Sample Church Bylaw Regarding Marriage
From Illinois Baptist State Association
November 2013

Note: This sample church bylaw comes in response to recent legislative action legalizing same sex marriage in Illinois and court action weakening federal laws on traditional marriage.

Local churches would be well advised at this time to examine their constitution and bylaws, and their policy manuals, to affirm their position on marriage and to state more clearly eligibility for use of their facilities. In previous lawsuits, courts have held churches accountable for obeying their own constitutional standards.

This sample bylaw takes into account
• the Southern Baptist Convention's doctrinal statement, the Baptist Faith & Message (2000),
• previous sample bylaws published by IBSA, guidance from Christian legal defense organizations, and
• the “Resolution on the Preservation of Biblical Marriage and Affirmation of Religious Liberty of Illinois Churches and Faith-Based Organizations” adopted by messengers at the 2013 IBSA Annual Meeting.

The Sample Bylaw for amendment and adoption by local congregations:

I. This Church believes in the sanctity of the marital union as described in Scripture:
   a. God created the first marriage as a sacred covenant relationship between one man and one woman for the purposes of procreation, companionship, and dominion over creation, in keeping with the covenant relationship God himself established with his own creation (Genesis 2:15-24; Romans 1:16-32); and
   b. Jesus blessed a marriage celebration between a man and a woman with his presence and his first public miracle, thereby affirming the traditional definition of marriage as a cornerstone of every culture and community (John 2:1-11); and further that he advised those who are for congenital or psychological reasons unable to enter into marriage (i.e. between a man and a woman) to remain single and therefore celibate (Matthew 19:4-12); and
   c. Society historically has embraced this traditional definition of marriage, eschewing all other unions as unnatural, inappropriate, and anti-social, and has advocated the family unit of husband and wife and their children as the chief building block of society (Leviticus 18:22-30; Psalm 127:3-5; Romans 1:16-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:4).
II. **This Church adheres to the doctrinal statements on Marriage and Family by our denomination**, the Southern Baptist Convention, as stated in the most recent version of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, that marriage is be defined biblically and theologically in God’s own terms rather than man-made terms; and further that this church intentionally adheres to the highest standards for marriage, namely biblical standards, and that other legal definitions and court actions are secondary to biblical mandate.

III. **This Church affirms that all marriage ceremonies performed in the name of this church** and any related celebrations or activities allowed in its facilities shall be for unions that meet the standards named in this church constitution, and further, that church ministers and staff engage only in marriage ceremonies in keeping with this church’s adopted biblical and theological definition of marriage.

For additional information on this topic, visit [www.IBSA.org/mariage](http://www.IBSA.org/mariage).