

Report of Special Committee Appointed at the 2013 Session of the NAFWB

During the 2013 Convention of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, a special committee was appointed to implement the following part of a resolution adopted by the body:

Furthermore, be it resolved that the moderator appoint a special seven-member committee to research the moral and legal ramifications of same-sex marriage as it relates to Free Will Baptists, and bring appropriate recommendations and/or documents to the 2014 Free Will Baptist Convention in Fort Worth, Texas, for consideration.

The Special Committee has met twice during the year—in December and in April—and has communicated frequently between meetings and makes the following report.

Preliminary Considerations

1. We think it important to offer some brief comments about the respective roles of the state and the church. Both of these have been established by God to operate in separate dominions. Where separation of church and state is practiced, as in our country, neither of the two can dictate to the other. Each must govern in its respective dominion according to the “just consent” of those governed and by the principles and grounds agreed on within its dominion. Within the church, these are found in the Bible; within the state, they are expressed in its constitution and in the laws enacted and upheld as provided by that constitution.

Since these are different for the two dominions, it is not surprising that the church and state do not always speak with the same voice, or even that tension between the two arises. Where there are differences, the church must continue to speak, without intimidation, the Word of God which reveals the will of God that stands in judgment over all human behavior with absolute authority. This can be done without demonizing the governmental authorities for refusing to listen to the church or to the Word of God that governs the church. Nothing in the state’s sphere of dominion requires them to do that. So long as the state does not require us to act in ways that violate the revealed will of God, we can obey both God and man. When the state requires disobedience to God—which in our circumstances, to this point in time, is very uncommon—we will obey God rather than man. If our society fully recognizes same-sex marriage, that by no means requires the church to do the same.

None of this means that the state may not make serious errors in governing within its proper dominion. And citizens of God’s kingdom are also citizens of the state. In that second role they should attempt to exert their influence for good government in the public arena—in ways that are appropriate to the exercising of their rights. Governments that recognize and uphold the moral laws of the Creator, who is identified as such in our grounding documents, will be more effective in fulfilling the divine intention for the state.

2. Meanwhile, our view is that our Free Will Baptist churches should take appropriate steps to protect themselves from unwarranted interference with the freedom to live under the government of God for His church. We offer the recommendations and resources defined in this report toward that end. In doing this, we caution that there is no absolute guarantee against the possibility of lawsuits brought by those who are zealous

for what they see as the rights of homosexuals. In our society, it is almost true that anyone can sue anyone else for anything, real or imagined. What we can do is to make sure that, when challenged, the rights of our churches to believe and practice the Christian faith, as we understand it, can be protected by law and upheld by the courts as fully as possible.

Nor are there any guarantees to prevent the possibility that our churches' tax exemption, or the rights of our members to have gifts to the church regarded as tax deductions, may be threatened over our refusal to recognize same-sex marriages in one way or another. That does not seem likely, at least not in the immediate future, but in such an eventuality we must not adjust our Biblical theology of belief and behavior for the sake of mere financial convenience. Whatever develops, we can continue to provide our governing authorities with the fear and honor God has required of us in Romans 13:1-7—including obedience so long as that does not require disobedience of God.

3. Our attention in this report has been focused primarily on the legal implications, for the church, of the approval of same-sex marriages by the state—especially as this might involve the church's recognition of and sanction of marriage as indicated by hosting or solemnizing weddings. We have not devoted much attention to the implications for church membership, except for a couple of brief statements in the sample "Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality," referenced below. For the most part, we do not think that the church needs separate policy statements regarding the persons approved for membership in good standing in the church. In whatever ways the church's requirements of Biblical morality for membership are defined, the rejection of homosexual behavior, including same-sex marriage, should be included. While our focus has been on the legal implications of the approval of same-sex marriages, for the church, we have not intended to offer legal advice to any individual, church, or association. Any recommendations, resources, references and documents provided by this committee are in direct response to the charge placed upon it. Each individual, church, and association is strongly encouraged to seek legal counsel in utilizing this report.

Resources

We think that one way we can fulfill our charge as a committee is to draw attention to resources that churches and their leaders can use to inform themselves, contribute to their understanding of the issues, prepare to minister to others within and without the church, and stand firm on Biblical and legal grounds. To that end, the following documents are made part of this report.

