court Cases  |         |
|      | E.    Revival Services                                   |         |
|      | F.    Church Music and Worship                           |         |
|      | G.    Church Societies                                   |         |

|       |   |         |
|-------|---|---------|
| VII.  | NEWLY ESTABLISHED CHURCHES  | 23 - 25 |
|       | 1. Planting a Church  |         |
|       | 2. Choosing a Mother  |         |
|       | 3. Organizing a Church  |         |
|       | 4. Naming of Churches and Associations                            |         |
|       | 5. Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities of an Organized Church |         |
| VIII. | ORDINATION  | 26 - 31 |
|       | 1. Ordination of Pastors  |         |
|       | a. General Requirements   |         |
|       | b. Church's Requirements  |         |
|       | c. Candidate's Requirements                                       |         |
|       | d. Ordination of a Divorcee                                       |         |
|       | e. Unmarried Pastors  |         |
|       | 2. Ordination of Deacons  |         |
|       | a. General Requirements   |         |
|       | b. Election   |         |
|       | c. Training of Prospective Deacons                                |         |
|       | d. Ordination of those Elected.                                   |         |
|       | e. Traditional and Chieftaincy Titles                             |         |
| IX.   | THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS  | 32 - 33 |
|       | 1. Non-Baptist Theological Education                              |         |
|       | 2. Graduation   |         |
|       | 3. Examination Malpractices                                       |         |
|       | 4. Sex Education in Theological Institutions                      |         |
| X.    | ETHICAL MATTERS/ISSUES  | 34 - 37 |
|       | 1. Dressing Code  |         |
|       | 2. Christian Chastity   |         |
|       | 3. Homosexuality  |         |
|       | 4. Traditional/Herbal Medicine                                    |         |
|       | 5. Cults and Cultism  |         |
|       | 6. Fund-raising   |         |
|       | 7. Politics/Public Office   |         |
|       | 8. The Use of Anointing Oil                                       |         |
| XI.   | GENERAL DISCIPLINE  | 38 - 39 |
|       | 1. Disciplining of Erring Pastors                                 |         |
|       | 2. Disciplining of Erring Deacons                                 |         |
|       | 3. Disciplining of Erring Churches                                |         |
|       | 4. Disciplining of Erring Church Members                          |         |
| XII.  | CONCLUSION  | 40      |

## I. INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, human beings were created social beings with the inclination to adapt to the environment they find themselves. But nature has so made it that every social group, be it religious or secular has got its distinctions. These distinctions have to be protected or they are lost.

Different Christian denominations have either come up with laid down policies guiding them or are in the process of doing so. The Nigerian Baptist Convention needs to come up with her own policies to guide our people in setting the pace.

The Nigerian Baptist Convention has observed with dismay the abuse of some policies and practices by our members that have consequently impacted negatively on our Christian witness. The argument has always been that they do not know the position of the Convention on these issues. This has made it necessary for us to express our belief system in clear and unambiguous terms. Our hope is to capture in the most practical way how we as Baptists should express our faith within the context of our diverse cultural backgrounds that many times differ from the Christian standards in substance and applications.

Ceremonies and cultural practices done by Baptists are expected to be modest in all ways. By modest we mean not being extravagant, not pretentious in appearance, manner, and conduct.

The first edition of the booklet was published in 2005 when the Rev. Dr. C. A. Amadi was the Assistant General Secretary (Ministerial). Between 2005 and 2014, many more decisions have been reached by the Ministerial Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention which are in tandem with the policies and practices of the Baptist faith vis-à-vis the policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Such beliefs and practices have been added hereto as part of our practices. We want to reiterate here that modesty is our watchword. Every Baptist man or woman should know that when Christ and culture clash, Christ is given the upper hand. May the Holy Spirit lead us to know what is modest and practice same in Jesus' name. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Gold O. Anie  
Vice President (Ministerial)  
Nigerian Baptist Convention,  
(2007 – 2014).

## II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

Articles of Faith are models of beliefs and practices of a given religious organization like the Nigerian Baptist Convention. They are clearly and comprehensively articulated to be worthy of acceptance as the common ground of beliefs, policies and practices among members of the same family of faith as exemplified in the early New Testament church. Such common beliefs are here under articulated:

### 1. **The Scriptures:**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. They comprise a collection of sixty-six books, from Genesis to Revelation, which, as originally written does not only contain and convey the Word of God, but IS the very Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:20-21).

### 2. **God:**

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience, as one worthy of all honour, confidence and love (Psalm 83:18; 90:2; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24; Jer. 10:10).

### 3. **The Trinity:**

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of salvation (Acts 5:30-32; 11:16; John 1:33).

### 4. **Providence:**

God from eternity decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures (Job 42:2; Col. 1:15-20).

### 5. **Election:**

Election is God's eternal choice of persons unto 'everlasting life not because of foreseen merit in them but of His mere mercy in Christ'. In consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified (Rom 8:30; 9:10-13).

### 6. **The Fall of Man:**

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherited corruption that is opposed to God and His law, therefore, he is under condemnation (Ezek.18:19-20; Romans 1:28; 20; 2; 32; Galatians 3:22).

7. **The Mediator:**  
Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand, He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, King, the Head of the Church, and He is coming again to receive His faithful followers to reign with Him (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).
8. **Regeneration:**  
Regeneration is a change of heart, worked by the Holy Spirit, who quickens those dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone (John 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 5:17).
9. **Repentance:**  
Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavour to walk with God so as to please Him in all things (Mark 1:15; Luke 3:8; 5:32; Acts 26:20; Rom. 10:9-11; 2 Cor. 7:10<sup>a</sup>).
10. **Faith:**  
Faith is the belief on God's authority of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life. It is done in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness and eternal life ( Eph. 6:16; Heb. 11:1; 11:6).
11. **Justification:**  
Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the atoning work that Christ has made; not for anything done by them; but on account of the obedience and self sacrifice of Christ, they receive and rest on Him and His righteousness by faith (Isa. 53:11; Hab. 2:4; Acts 13:39; Heb. 10:38).
12. **Sanctification:**  
Sanctification means being holy and set apart. Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands (Lev. 20:7; John. 17:17)
13. **Perseverance of the Saints:**  
Perseverance of the Saints means those whom God has accepted and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation into

sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comfort, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (Mat. 3:6; 6:20; John 8:31-32; 10:28-29; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet.1:5).

14. **The Church:**

The church is a group of baptized believers in Christ who have covenanted to worship, teach, evangelize and co-operate with the Nigerian Baptist Convention and people of similar faith. It is in essence, self governing, self funding and self propagating.

The regular officers of a church are Pastors and Deacons.

As Baptists, we also recognize other ministry gifts such as evangelist, teachers and missionaries. (Lev. 27:31; Acts 2:41-42; 6:5-6; 14:23; Col. 18:1).

15. **Baptism:**

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is a prerequisite to church membership and to participate in the Lord's Supper. (Matt.3:6; 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-5; Act 8:36-39).

16. **The Lord's Supper:**

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered by an ordained minister with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by His church till the end of the world. It is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him and one another (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:20-25).

17. **The Lord's Day:**

The Lord's day (Sunday) is a day set apart for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, except works of necessity and mercy only (Exo. 20:8; 31:14; Deut. 5:12).

18. **Liberty of Conscience:**

Conscience is the faculty in man by which he distinguishes between the morally right or wrong, which urges him to do that which he recognizes to be right and restrains him from doing that which he recognizes to be wrong which passes judgement on his acts and executes that judgement within his soul.

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it (John 16:2; Acts 26:9; Titus 1:15; 1Tim.4:2).

19. **The Resurrection:**

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness until

the judgment day. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised; the just to eternal life and unjust to eternal damnation (Mark 16:1-8; Mat. 26:1- 7).

20. **The Judgement:**

God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds: the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment and the righteous into everlasting life (2 Cor. 5:10)

### III. CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour,

And on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

We do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort;

To promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;

To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;

To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;

To abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to use our influence to combat the abuse of drugs and the spread of pornography; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour.

We do adhere to the New Testament teaching on monogamy as God's ideal state of family life.

We engage to steer clear from any secret society/cult.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love;

To remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness, and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech;

To be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other Baptist church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

#### **IV. CHURCH ORDINANCE**

##### **A. Baptism**

- a. Baptism should be by immersion in water.
- b. Only those who have genuinely professed faith in Christ should be baptized.
- c. The candidates should be presented to the Church for approval before baptism.
- d. Only ordained Baptist ministers should baptize.
- e. Baptismal candidates should be decently clothed for the service.

##### **B. Lord's Supper**

- a. The Lord supper should be observed regularly at least once in a quarter.
- b. The elements should include:
  - i. Bread without yeast. However, biscuits or wafers may be used.
  - ii. A non-alcoholic beverage with the colour of blood should be used.
- c. Only ordained Baptist ministers should administer the Lord's Supper.
- d. Only Christians who are baptized by immersion should participate.

#### **V. CHURCH'S SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS**

##### **A. MARRIAGE**

The Nigerian Baptist adheres to the New Testament teaching on monogamy as God's ideal state of family life.

There are processes to go through in marriage. Some of these processes have been abused and have become a burden on our young men and women, as well as on the parents. This has left us with a good number of bachelors and spinsters staying above thirty years before getting married. Preliminary preparations and the actual performance of the marriage should be modest, knowing that the law requires only five people for wedding to take place.

##### **1. Premarital Counseling**

Premarital counseling is an important aspect of the marriage process which ministers should not disregard. Every church is expected to set up a counseling committee that may assist the pastor or minister to screen the intending couple to make some

necessary corrections and give suggestions where necessary. The church pastor shall be the chairman of the counseling committee.

Every intending couple should undergo the following tests:

- i. Pregnancy Test (to be done within a week to the wedding day)
- ii. Genotype Test
- iii. Blood Group Test
- iv. HIV/AIDS Test

The intending couples' responsibility to the church on the wedding day should be made clear to them.

In addition, the pastor should seize the opportunity of counseling with the couple to familiarize himself with them before the day of the wedding and teach them on what an ideal Christian home should be. This contact with the couple helps the pastor to be acquainted with all necessary information about them prior to their presentation to the church for approval. A three month period would do for this exercise. In some cases it could be more or less.

## **2. Engagement and Traditional Marriage**

Baptists should restrict themselves to ceremonies that will glorify God. In many areas of Nigeria, because of some unchristian practices introduced by money exploiters into engagement ceremonies, things have become unbearably expensive. Unwholesome practices such as spraying of money and unnecessary elongation of the programme to extort money should be discouraged. The practice where young people engage in licking of blood is totally idolatrous, unwholesome and unacceptable.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. All formal and informal pre-engagement practices, which are becoming expensive, should be discouraged. We encourage that introduction, engagement and wedding should be conducted within a reasonable time.
- ii. Invitation of professional engagement narrators should be seriously discouraged and church engagement teams (i.e. WMU) should conduct engagement of church members.
- iii. All unchristian items on the engagement list should be dropped.
- iv. Bride Price: The bride price is actually a symbolic contractual acknowledgement of the worth of the bride. Since there is no hard and fast rule guiding this in different places, Baptist families should allow the bridegroom to pay whatever he can afford on the agreement with the in-laws.
- v. Where traditional marriage is conducted, the church should encourage the intending couple to regularize their marriage by ordinance.

### 3. **Wedding:**

The wedding of a couple (man & woman), even in Bible times, involved expenses. Christian wedding is a solemn and important ceremony in which God is involved. Unfortunately, it is becoming too elaborate and expensive that many “couples-to-be” either wait till when they are financially buoyant or go ahead and live together as husband and wife without the official wedding. This is considered a bad witness to our Christian testimony and brings dishonour to the name of our God.

#### **Decisions:**

- i. Wedding ceremonies should not be too expensive. “Couples-to-be” should not mortgage their home in order to have a flamboyant wedding.
- ii. All unchristian practices like spraying of money and pre-marital sex should be discouraged.
- iii. Churches should help couples to perform modest wedding ceremonies through premarital counseling and teaching about modesty.
- iv. No alcoholic drinks should be served at anytime in accordance with our covenant.
- v. Only ordained Baptist minister should join couples in marriage.

### 4. **Marriage Blessing**

Marriage blessing is usually done when the bride and bridegroom and their families prefer it in order to solemnize the union of those who have been living together without formal marriage ceremonies. The couple is required to confess and repent of their former state of co-habitation. The couple involved may choose not to be accompanied by friends and acquaintances. They are free to suggest the way they want it done without breaching the church’s policy on marriage and/or Biblical principles.

Marriage blessing should be conducted with dignity and reverence as the ceremony may include some essential ingredients involved in formal marriage ceremony such as taking of vows and the pronouncement of the marriage. Certain lines usually repeated after the minister may be omitted. This service could be done during the church worship service on Sunday, in the Pastor’s office or study. It should not be a full-fledged service on any day. In all marriage matters, registration in the open marriage registry and counseling are required.

After the brief ceremony, the Couple may choose to go for reception and friends, parents and even the minister are free to grace their occasion. Having greeted and/or congratulated the couple, the minister should then retire to the background.

### 5. **Divorce:**

Divorce is the legal termination of a marriage which brings to an end the nuptial union of a couple. Baptists are encouraged to prevent divorce in their marriages. Divorce brings disrepute to our Christian/Baptist testimony.

Those with children outside wedlock should go to court for to formalize the marriage and then come to church for marriage blessing.

**Decisions:**

- i. Couples should endeavour to live together until death do them part.
- ii. Couples should not take divorce as option in conflict management.
- iii. Since divorce is not a good witness to our faith, principle and practice, it should be avoided.
- iv. Ask God to give you the grace to remain in your marriage.
- v. Monogamy is the will of God for marriage and should thus be maintained.
- vi. As much as possible, they should endeavour to bring about reconciliation between themselves.

**B. Burial**

There are two types of burial ceremonies in our context: the interment of the deceased person's body, and the traditional burial or final burial. In some cases, when the deceased was not advanced in age, the two types of burial are done simultaneously. In the case of the elderly ones, in most cases, the body is interred first before the actual ceremonies that follow. Most families want it done the traditional way. At this point, the Baptists are encouraged to make a difference in order to keep the faith.

**1. Service of Songs:**

It is observed that service of songs, which is normally done a day before the burial, has been grossly abused.

- a. In some cases, the visitors that come from various places are housed and fed by the bereaved, thereby putting heavy expenses on them.
- b. Some of those who take part in the wake keep are never ready in time for the burial the following day.
- c. Many atrocities like drinking of alcoholic beverages, immoral dancing, sexual immorality, stealing are done during this period.
- d. Some unbelievers take the advantage to perform their own rituals in the night of wake keeping.

**Recommendation:**

There may be Service of Songs for any Baptist member and should last only two hours. There should be no elaborate entertainments during the service of songs. It should be solemn and spiritual.

## 2. **Burial/Interment Day:**

It is observed that corpses are allowed to stay in the mortuary for a great number of days or months either for the purpose of building a house for the dead or preparation for big feasts. Frequently, the bereaved that need to be helped have been forced to go on borrowing. Some have sold their belongings only to exhibit their flamboyancy at the burial of their parents or beloved ones. Some of the debts incurred at this period have left the bereaved in agony years after the burial.