1. DOCUMENT ONE is a reproduction of the resolutions adopted by the National Association of Free Will Baptists that speak significantly to the subject of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. (There are two or three others that do little more than mention homosexuality in passing.) The National has not just recently spoken to the issue: clear resolutions date to 1976, 1977, 1987, 1993, 2002, and 2004.

It is always important, when legal action against the church seems possible, to have an established definition that affirms the religious basis for, and practice consistent with, any conviction. These six resolutions show that we regard homosexuality as sinful before God, and that our opposition to same-sex marriage is grounded in that conviction. The first four were adopted before legal recognition of same-sex marriage seemed a

possibility. The last two were adopted when that possibility, sadly, began to be more realistic.

All churches that are part of the National Association of Free Will Baptists can freely use these resolutions, as desired, to provide explanation of, or defend, its practices in this matter. We do not judge that any further resolutions on the subject are needed at this point in time.

2. DOCUMENT TWO is a copy of the Appendix to the *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptists*, adopted in 2008, on the subject of same-sex marriage. We have included this since many of our people do not have copies of the *Treatise*.

The fact that this has been made an appendix to the *Treatise* goes much farther than the expressions stated in resolutions, as significant as they are. This means that a Biblical view of marriage has been made part of our very statement of faith, included in the fundamental doctrine of God's creation of man. That is, of course, where the nature of marriage is properly grounded, given that the creation account in Genesis defines marriage in the creation of humanity, in the image of God, as male and female.

Free Will Baptist churches can point to this appendix as a clear statement of Biblical doctrine, as believed by us, about marriage. We should make sure that our people are informed that this is part of our basic doctrine of God and man.

One of our recommendations will include a very slight change in the wording of this appendix. The meaning of the statement will only be clarified, not changed, by the recommended change.

3. DOCUMENT THREE provides some selected online resources that we suggest may be helpful, as examples, in understanding and framing policy regarding the issue of same-sex marriage. Important: *there will be some things in these statements that we would not agree with, and they should be critically evaluated*. But they provide examples of policy statements that others have issued and can offer some help in understanding both the moral and the legal ramifications of state-approved same-sex marriages.

Some excerpts from some of these resources have been adapted in the local church position statement that will be included as one of our recommendations.

4. DOCUMENT FOUR is an extensive bibliography, listing books, journal research, and podcasts—briefly annotated—that deal with the subject of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. *Again, it is important to note that the list includes sources that represent a wide variety of viewpoints, including some that are clearly opposed to Biblical standards; use it carefully and evaluate the resources by the Word of God*. They are included here for the benefit of those who seek a better understanding of the issues involved and desire to be armed against the arguments of those who support homosexuality. The discerning reader will recognize the works in this list that support traditional Christian morality. The annotations provide some insight into the nature of the material and what may be most helpful. Our intention, in providing this list, is to offer help both in understanding the issues—including the moral and legal ramifications of state-approved same-sex marriage—and in framing policy that will be useful when legal challenges come.

Recommendations

Our report concludes with three recommendations.

Recommendation one. While the appendix to the *Free Will Baptist Treatise* that expresses our doctrinal view about marriage is fine as it is, we think that a small change in the wording might be helpful in a court where our position was at issue. We therefore recommend that the words “marital relationship” be changed to “Biblical marriage.” The affected sentence will then read, “It is the sole and beautiful context of the divine plan for the Biblical marriage of man and woman as image-bearers of God, as well as the foundation for the family as the basic, divinely ordained unit of human society.”

Recommendation two. We recommend that local Free Will Baptist churches be strongly encouraged to adopt a policy statement about marriage and human sexuality that will serve both to express forthrightly the church’s position on the issues and to protect the church and its ministerial staff in the event of potential legal challenges.

To this end we have included, as DOCUMENT FIVE, below, a “Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality” that may serve as an example of such a statement. The document includes a section on marriage and a section on human sexuality, and each of these includes two options to choose between. Of course, the church may also adapt what is given or substitute other language to suit its own purposes. Indeed, we recommend that each church consult with an attorney for help in choosing the final wording. What we have provided in DOCUMENT FIVE has itself been shaped by borrowing from documents in use by others, including some found in the “online resources” named in DOCUMENT THREE.