### **Recommendations:**

- a. The corpse should be brought from the mortuary to the church and buried the same day. Where the corpse has to travel very long distances, arrangement should be made to keep it properly before the burial day.
- b. Under normal circumstances, no corpse should be kept in the mortuary for over four weeks. Failure to abide by this policy calls for a disciplinary measure by the church.
- c. Extravagant dressing of corpses and expensive coffins should be discouraged.
- d. All burial ceremonies should end on the day of burial. The third, fortieth or any other second burial should be abolished.
- e. Free-will-offerings and gifts to the bereaved by the Church should be encouraged.
- f. Undertakers, where they are used, should carry out their duties in a manner that will not hinder the smooth flow of events. This includes:
  - i. Not to desecrate the corpse by toying or tossing it about.
  - ii. Not turning the funeral into a money-spinning affair.
  - iii. Not extending the funeral procession unnecessarily, by going back and forth.
- g. The bereaved should not be burdened with unnecessary demands by the Church.
- h. Churches should not get involved in interments where fetish practices and elements are introduced.

## 3. **Treatment of Widows/widowers:**

It is observed that some tribes torture women when their husbands die. Such ill treatments may include: forcing widows to sleep on mat, plank or bare floor; be half clothed, forced to eat in broken plates, sleep in the same room with the corpse, drink the corpse-bath-water, shave her hair which differentiates them from other people, they are not allowed to walk in the house as they are put in solitary confinement for certain periods. They are not expected to smile. At times, the relations of the deceased seized spouse's property and engage in all other practices that are unchristian.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. All the above ungodly practices should be banned in the families to which members of our Baptist Churches belong. No member of the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches should be subjected to such treatment.
- ii. It is mandatory for all Baptists to engage in lawful and Christian marriages that protects the interest of the living spouse.
- iii. Couples should be encouraged to make their wills.
- iv. Churches should be more actively involved in protecting and defending widows and assisting them in other practical ways such as:
  - a. Financial Assistance
  - b. Legal Aid
  - c. Sponsoring them to Widows/Widowers' Fellowship
  - d. Encouraging and supporting widows/widowers Societies.
  - e. Widows/Widowers are free to remarry at any convenient time.

### **C. Dedication of a Child, Church and House**

In as much as we cannot discourage sharing, we expect the church to be a pacesetter for the community. Even when the financial strength is there, Baptists are not to forget our goal to witness. A moderate service should be held. The Unreached or less privileged should be remembered when planning for the reception. This also goes for house, car dedication, etc.

The spirit of sharing is recognized and should be encouraged. Nevertheless, no one should go into debt in order to celebrate. All celebrations should be done within the reach of the celebrant(s) with all modesty. No child should be rejected for dedication for whatever reasons.

## **VI. CHURCH LIFE**

### **A. Church Environment**

The ministry of the Church is a life-mediating ministry. It is a contradiction to find churches worshipping in an environment of filth, stench and decay. Nigerian Baptist Convention churches are encouraged to be mindful of the quality of their worship environments and to keep them clean both in the physical interiors and exteriors.

Congregations are encouraged to plant flowers and lawns and culture them to keep their environment tidy and dignifying.

## **B. Church Council**

Churches should use Church Council instead of Church Executive Committee because the council's decisions are recommendations to the church-in-conference. The pastor should always be the Chairman of both the church council and the church-in-conference.

## **C. Church Leadership**

There should be no church leader in any Baptist church when there is a pastor. Lay leaders leading churches should lead their churches to call pastors to lead their churches. No homosexual, polygamist, drunkard, cultist, divorcee or person of questionable character etc, should serve as a leader in any Baptist church.

### **1. Calling a Pastor**

In a democracy, the leader should be the choice of the majority of the members. In a congregational church the expression of choice should be based on more than mere human considerations. The church should seek to discover the will of God. The divine will must therefore, be made known through circumstances and instrumentalities that are humanly recognizable.

#### **Recommendations:**

The calling of a pastor by a church will involve, therefore, consideration of such questions as these:

Has prayer for guidance been sincerely made?

Is the church willing to be led of the Holy Spirit in its choice?

Has prayerful selection been made of a dependable search committee to represent the congregation in their search for the right person?

Has this committee first considered the qualifications of the person best suited to the needs of the church?

Has the church renounced all selfish motives?

Is she determined to have under consideration only a person at a time?

Has she had personal contact with him, preferably in his place of service?

Is she ready now to open correspondence with him, perhaps inviting him to the church for conference and acquaintance with the people, yet avoiding all appearance of making him a "candidate"?

Unless hindrances develop, would she be willing to recommend his call by the church?

If yes, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the church should go ahead to call him.

Has she done underground search to know his/her antecedents?

## 2. **Full-Time Pastor**

The full-time pastor is the one called by his church to serve on full-time basis by leading the church to determine, and carry out its vision and mission. He serves as an enabler to involve church members in the work of the church so that its divine mission can be achieved.

His leadership responsibilities are as follows:

1. He leads the church in the proclamation of the gospel in the church and the community.
2. He cares for persons and leads church to care for church members and the Community.
3. He provides administrative leadership to guide the church in the attainment of its divine missions.
4. He leads in congregational and other worship services such as: the Lord's Supper and baptismal services.
5. He conducts wedding ceremonies and funeral services.
6. He works closely with the deacons in their training and performance in their work of caring and building up of the church membership/fellowship.
7. He serves as chairman of the church council and church conference, and provides administrative leadership for the entire program of the church.
8. He supervises church staff members according to their job description, and provides for staff training on the job.
9. In a multi-staff setting, he coordinates the work of other ministers in the church as the minister of preaching. Such other ministers may include: Minister of Education; Minister of Music; Minister of Evangelism/Outreach; Minister of Youth/Teenagers, etc.

## 3. **Interim Pastorate**

- a. **Pastors Serving In the Nigerian Baptist Convention Institutions.**  
Pastors, who teach in our Theological Institutions, serve as chaplains in our medical institutions, work in the Baptist Building, BWMU Headquarters, or Conference offices etc., can accept interim pastorates for six months renewable once, making a total of one year. All pastors in this category should wait for two years after the end of an interim pastorate before accepting another one.
- b. **Retired Nigerian Baptist Convention Pastors**  
Retired pastors above 70 years of age should not be called as interim pastors. However, they could be advisers or consultants of Associations.

#### 4. **Induction Service**

Induction is the formal transfer of both physical and spiritual authority and leadership of a local church, Conference or Convention to the Pastor. This event should be carried out on one Sunday morning in the worship service within the first month of the assumption of the pastor into office.

The coming of the new minister should mark an epoch in the life of the church. A propitious beginning is of much value. Inauguration ceremonies lend dignity to the taking of office by officials of state and society. Frequently neighbouring churches will dismiss their services in order to participate in the inaugural service of a new pastor, thus giving him opportunity for wider acquaintance immediately.

#### 5. **Bi-vocational Ministers**

**Definition of Term:** Persons in other employments but have ministerial calling and have gone for theological training.

**Age:** In a situation where the senior Pastor is a younger person who entered into the ministry earlier but has lower years of academic qualifications and experience; and the bi-vocational minister has more experience and higher academic qualification, it is strongly encouraged that the bi-vocation minister should submit to the pastor being the senior pastor even though younger and of a lower academic qualification than him or her.

**Job:** There are dual commitments in bi-vocational ministry. Serving two masters is difficult, a balance is required. Therefore, there is need for job description for both bi-vocational and full-time minister.

**Residence:** Where the church intends to call a full-time minister and engages the ministry of a bi-vocational minister, such a bi-vocational minister should not move into the pastorium of the church.

**Induction:** Any bi-vocational minister who wishes to be inducted into the pastorate of the church should resign from his work to become full-time minister. On no account should a bi-vocational minister be inducted into the pastorate of a church except with the approval of the Ministerial Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

#### **Basic Rules that should Guide the Call of a Bi-Vocational Pastor by the Church:**

**Duration:** A bi-vocational pastor shall not lead a church more than three years, renewable one year at a time with the Ministerial Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

**Accommodation:** No bi-vocational pastor should occupy the church's pastorium.

**Remuneration:** A bi-vocational pastor should not be placed on a Nigerian Baptist Convention regular scale of salary. He or she should be on stipend agreed together with the church.