Recommendation three. We recommend that all the bodies in the Free Will Baptist denomination that play a role in the examination, licensing, and ordination of ministers be urged to include instruction and careful questioning on the issues involved in homosexuality and same-sex unions as part of the process. Our churches and associations of churches must make sure that only those candidates who are in complete agreement with the Appendix to Chapter IV, Section 1, of the *Free Will Baptist Treatise*, as adopted in July, 2008, are licensed or ordained to preach, and so to perform marriages, as Free Will Baptist clergy.

We have decided that no specific recommendation needs to be made by this committee regarding the implications of same-sex marriages for chaplains. Our reason for this is that the Home Missions Board has dealt satisfactorily with this in its document entitled “The Chaplaincy Under the National Association of Free Will Baptists.”

Respectfully submitted

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DOCUMENT ONE

Resolutions by the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc. regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

1976: HOMOSEXUALITY AND ADULTERY

WHEREAS, there is a widespread move by some modern advocates who want to consider Christian love as a basis for tolerating all kinds of sexual “freedom”; and WHEREAS, these same persons advocate that homosexuality, adultery, and fornication are satisfactory ways of life even for Christians; and WHEREAS, there is a growing sentiment and toleration among some church people toward homosexuality, adultery, and fornication; and WHEREAS, the Bible is replete with references (See note below.) exposing and condemning such actions on the part of any person, whether that person claims to be a believer or not; and, WHEREAS, Free Will Baptists believe the Bible is our rule and guide for faith and practice, therefore,
BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the National Association of Free Will Baptists continue to denounce homosexuality and adultery as sinful, unChristian, and already condemned by God in His Word.
2. That the National Association of Free Will Baptists recommend that all pastors and church leaders continue to strongly denounce this unrighteous conduct and urge purity to prevail, “...for God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (I Thessalonians 4:3,7).

SPECIAL NOTE: Bible references supporting the above resolution: Genesis 13:13; 19:5, 7; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Judges 19:22, 23; Romans 1:24-27; I Corinthians 6:9,10; 7:2; Jude 7,18,19. While many other references could be attached, these are more than adequate to support the above resolution.

1977: HOMOSEXUALITY

WHEREAS, the National Association of Free Will Baptists in its 1976 session passed a strong resolution against homosexuality and adultery; and WHEREAS, homosexuality has come increasingly to the forefront gaining widespread acceptance even among many so-called Christians; therefore,
BE IT RESOLVED: that we reaffirm our belief that according to the Bible homosexuality is sin; its participants are sinners; and the practice and the participant are condemned by God.

1987 (untitled)

WHEREAS, Free Will Baptists believe that obedience to God’s laws of chastity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage is God’s plan for the sanctity of marriage and the prevention of many diseases, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we oppose advertising and educational endeavors which appear to accept adultery, fornication, infidelity, homosexuality and promiscuity;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we condemn and deplore any distribution of birth control devices which seem to encourage and condone immoral behavior; and exemplify compassion and sympathy toward the innocent and other victims.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we encourage the teaching of Biblical principles by our parents, churches, and pastors concerning sexual conduct.

1993: HOMOSEXUALITY

Whereas, homosexuality and the teachings of alternate lifestyles have invaded many segments of our society, and

Whereas, the Bible strongly condemns homosexuality, and because of our strong commitment to Biblical truth;

Therefore, be it resolved that we as Free Will Baptists go on record as

- (1) opposing the lifting of the ban on homosexuals in our armed forces, and
- (2) as opposing the government's condoning or accommodating homosexual practices in any manner.

And be it understood that neither our resolute opposition to the potential change in national military policy nor our continued belief in the sinfulness of homosexual practice should be construed to deny our historic evangelical beliefs about God's love for the sinner while hating the sin. God is full of grace, as well as truth. We thus reaffirm that homosexuals, like the rest of humanity, are fully the objects of God's redemptive love. By faith and repentance, all may obtain full forgiveness through the renewing of their minds by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:22-24). We welcome all who receive forgiveness and wholeness in Jesus Christ as fellow believers in the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

2002 (untitled)

Be it resolved that we reaffirm our position that marriage as instituted by God is intended to be a union between a man and a woman (I Corinthians 7:1-2), and that we oppose same-sex marriages.

Whereas the American Family Association (AFA) has launched an online petition www.nogaymarriage.com to boost the efforts of those in Congress trying to protect marriage, be it further resolved that all attending the national convention be urged to visit AFA online in support of their initiative. Be it also resolved, that every Free Will Baptist be urged to call or write their congress person stating our position on same-sex marriage. Note: According to research, individual letters/emails are more effective than a single letter from a convention.