**Role:** Bi-vocational pastors are to assist weak and needy churches that cannot afford to call full-time pastors.

No retired personnel from other employments is eligible for Retirement Benefit.

There should be an established ministry need; the Church Council should communicate the need to the church-in-conference; the church should look at her ministry need and where she could not genuinely afford a full-time pastor, a bi-vocational pastor may be invited.

**Types of Call:**

- a. **Full Volunteer Service:** This is someone who accepts not to be remunerated monthly by the church. The church is encouraged to give such a person allowances according to her strength such as monthly GSM, transportation allowance and seasonal gifts. He should be made to write his ministry convictions in brief and area of service. He should then be given a letter to serve for two years and renewable for two terms.
- b. **Stipend Volunteer Service:** He shall not be placed on salary scale; consequently, he shall collect consolidated monthly allowance according to the church's strength. He shall also not be entitled to any other allowance except Christmas gift the church deem fit.

Ordinarily, the gospel ministry demands a total commitment of the Pastor. It is a 24-hour call a day. In other words, the gospel ministry is a full-time job. Ideally, the Pastor should devote his full energy and God-given talents to advance the course of the gospel ministry.

**6 Full-Time Pastor Doing Other Part-Time Jobs:**

There are some circumstances in our situation that will warrant the Pastor to take up a part-time job. These may include:

- i. Inability of the local church to adequately remunerate the Pastor and his family.
- ii. Invitation to serve the Lord through the Society.
- iii. The urge to put into practice a learnt trade or profession.
- iv. Invitation to help in an institution particularly Conference or Convention-owned Institutions e.g. teaching in a Bible

School, College of Theology or Seminary, Chaplaincy in medical institution or other related positions or employments.

In as much as the Convention is interested in establishing more churches, we recognize that calling of full-time Pastors may not be possible always. Therefore, there is need to allow Pastors to engage in part-time ministry.

However, this should be left at the discretion of the church. It must be fully discussed with the Church before the Pastor gets involved. This must be fully documented in a well-spelt out terms to avoid abuse in the future and to protect the pastor involved.

Churches, which need information on their pastors or prospective pastors, should ask from the pastor, Conference President or the Convention President. In cases of pastors who are about to graduate, such inquiry should be made from the appropriate theological institutions.

#### 7. **Multi-Staff Ministry**

It is not an over statement that multi-staff ministry has come to stay in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Therefore, churches are encouraged to adopt it to enrich their ministries. Also, pastors should learn to be broad-minded to work together with other pastors .

In a Baptist church, there may be many ministers, but there is only **one** pastor. It is the pastor that is the leader and the visionary. Other ministers are to cooperate with him to carry out his/her God-given vision.

#### **Procedure for Starting Multi-Staff Ministry**

Before a church begins multi-Staff Ministry, she should do the following:

- a. Be properly educated about multi-staff ministry.
- b. Ensure there is available financial resources to adequately remunerate the additional ministers, so that it will not result in a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul.
- c. Appropriate job descriptions be designed and given to every staff before assumption of office
- d. Ensure that it is a unanimous decision of the church.
- e. Set up a Search committee to which the church pastor should be the chairman.
- f. Give the church pastor freedom to lead the committee to call someone with whom they can work harmoniously.
- g. Induct the minister so called within one month of his arrival.
- h. Upon assumption of office, the ministerial staff should also be oriented on the workings of multi-staff ministry.
- i. Regular workshops, seminars and prayer should be organized to strengthen their relationships.

## 8. **Appreciation Service**

Appreciation services for pastors should continue and this should be done periodically. Appreciation service should also be done for those working in Convention institutions and agencies at least once every five years. Many a church has come to ask as to what will be the church's commitment to her pastor at such occasion, our advice has been, and still is that church should go beyond what the Convention is doing for her workers. However, as a guide, we suggest one year emolument or one year basic salary as minimum. Pastors are hereby advised to take it easy with their churches as appreciation service is a gift from the church for the work well done within a period of five years, and not a right to be contested. It is a privilege to be appreciated in order to enhance the pastor's performance.

## 9. **Retirement Service**

The compulsory retirement age of a staff working with the Nigerian Baptist Convention is 65 years. A retiring staff should notify the office of the Convention President at least two years preceding the year of retirement. The Convention President, upon receiving the letter will duly inform the direct employer of the staff. Upon receiving the notice of retirement, the direct employer should do the following:

- i. Ensure that retirement benefits premium of the staff is paid to date in full.
- ii. Where visible, the direct employer (church, head of institution) should be encouraged to give necessary assistance to ensure a retirement home for the pastor; and
- iii. Organize a befitting retirement service in honour of the staff.

With regard to the retirement of a pastor, the church should ensure a substantive pastor assumes duty immediately a pastor retires or relocates. However, where it is impossible to fill the vacancy immediately, it should not exceed one year.

In addition, the local church has responsibility to sponsor the retired pastor to the Convention-in-session following his retirement where he will be given his certificate of meritorious service.

## 10. **Conflict between Pastor and the Church**

Any conflict between the pastor and his church should be resolved internally. Failure to do so, the matter should be referred to the Association, if it could not be settled at that level; it should be referred to the Conference and subsequently to the Convention. No pastor should be sent away and paid three months'

salary in lieu of notice without proper investigations and discussions with the Conference Ministerial Sub-Committee about whatever may be the grievances leveled against him. If the pastor should leave, he should be paid all his entitlements.

#### **11. The Role of Pastor's Spouse in the Church**

The pastor's family is the bedrock of success of his or her ministry. Therefore, the role of his or her spouse in the ministry is very significant. A Pastor's spouse should be a person of respect, not malicious talker, but temperate, and trustworthy in everything (I Tim. 3:11).

Thus, a pastor's spouse should be a good administrator, counselor, caterer (if a woman), nurse and lover. He or she should relate well with people to attract them to the gospel of Christ. A pastor's spouse should give him or her partner confidence, comfort and respect.

His or her primary role is to ensure a happy and stable family; assist his or her partner to raise their children to be exemplary. A pastor's spouse also has responsibility of being an intercessor for his/her family and the church.

If a female, she should serve as Women's Missionary Union Counselor in the church and be committed to Women's ministries. Ditto for a male; he should be committed to Men's ministries in the church. They should promote unity, cooperation and participate actively in church programme and lead the children to do the same.

When a pastor's spouse is also a trained minister, the church should consider calling her full-time or as a bi-vocational minister. Where a pastor's spouse is not a trained minister, her spiritual endowment should be tapped for the good of the church.

#### **12. Criteria for Approval of Non-Church Based Pastoral Ministers**

The following criteria are considered necessary for approval for any non-church based pastoral minister who intends to be recognized by the Nigerian Baptist Convention:

1. Evidence of genuine conversion.
2. Evidence of call into the gospel ministry (Oral & written interview to be conducted by the Vice President (Ministerial)).
3. Quality training from a recognized Baptist theological institution.
4. The candidate must have an exemplary family life.
5. The candidate must be recommended by the local Baptist church where he has his membership, Associational Moderator and the Conference President.
6. The candidate must be in good standing with a local Baptist church.
7. The ministry must be registered with the Cooperate Affairs Commission for the final approval stage.
8. There should be a guiding Constitution for the said ministry.

9. Both the minister and the spouse must be active members of a local Baptist church.
10. The candidate must be active member of local Baptist Pastors' fellowship.
11. Upon graduation from a Baptist Theological institution, an intending non-Baptist minister may apply and be placed under the watch care of a minister appointed by the Ministerial Board for two years. After the two years, he/she would be evaluated for approval by the Ministerial Board.
12. Those who have served in the ministry for a minimum of two years may apply and be evaluated for approval by the Ministerial Board.

**D. Court Cases**

Crises within the Baptist family should be resolved in accordance with the Convention Constitution, as amended. All cases in court instituted by individuals, churches, Associations or Conferences or group of persons against the Convention or any of its components should be withdrawn from court.

Any person or group of persons who institute litigation, and who fail to withdraw such cases from court as directed, face the danger of being dis-fellowshipped from the Convention family. Such recalcitrant member(s) will not be accepted back into the fold until the misconduct is purged.

In times of crises, the church should endeavour to stem them. If the cases could not be resolved by the church, it takes the cases to the Association, Conference and Convention in that order.

**E. Revival Services**

- a. Two revival services in a year are recommended. These can be complemented with special emphasis through teachings, seminars, and workshops.
- b. Normally, Baptist ministers should be invited to lead these revivals.
- c. Churches and their pastors should agree on the number of times the Pastor can be away for outside engagement without prejudice to the fact that the primary responsibility of the pastor is his local Church. However, two revival services only are permitted by Nigerian Baptist Convention Scheme of Service.

**F. Church Music and Worship**

Christian music is important in worship. Thus:

- a. We encourage our churches to avail themselves of the ministry of Music Ministers who are theologically trained.
- b. The use of Music in worship should be decent as against sensuous and distractive music.
- c. Our worship is to glorify God. Thus, it should not be allowed to become theatrical or mere entertainment.

- d. The assistance of a Music minister should be enlisted.
- e. Singing in a church service or programme should not be used to praise any human being.
- f. Churches should ensure that they use Baptist hymnals in all their worship.

**G. Church Societies**

Although not all our churches nationwide have church societies, in the churches where they exist, some advantages have accrued there-from. However, we also note that there are excesses. These include:

- a. The over-burdening of members or encouraging them to go into debts for contributions.
- b. Looking down on or despising those who do not belong to any church society.
- c. Treating those who do not belong to societies as isolated beings or ostracizing them.
- d. Holding meetings at a time that conflicts with church activities.
- e. Turning of societies to pressure groups.
- f. Use of alcoholic drinks at meetings and anniversaries.

Consequently, the committee affirms that:

- a. Membership of societies is optional.
- b. Societies should be focused on fellowship, missions and evangelism.
- c. Members should uphold church covenants.
- d. Members should actively participate in church organizations like Men's Missionary Union, Women Missionary Union, Baptist Students' Fellowship, Lydia, Royal Ambassador. etc. which cater for the interaction of the small groups.
- e. Society celebration should be modest.

**VII. NEWLY ESTABLISHED CHURCHES**

**1. Planting a Church**

A Baptist Church can be planted by a person, family, and group of persons; a Church, Association, Conference or Convention. A Church so planted should be under the guidance and watch care of an organized Church. Such an organized church becomes the “Mother Church.” The Church planted becomes a “Mission Church” or station of the organized church. Membership of baptized believers in the “Mission Church” should be held in the Mother Church until the “Mission Church” is organized. Likewise, authorization for conducting the ordinance of baptism, Lord’s Supper, etc. is given by the mother church.

Planting of a Baptist Church should not be close to an existing Baptist Church. Therefore, a geographical survey of the proposed location for planting of a church should be carried out in conjunction with the Baptist Association in the proposed area.

Church planting in a location may be preceded by personal witnessing, revival, crusade and or house fellowship in the proposed area. Church planting as a result of Church splitting because of crises in an existing church should be discouraged. Whenever there is crisis, it should be resolved in the love of Christ.

There is no “family planning” in Church planting. It is a continuous process until Christ comes. Mission churches so planted should cooperate with the Association, Conference and Nigerian Baptist Convention.

## 2. **Choosing a Mother Church**

A Church planted by an individual, family, or group should freely choose a “Mother Church.” Where this is difficult, an Association or Conference can take up the role of the Mother.

When an Organized Church plants a new church, she automatically becomes the mother of the new church or preaching station. However, if an existing church splits into two or more church groups, by binary fission or through crises, the dissenting churches must look for an organized church and adopt her as mother, and such a mother church assumes the responsibility of administering the preaching station.

In a crisis situation where no organized church agrees to mother the “new church”, the latter is free to adopt an Association as mother. In either of the cases above, the mother church or Association should give the newly planted church the opportunity to grow by allowing her to also assume some responsibilities like cooperating with the Association, Conference and Convention. By so doing, the church begins to operate in both independent and interdependent status.

## 3. **Organizing a Church**

The organization of Baptist church is a special service in which a group of baptized Christians of like faith and practice publicly commit themselves to follow the standard of a New Testament Church in all their activities. During the organization service, members

publicly dedicate themselves to certain principle, conduct and standard which are taught in the New Testament concerning the Christian and church duties.

Having reached an agreement that the new church or preaching station be properly instituted, after a careful and prayerful consideration, steps will be taken toward formal organization. The decision thus reached is an indication that the new church is growing and maturing. Consequently, she shall:

- a. have at least 25 baptized members, a trained minister and functional ministerial organs of a church such as Women Missionary Union, Men's Missionary Union, and Christian Education etc.
- b. Apply to the mother church for organization.
- c. Invite the local Association where she is likely to belong.
- d. have a place of worship and a vault where vital documents are kept.
- e. Draw up a simple constitution and bye-laws, as well as setting forth their common conviction in certain articles of faith and pledging themselves to the faithful performance of the certain duties, and availing themselves of certain privileges as articulated in the solemn covenant.

By so doing, the church now has the right to fellowship fully with other churches, Associations, Conference and Convention as a Baptist Church cooperating with the larger body, and other Great Commission churches.

#### 4 **Naming of Churches and Association:**

Whereas, we value, appreciate the labour and cherish the memory of certain individuals who worked relentlessly to advance the kingdom of God, especially through the Nigerian Baptist Convention, naming of churches and Associations after living or dead individuals is absolutely discouraged and disapproved. However, properties of the church or Association; Such as Multi-purpose Buildings, Halls, Guest Houses, Educational Buildings, Schools, Awards, etc. could be named after such individuals to retain their memory.

#### 5 **Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities of an Organized Church:**

When a church is fully organized, she becomes a sister church in the Association, Conference and Convention with the mother church. The following rights, privileges and responsibilities are attached:

- She becomes self governing, self supporting and self propagating.
- She will hold her membership list.
- She is authorized to observe ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper).

- She will carry out her own work and worship according to the vote of her members as they are guided by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- She has the privilege to start and organize her mission church and thereby becomes a mother to other groups of Christians.
- She has right to choose her leaders and workers. The workers must be members in good standing and dedicated to the growth of the church.
- She can make or adopt her own church constitution and byelaws. This should include statement of faith and doctrine, duties of officers and committees, provisions for regular church in Conference.
- She becomes full fledged member of a Baptist Association, Conference, and the Nigerian Baptist Convention.
- She takes up responsibility of statutory payment to the denominational bodies such as: Baptist Association -----%, Baptist Conference ----- %, and the Nigerian Baptist Convention 20%, faithfully and as at when due----- monthly or quarterly.
- She can ordain her own deacons.
- She becomes financially self-supporting

She takes responsibility of taking and keeping proper record of her church-in-conference, church council, financial reports, membership list, etc.

### **VIII. ORDINATION**

Ordination within the Nigerian Baptist Convention is two-pronged: The ordination of Ministers and that of Deacons.

#### **1. Ordination of Pastors:**

##### **a. General Requirements:**

The process of ordination within the Nigerian Baptist Convention for Ministers shall be understood as this:

- i. Ordination, right from the Bible times is the prerogative of the local congregation.
- ii. It is the duty of the local Church to request for the ordination of her Pastor.
- iii. The Conference sub-ministerial committee shall interview the candidates using only the criteria set by the Ministerial Board of the Convention.