2004: RESOLUTION CONCERNING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

WHEREAS, the 1st Amendment of the U. S. Constitution grants citizens the freedom to voice support of or opposition to issues that concern us, whether they be issues of law, morality, societal, educational or economic; and

WHEREAS, our sense of moral obligation and evangelistic responsibility forbids us to remain silent on issues so paramount, so eminently threatening to the moral fabric of our nation; and

WHEREAS, our concern for those who are enslaved to a perverted, self-destructive, sinful lifestyle, requires this body to proclaim a clear denunciation, and warn of the dangers and consequences of departing from God's standard; and

WHEREAS, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts has declared same-sex marriage to be the policy of the commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in California, Oregon, New York and New Mexico, rogue local officials have defied their own state marriage laws and married thousands of same-sex couples; and

WHEREAS, as a result of such action, at least 46 states now have same-sex married couples who are proactive and implementing a well-funded, multifaceted and highly coordinated legal assault on traditional marriage; and

WHEREAS, traditional marriage between a man and a woman has been the norm in every political community for over 5,000 years, with history revealing society's demise whenever same-sex relationships become prevalent; and

WHEREAS, President Bush has said "the union of a man and a woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith," and that "marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society," and

WHEREAS, activist judges and courts are moving outside constitutional boundaries and definitions, including the definition of marriage, forcing this present groundswell of conservative, Judeo/Christian opposition; and

WHEREAS, same-sex marriage has now been embraced by the Netherlands, Belgium and three provinces in Canada, which now allow same-sex marriage; be it therefore

RESOLVED, THAT THE DELEGATES TO THE National Association of Free Will Baptists, convening in Kansas City, Missouri, July 18-22, 2004, reaffirm the legal and Biblical definition of marriage as occurring only between one man and one woman; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we declare marriage to be sacred and between one who is born male and one who is born female, that we adamantly oppose any redefinition of marriage, the sanction of marriage counterfeits, such as civil unions, or the legalization of same-sex marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we wholly support the time-proven institution of traditional marriage as the single best arrangement for raising children and forming citizens as opposed to the radical and unacceptable alternative of same-sex marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, that we support the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, signed into law by former President Clinton, which prevents federal recognition of same-sex marriage, allowing states to ignore same-sex licenses from outside their borders, and currently is the nation's best defense until a Constitutional Amendment can be enacted; and be it further

RESOLVED, that since the Defense of Marriage Act may itself be struck down by activist courts, we press Congress to follow President Bush's lead and pass the Federal Marriage Amendment, which reads: Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the Constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman (wording as of July 12, 2004); and be it further

RESOLVED, that we adamantly oppose the use of public tax dollars to reeducate our children in contradiction to standards taught at home and at church under the guise of tolerance toward the homosexual lifestyle or same-sex marriage; and be it further
RESOLVED, that we commit ourselves to pray for and support legislative and legal efforts to oppose the legalization of same-sex unions; and be it further
RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to our nation's President and members of Congress, either by regular or electronic mail; and be it further
RESOLVED, that regardless of how our motives are demonized, we reaffirm our commitment to pray for and evangelize those who are enslaved in the homosexual culture, expressing our mission: that all people be saved by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, and teaching them to separate from the immorality of this present world and its coming judgment.

DOCUMENT TWO

Appendix to the *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the
National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc.*
Chapter IV, Creation, Primitive State of Man, and His Fall
Section I. Creation: Part 3. Man

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV, SECTION I

Adopted July 2008

Both Scripture and nature as designed by God affirm the life-long, covenantal union of one man, being male as created by God, and one woman, being female as created by God, in a one-flesh relationship. This one-flesh relationship is emblematic of the union of Christ and His church. It is the sole and beautiful context of the divine plan for the marital relationship of man and woman as image-bearers of God, as well as the foundation for the family as the basic, divinely ordained unit of human society. Violations of this one-flesh union, whether heterosexual or homosexual, premarital or extramarital, contravene the divine plan for the family and for the conception and rearing of children, bringing spiritual despair, guilt, and death to individuals and cultures.