- iv. All those recommended by the Sub-ministerial Committee should appear before the Ministerial Board's interview (Oral and Written) for onward recommendation to the Convention for ratification.
- v. Upon the recommendation of the Ministerial Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and the approval of the Convention-in-session, all candidates for ordination shall be ordained in one day at a common place by each Conference within the Convention year.
- vi. There should be no fanfare and/or elaborate ceremonies.
- vii. Those who are 64 years and above should not be recommended for ordination.
- viii. No homosexual, polygamist, drunkard, member of the secret societies, divorcee or person of questionable character should be ordained.

**b. Church's Requirements**

- i. The Church must be co-operating with the Association, Conference and Convention in terms of finance, promotion and attendance of their programmes.
- ii. Only organized churches are eligible to recommend candidates for ordination.
- iii. The Pastor must either be a full-time or bi-vocational Pastor of the Church.
- iv. Ministers who are workers in the Baptist Building, WMU Headquarters, Theological Institutions, Baptist Mission Schools, or other agencies of the Convention are qualified for recommendation by the Churches where they have their membership and the head of the institution they serve.

**c. Candidate's Requirements**

- i. Successful completion of a recognized theological course of study in a Theological Seminary, Colleges of Theology and/or Pastors' School of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.
- ii. Evidence of an effective ministry as in the development and growth of the church, institution or organization where he/she is serving.
- iii. Evidence of Christian Character. That is, a Pastor's character in all respects should be in harmony with the biblical ideal for a Minister as set forth by Apostle Paul in I Timothy 3:1-7.
- iv. Evidence of a conviction of divine call to the ministry. We believe that Pastors should be able to provide, through word and deed, convincing

evidence of a divine call to the ministry of the Word. The spirit of the minister should be like that of Apostle Paul when he said; “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel, (I Corinth. 9:16).

- v. Evidence of personal experience and attainment of spiritual maturity. In cautioning that we “lay hands suddenly on no man” and that “a Bishop must not be a novice,” Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of personal experience and maturity of character and personality required of a Pastor. These should also characterize the candidates for ordination by Churches in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.
- vi. The Pastor must have served the Church for at least two years before being recommended.
- vii. The Pastor who received a new call from one church to another shall be recommended for ordination after spending one year in the new Church.
- viii. Candidates shall also fulfill the following:
  - a. Ministers with Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degrees and Doctoral degrees in Theology (and their equivalents) shall be recommended after two years’ experience in the church or organization they serve.
  - b. Ministers with Diploma shall be recommended after three years in their places of service.
  - c. Ministers with Certificate qualifications shall be recommended after four years in their places of service.
  - d. Bi-vocational pastors shall be recommended after four years in their places of service.
  - e. Bi-vocational pastors with Certificate shall be recommended after five years in their places of service.

d. **Ordination of a Divorcee**

A divorcee (pastor) cannot provide to others the model example of a Christian marriage, which he or she should preach, teach, and exemplify. Therefore, divorced persons do not qualify to serve as pastors and consequently, shall not be considered for ordination by the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

e. **Unmarried Pastors**

Sometimes, some churches raise issues on the ordination of unmarried pastors, and that is expected. It should be noted that before a church recommends her pastor for ordination, the minister must have served the church for a good number of years and during that period, the church might have assessed the pastor.

Going by the above assumption, an unmarried pastor who has been found faithful to God and the Church, whose ministry has been credible and successful, should be recommended for ordination. However, if the integrity of an unmarried pastor is in doubt, he should be allowed to further mature both spiritually and physically.

## 2. **Ordination of Deacons**

The office of deaconate is one of the two ordained ministries recognized by the Baptist church globally; the other being the office of the pastor. It is generally considered to have originated in the election of the seven as helpers to the Apostles (Acts 6:1-6).

### a. **General Requirements:**

1. The term deacon in the New Testament means a minister or a servant.
2. As is true of the office of a pastor, the office of deacon is not a hierarchical one.
3. The office of deacon is one of example, as are all other positions of leadership in the church. Only members who measure up to the scriptural qualifications mentioned in Acts 6: 1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 should be considered for the office.
4. Deacons should be selected from among members who have proved themselves faithful to Christ and the Christian calling in the ministry of a local church.
5. Deacons are to be selected and ordained by the church according to the need for their services and the availability of people qualified for the office. It is better not to elect deacons unless there are those qualified for leadership.
6. The number of deacons will depend upon the size of the church and its needs. In the larger churches, it has been found practicable to have one deacon for every twenty-five members.
7. The length of service of a deacon is not set forth in the New Testament and we did not also have evidence that deacons served perpetually. Therefore, it is appropriate to elect a deacon to office for a particular period of time. Churches have found a rotation system practicable. When a deacon completes his term of service, one year elapses before he is eligible to be elected again to the active office. As deacons finish their terms of service, other deacons are elected by the church to fill the vacant offices. It could be those who have previously served or other people to be ordained.
8. The duties of deacons include responsibility for the temporal affairs of the church, the pastoral care and counseling of sick and needy members,

and working with the pastor in implementing the general work of the church in both its vast material and spiritual areas.

**b. Election:**

The following steps or procedure have been found helpful in the election of deacons:

1. The church will select a representative committee for the nomination of deacons with the church pastor as the chairman.
2. The congregation may be given the opportunity of suggesting to the committee by secret ballot the names of members who may be considered for the deaconship.
3. The committee shall screen men and women on the basis of requirements and qualifications established by the church. They should have personal interviews with those they deem qualified for the office.
4. The candidates interviewed should be asked if they would be willing to serve as deacons in the church that elects them.
5. The committee will present to the church a list of the candidates who have been deemed qualified to serve and the number to be elected.
6. After prayer the congregation will write down as many names as the number of candidates they want to vote for. The vote should be taken by secret ballot.
7. Those receiving the largest number of votes will be declared elected to the office.
8. The time for ordination and induction into office will be set. The ordination of deacons is usually conducted in a regular worship service of the church.

**c. Training of Prospective Deacons:**

After choosing the deacons elect, the pastor plans for a four or six month training for the prospective deacons. He uses his discretion to choose pastors and deacons in good standing to lead in the training process.

Areas of concentration for training should include:

1. Qualifications of a deacon
2. Marriage and the home
3. Service and Ministry
4. Servant-hood and authority
5. Rotational deaconship – advantages and disadvantages

6. Duration of service
7. Counseling practicum
8. Pastor/Deacon relationship
9. Promoting fellowship among church membership
10. Caring for church members and community
11. Baptist heritage (Polity and Practices)
12. Baptist history
13. Baptist doctrines

d. **Ordination of those Elected**

1. The ordination of deacons in the New Testament is the prerogative of the local church.
2. The local church shall consider the counsel of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
3. No known polygamist, homosexual, divorcee, after conversion into Christianity may be ordained.
4. A woman who is married to one man before the husband decides to multiply his wives may be considered on merit if she is an exemplary Christian.
5. A drunkard, member of secret society, fraudster, and persons of questionable character should not be ordained.
6. There should be no fanfare, and ceremonies should be minimized.
7. The deacons in the Baptist church should not constitute themselves into a Board that would lord itself over their Pastors or their churches. We emphasize that the deaconate of a local Baptist church should remain as assistants to the Pastor, and with the Pastor, should together understand their roles as the servants of the whole church. Deaconate fellowship or body should be used, not Board.

e. **Traditional and Chieftaincy Titles**

1. No Nigerian Baptist Convention member should take up ritualistic chieftaincy title. But, where honorary traditional titles are to be accepted, it must not compromise biblical faith vis-à-vis Baptist faith, principles and practices.
2. Since a deacon (where serving or one who has rotated out) and a pastor already hold a honorable title in the church, any deacon or pastor who is interested in taking up traditional titles, must be willing to drop the church title (Rev, Pastor, Deacon, etc).

3. No one should accept titles that carry rituals or that would lead to a compromise of faith. Such traditional titles must be devoid of:
  - Sacrifices (Directly or Indirectly)
  - Any form of taboo (what to eat and what must not be eaten)
  - Oath taking
  - Prostration
  - Any form of linkage with any deity or ancestral spirit
4. However, where a Christian believes a community can absolutely do away with the use of traditional or cultural objects and symbols, and replace them with Christian objects such as: the Bible, cross etc, and be crowned in the church by Pastors and other Christian leaders, then it must be left to the choice of that individual.

## **IX. THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS**

At present, the Nigerian Baptist Convention recognizes and funds ten theological institutions namely: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso; Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna; Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku; Baptist College of Theology, Obinze; Baptist College of Theology, Oyo; Baptist College of Theology, Igede Ekiti; Baptist College Theology, Benin City; Baptist College of Theology, Lagos; and Baptist Pastors' School, Jos and Gombi.

However, there have been reported cases of Pastors who have established or are still contemplating establishing unrecognized schools contrary to regulations. Some claim ignorance of the policy while others claim that they felt the necessity to establish theological institutions in order to meet the needs of their people.

In the light of the above, the Convention:

- a. Re-affirms clearly that no Conference, Association, Church or Pastor should henceforth establish theological institutions.
- b. Ministers should endeavour to adhere to the policy of the Convention on the establishment of theological schools.
- c. With due respect to the autonomy of the local congregation, for the corporate existence of the Convention, such autonomy should recognize and abide by the norms of the Convention.
- d. The Convention has not accredited any theological institution established by individuals nor will she recognize the certificates issued by such institutions.
- e. The Convention encourages the training of lay-leaders by the churches for the purpose of starting house fellowship churches. These churches will call for the services of trained Pastors when they are ready.

- f. Any violation of the policy for establishing theological schools will attract discipline ranging from suspension to dis-fellowshipping, depending on the circumstances surrounding such action.

1. **Non-Baptist Theological Education**

Any Baptist pastor who wants to attend a non-Baptist Theological Institution must have obtained a minimum of Bachelor's Degree in Theology (or its equivalent) from any Baptist Theological Institution before proceeding to other theological institutions. A Baptist member trained in a non-Baptist Theological Institution, as a minister of the gospel shall not serve as pastor in any Baptist church. Such a person, must receive proper training in a Baptist Theological Institution. It is only then, that the concerned person can be recognized by the denomination.

2. **Graduation**

Graduation ceremonies, particularly in our Seminaries, Colleges of Theology, or Pastors' Schools should be characterized by modesty rather than extravagance.

3. **Examination Malpractices**

All Baptists should insist on diligence to study and hard work of their children and wards. There should be zero tolerance for examination malpractices in all Baptist institutions.

4. **Sex Education in Theological Institutions:**

To minimize cases of immorality among the pastors:

- i. Theological Institutions should enlarge their curriculum to include sex education.
- ii. Theological Institutions should be more stringent in their assessment and evaluation of prospective students before admission.
- iii. Marriage Counseling Committees should be organized by the Associations and Conferences, Pastors' Fellowship for pastors. Pastors should endeavour to avail themselves of this opportunity before marriage.
- iv. All churches should have marriage counseling committees to support what the pastor is doing in the church.

- X. **ETHICAL MATTERS/ISSUES**

1. **Dressing Code**

In view of the prevalent moral decadence in our society, all Baptist members, church organs, and churches should use every opportunity to seriously discourage seductive dressings such as body hugs, spaghetti strap, off-shoulders, transparent cloths that reflect underwear, see-me-through blouses, bell bottom, miniskirts etc, among our girls and even women. Christian ladies should continue to dress decently in order to win others to Christ and to enhance our Christian witness among people of other faith.

Since we expect Pastors and their wives to be models of what Christian dressing is, they should help our ladies through prompt corrections, advice, as well as stressing

appropriate dress patterns during weddings for both bride and bridal train. Our young men should also dress corporately and decently.

### **Recommendations:**

- (a) **Modesty:** In all that we do as Christians we should apply the rule of modesty, and it should start from the heart. Children of God should not wear indecent dresses (Romans 12:1, Prov. 7:10). In the light of this, we encourage our women to dress smartly and neatly, they should not look un-kempt and dirty. Brothers should dress responsibly and sisters should also dress as candidates of heaven.
- (b) **Examples of indecent dressing:**
- i. Transparent fabrics – unless sufficient backing is added.
  - ii. Dresses that do not conceal but reveal body figures
  - iii. Dresses that may make one lose dignity, such as:
    - a) Low Trousers
    - b) Midriff showing
    - c) Bare Shoulders
    - d) Cleavage
    - e) Low necklines
    - f) Thin tops
    - g) Tight form – fitted tops
    - h) Tight trousers (for males)
    - i) Skirt slits that are too tight
    - j) Mini skirt and micro-mini skirt
    - k) Wider Coverage headgears
    - l) Uncovered hair during worship
    - m) Sagging for males
    - n) Males wearing earrings
    - o) Dreadlocks for both sexes, Jerry-curls and plaiting of hair for male.

In our setting (culture), there are no compelling reasons for women to wear trousers. As much as possible, females wearing trousers should be discouraged.

- (c) **“Make Ups”**  
The rule should be modesty, decency, and simplicity in applying “make ups” to the body.
- (d) **Wedding Ceremony Dressing**  
There should be a Christian standard of dressing code for wedding (not sheer blouses, sleeveless dresses, Thin-tops etc). Wedding gown should cover the chest and should not be sleeveless. The problem with some wedding dresses is usually with the top-part. This should be addressed with all godly seriousness it deserves.

### **Implementation:**

- i. Pastors (Gospel Ministers) should teach and preach about modesty at every level of church life.
- ii. Correct in love (about heavy “make ups”).
- iii. Wedding Dress: Churches should have marriage committees, which should work with the Pastor. The Committee should ensure that they verify wedding gowns, to maintain Christian standard for the wedding day.

- iv. The boys should also dress decently, no sagging.
- v. Females should desist from wearing mini, micro-mini skirts.
- vi. Modesty, decency, simplicity should be applied in dressing. However, there is the need to exercise sensitivity and tolerance, knowing that spiritual maturity does not develop over night.
- vii. The responsibility for maintaining and emphasizing a godly dressing code should rest on the local church and her pastor.

2. **Christian Chastity**

Chastity means abstinence from sex before or outside marriage. Therefore, Baptists should abstain from sex until after marriage and should be faithful to their spouses (Heb 13:4).

It is known that the use of condom is highly associated with promiscuity in addition to the fact that condom-use is not absolutely protective against contracting HIV/AIDS. In the light of this knowledge, the Nigerian Baptist Convention dissociates herself from promotion of condoms as a reasonable alternative measure to chastity.

3. **Homosexuality**

Homosexuality is sexual attractions or sexual relations with persons of the same sex. The Bible affirms marital union between a man and a woman. Consequently, the Nigerian Baptist Convention categorically condemns any sort of union between individuals different from this biblical standard.

4. **Traditional/Herbal Medicine**

There could be genuine and honest use of traditional or herbal medicine devoid of evil influence, hence, the Nigerian Baptist Convention believes that herbs are given for the healing of man if they are used without occultic and demonic elements. But, in order to avoid creating confusion, doubt, suspicion and above all, bringing the name of Christ into disrepute, no member of the Nigerian Baptist should be involved in such practices. In the same vein, no Baptist member should engage in traditional or herbal medicine.

5. **Cults and Cultism**

Realizing that membership of a secret society and the taking of oath of membership in the society are both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament (See Matthew 10:26; John 18:20; I Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14,17; Ephesians 5:11-12; and James 5:12), the Nigerian Baptist Convention which accepts the New Testament as its rule of faith and of church policy, re-affirms its stand on secret societies as follows:

- a. No pastor, official or officer of the Nigerian Baptist Convention shall be a member of any secret society whether it be foreign or indigenous. Anyone of these persons who is known to be a member of the society shall be relieved of his position in the Convention.
- b. Any member of a Baptist church who is known to be a member of a secret society shall forfeit his membership in the fellowship of a Baptist church.

- c. Any church member who has lost his membership in a Baptist church because of his association with a secret society can be accepted back into the full membership of the church only upon a verbal and written renunciation of his membership in the said society.
- d. No Baptist church co-operating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention shall recognize any known member of any secret society (foreign or indigenous) as a member of the church. Any church, which condones such members of secret societies within its fold, shall be expelled from the fellowship of the Convention.
- e. The church shall deny any member of a Baptist church who in his lifetime was known to have been a member of a secret society a Christian burial.
- f. Baptist churches should refrain from inviting members of secret societies to officiate at all church functions.

6. **Fund Raising**

- a. All churches cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention should henceforth refrain from using non-Christians in their Church fund-raising programmes. Such co-operating churches are encouraged to raise whatever funds they need for their projects from amongst the membership of their churches and other Christian bodies.
- b. Churches are encouraged to start projects they can finish in a short period of time of about five to ten years

7. **Politics/Public Office**

We believe that it is the inalienable right of every citizen to take part in the government of his country through the exercise of his civic rights such as voting. It is also true that some citizens, due to their special abilities and interests may be called upon or opt to give their full time to politics, and by so doing may be active in party politics. Such persons should put first their loyalty to God to whom they are ultimately responsible for the use of their opportunities. Therefore, any Christian who is actively engaged in full-time politics is under divine obligation to influence his party to embrace principles of morality and righteousness. This will further require that if the political party in which a Christian is active conducts itself in a way displeasing to God and contrary to Christian teaching, such a person should dissociate himself from the party until the policies and practices are made right. They should work towards meeting the need of the people they represent and project the image of Jesus Christ. It is in the light of the above that we encourage Baptist men and women to actively participate in politics.

a. **Convention Workers:**

- i. All workers (ministerial and non-ministerial) in the Convention – Church, Association, Conference and Convention – should stay clear of active participation in politics and political parties. A worker should not introduce party politics into the church or Convention. A worker should not use the influence of his office as pastor or leader in the Convention to persuade the people toward a political party. A worker should be neutral in party politics.

- ii. Any worker in any Convention institution – church, educational, medical, or other enterprises – before accepting a post in public service, should seek and receive the approval of his or her employer.
- iii. If a worker seeks elective office whether into Local, State or Federal Government, he or she should resign from his or her office position. If he or she is appointed the chairmanship of a public corporation that will entail full-time service, he or she should apply for a leave of absence without pay.

**b. General:**

- i. When Baptists accept appointments in public life they should use such appointments as opportunities for Christian witness. We expect Baptists who hold public offices to take a strong personal stand against using, serving and selling alcoholic beverages, hard drugs and tobacco. They are also not expected to be involved in corruption and corrupt practices.
- ii. The Convention reserves the right to call to order anyone in public office whose Christian witness is questionable.

**8. The Use of Anointing Oil**

The anointing oil is use in both Old and New Testaments to consecrate Priest and Kings. It is also use to sanctify the tabernacle, temple and their utensils. In addition, it is use as a medicament on wounds. The epistle of James expressly states that the sick should be anointed with oil and prayed for (James 5:14).

However, today, the use has been abused. As a denomination, we believe in the proper use of anointing oil to minister to the sick and those afflicted by demons.

The foregoing, notwithstanding, Baptists should put their faith in God, who works through the anointing oil and not in the anointing oil itself. Thus, anointing oil should not be carried about like a magical object. The usage should be as led by the Holy Spirit.

**XI GENERAL DISCIPLINE**

**1. Disciplining of Erring Pastors**

Pastors are expected to be role models. However, when a pastor errs, he should be reported to the Sub-Ministerial Committee of his Conference, which should investigate the allegations, and give the accused fair hearing. When found guilty, depending on the nature of the offense, he could be given a verbal or written warning, demotion, or withholding of increment, suspension, interdiction, withdrawal of ordination and preaching license, termination, dismissal, sub-charges and or compulsory retirement.

**2. Disciplining of Erring Deacons**

Deacons are primarily officers of the local church. Their election, training and ministry are basically carried out in the local church. When a deacon errs, he or she

should be investigated, given fair hearing and if found guilty he or she should be disciplined by the local church where he or she has membership. In situations where the local church is weak or becomes an accomplice in the error, the Association, Conference or Convention should discipline and/or enforce discipline of a Deacon. This discipline may include but not limited to: private and public warnings, rebuke, suspension from ordained ministry, or dis-fellowship.

### 3. **Disciplining of Erring Churches**

Without disregard or prejudice to the autonomy of the local church, every church cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention is obliged to obey the Word of God, follow the Constitutions of the Convention; and conduct her affairs in tandem with the beliefs, policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Convention has the right to discipline any erring church.

#### **Acts that constitute punishable offenses include but not limited to the following:**

- a. Heresy – holding unto beliefs and practices that are contrary to the Bible.
- b. Holding unto beliefs and practices that contradict the doctrine, beliefs and policies of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.
- c. Any other act that is regarded as being unchristian and is capable of dragging the name of the Lord in the mud or an act that is detrimental to or threatens the corporate existence of the Convention.
- d. Taking the church, Association, Conference, Convention or their officers to court.

#### **Procedures for Disciplining Erring Churches**

- a. When any case of misdemeanor by any church is brought to the notice of the Convention, the Executive Committee of the Convention shall mandate the Ministerial Board to investigate the matter, give fair hearing and make necessary recommendations to it.
- b. Where the issue has to do with lack of cooperation with the Convention, the church shall be given first and second warning in writing. Where the church fails to heed the warnings and cooperate with the Convention, the church shall be dis-fellowshipped. Dis-fellowship means being excluded from the meetings, gatherings and programmes of the Convention and its constituent departments and organs. It also means barring the officers, ministers (pastors) and members of the Convention family from having anything to do with the church until he or she repents.

### 4. **Disciplining of Erring Church Members**

Without prejudice to the autonomy of the local church, every member of the churches cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention is obliged to obey the Word of God by conducting himself or herself in Christian manner, follow the Constitution and adhere to the beliefs, policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Convention shall discipline any erring church member.

### **Procedures for Disciplining Erring Church Members**

When a church member errs, he or she shall be investigated, given fair hearing, and if found guilty, he or she shall be disciplined by the local church where he or she has membership.

The discipline may include but not limited to private and public warnings, rebuke, suspension from church office or dis-fellowship.

In situations where the local church is weak or becomes compromised, the Association, Conference or Convention shall discipline and/or enforce discipline of the member.

#### **Note:**

- The goal of discipline at all levels shall be redemptive and not punitive.
- To maintain discipline among members, Churches, Associations, Conferences and Convention institutions.
- To facilitates reconciliation and forgiveness.
- To bring about restoration.
- To pursue and ensure complete healing.
- To respect and promote justice and fairness.
- To facilitates church and denominational well-being.
- To advance the course of the kingdom work as programmed by the Convention and her units.
- However, any church member, group of members, Deacon, Pastor, Association, Conference or Convention officer or worker that wants to pull out of a local Church, Association, Conference or Convention shall submit all documents and properties of the respective bodies to them before his, her or their leaving.

## **XII CONCLUSION:**

This handbook on Baptist beliefs, policies and practices is a compilation of some of our distinctives, major convention polity, policies, and our modes of operation as a denomination. Some decisions arising from our day to day *modus operandi* are also collated for our own good and operation.

The handbook is not meant to take the place of the Bible in church life and its administration. Rather, it is a guide in decision-making and in living our lives in and outside the church environments. It enables us to uphold the tenets of our faith in daily living wherever we find ourselves. It is meant to be a handbook for every Baptist church and family members cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

We give God the glory for this document that has been put together to the glory of His name. We also seize this medium to thank all those whom God used to accomplish this long-awaited instrument that will facilitate our decision-making in the exercise of our faith. To God be the glory. Amen.