DOCUMENT THREE

Online Resources

Some churches may find the following resources helpful in understanding the issues involved or in framing policies related to same-sex marriage. We have annotated them to indicate how they may be useful, but we do not thereby indicate approval of every idea expressed in them. Excerpts from some of the following have been adapted in one of the recommendations included in our report.

1. **Churches changing bylaws after gay marriage ruling** (Associated Press, August 24, 2013), by Travis Loller. A cursory survey of the issues, including a statement by Eric Rassbach with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, who said it is unlikely the government will try to force a pastor to perform a same-sex marriage, but churches that rent out their facilities to the general public could face problems if they refuse to rent to gay couples. Rassbach makes a few additional interesting comments.

You may access the article by Googling “Church changing bylaws after gay marriage ruling.”

2. **Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience**, released November 20, 2009. This is a nine-page document drafted by Timothy George, Beeson Divinity School at Samford; Robert George, professor at Princeton; and Chuck Colson. The document includes several lengthy talking points on marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

The document may be accessed in pdf format by Googling “Manhattan Declaration, November 20, 2009.”

3. **Nashville Declaration on Same-sex Marriage**, by Fellows of the Research Institute, March 9, 2005. This is a document from ERLC of the Southern Baptist Convention. Mostly talking points with six “appeals” at the end.

The document may be accessed by Googling “Nashville Declaration on Same-sex Marriage.”

4. **Oakwood Church Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality**. This is an Evangelical Free Church’s position statement as well as the church’s policies, practices, and use-of-facilities statement.

You may access the document by Googling “Oakwood Church Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality.”

5. **Wayside Chapel Marriage Policy**. Another Evangelical Free Church’s statement. Very brief.

Access by Googling “Wayside Chapel Marriage Policy.”

DOCUMENT FOUR

Books

Jones, S., and Yarhouse, M. (2007). *Ex-Gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*. Downers Gove, IL: IVP Academic.

Two Christian psychologists present solid research about how people who have been entangled in homosexual behaviors have been able to change. This work shows promise for those who participate in Christian interventions to treat homosexual behaviors.

Yarhouse, M. (2007). *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*. Ada, MI: Bethany House Publishers.

A good resource that shifts the conversation from the causes of homosexuality to the choices one makes regarding the will of God (*Christianity Today*).

Yarhouse, M. (2013). *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Resource for Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

A guide for how to help young people who are struggling with same sex attraction.

Butterfield, R. (2012). *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications.

A good example of how the homosexual movement is bankrupt and how Jesus Christ can radically change a life.

Jones, S. (2000). *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate*. Downers Gove, IL: IVP Academic.

Though this is an old book, it is a good example of how the arguments for a scientific basis for homosexuality can be discounted when closely examined.

Lutzer, E. W. (2004). *The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

An old book that provides a solid Biblical approach on the damage that will be caused by the proliferation of homosexual marriage.

Gangon, R. A. (2002). *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press.

A thorough analysis of all of the Biblical texts relating to homosexuality, demonstrating that the Bible clearly and definitively addresses homosexuality.

Robinson, G. (2012). *God Believes in Love: Straight Talk About Gay Marriage*. New York: Random House.

If you want to know the standard arguments of the homosexual community you can find them in this book. Robinson was the Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, the first openly gay Episcopal Church bishop. It is helpful to read his arguments and what he says about Scripture, realizing that this is the standard argument provided in most secular settings.

Pertinent Research

Jones, S. L., and Kwee, A. W. “Scientific research, homosexuality, and the Church’s moral debate: An Update.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 24 (4) (2005). 304-316.

A solid dismantling of the “scientific” arguments for homosexuality being causative in nature.

McMinn, L. G. (2005). “Sexual Identity Concerns for Christian Young Adults: Practical Considerations for Being a Supportive Presence and Compassionate Companion.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 24 (4) 368-367.

A good article about how to help those who struggle with same sex attraction. This study was conducted at a conservative Christian university.

Gagnon, R. A. (2005). “Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 24 (4) 293-303.

A good explanation for how following Christ means one must submit to the lordship of Christ.

Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., and Michaels, S. (1994). *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

A classic, national study that shows what sexual behaviors were like before the onslaught of homosexual propaganda. This study disproved the popular claim that 10% of the U.S. population was homosexual. Instead, they found that 6.2% of males and 4.4% of females reported same-sex attraction

Helpful Podcasts

Homosexuality Forum at Harding University. Pay Special Attention to the two podcasts on “What Should We Say to the Man on the Bus?”
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/what-should-we-say-to-man/id448945566?i=95484807&mt=2>

Liberty University Convocation 2010: 2/12/2010. Alan Chambers, “Leaving Homosexuality.” Chambers describes how he got into a homosexual lifestyle and through Christ left it behind. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/2010.02.12-leaving-homosexuality/id427899317?i=92369476&mt=2>

“Homosexuality: What We Know from the Bible and Science.” An old American Association of Christian Counseling class with Wheaton Provost Stanton Jones. He dismantles some of the so called scientific arguments about homosexuality.
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/course/homosexuality-what-we-know/id547245977?i=118460781&mt=2>

Homosexuality and the Church: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. A panel discussion about homosexuality. The last session highlights a Christian who was saved out of the homosexual lifestyle. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/lecture-1/id522683191?i=113974140&mt=2>

DOCUMENT FIVE

Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality
_____ Free Will Baptist Church

Adopted _____, 20__

Introduction

This statement expresses the beliefs of _____ Free Will Baptist Church regarding marriage and human sexuality. It is based on the application of Biblical principles to our faith, our life, and our practice, and is in intentional accord with the *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of Free Will Baptists*, especially as expressed in the Appendix to Chapter IV, Section 1, adopted by the National Association of Free Will Baptists, of which this church is a member, in July 2008.

A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by this church only to the extent that it is consistent with the Biblical definition of marriage expressed in this policy statement.

What We Believe About Marriage and Human Sexuality

MARRIAGE

[OPTION ONE; or choose OPTION TWO, below]

Both Scripture and nature as designed by God affirm the life-long, covenantal union of one man, being male as created by God, and one woman, being female as created by God, in a one-flesh relationship. This one-flesh relationship is emblematic of the union of Christ and His church. It is the sole and beautiful context of the divine plan for the Biblical marriage of man and woman as image-bearers of God, as well as the foundation for the family as the basic, divinely ordained unit of human society. Violations of this one-flesh union, whether heterosexual or homosexual, premarital or extramarital, contravene the divine plan for the family and for the conception and rearing of children, bringing spiritual despair, guilt and death to individuals and cultures.

[OPTION TWO]

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world and is intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. This understanding is supported by the account of creation in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1:26-27 indicates that God created man in His own image, as male and female. The passage implies that the unity of a man and woman in marriage is in some way reflective of the image of God in mankind.

Genesis 2:18 provides a more detailed account, relating that God created the first man, Adam, and decided that it was not good for him to be alone. God indicated that He would make "an help meet for him," which means a helper suitable for or matching him. Then God brought all of the animals to Adam, but none of them was such a suitable helper; so God created Eve, the first woman, from part of Adam himself. God did not create a second man to be Adam's helper, or an assortment of multiple women, but one woman. Together they were man and wife and had "no shame" or sin in their union (Genesis 2:18-25).

Jesus Christ reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution, but is a special, divine metaphor that illustrates the union of Christ and the Church. For this reason also, only a union between one man and one woman can be a Biblical marriage because no other union—whether of two men, two women, or any other arrangement—could illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church in accord with this Biblical teaching.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

[OPTION ONE; or choose OPTION TWO, below]

First Corinthians 6:9-11 condemns a variety of lifestyles including those associated with adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality. Indeed, the Bible condemns as sexual immorality—“fornication” in the Authorized Version—all sexual intercourse outside marriage as defined above. It also encourages Christians to flee from sexual immorality because of its destructive effects and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:12-20).

Romans 1:18-32 makes clear that it is not only sinful to engage in homosexual unions, but also to approve of such sins in others or to encourage their practice. As a result, in order to maintain our consistent Christian witness, we cannot sanction, approve, or promote in any way adultery or any other form of sexual immorality—including, but not limited to, pornography, pedophilia, polygamy, bestiality, or homosexual unions. This is made clear in many passages in the Old and New Testaments.

Our church follows what the Bible reveals as the “sure foundation” of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29; 1 Corinthians 14:37). If our church is to bear the name *Christian* authentically, we are called to teach and practice these teachings and are not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority. Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, if the two come into conflict about matters as foundational as marriage, we must ultimately obey God rather than man (Acts 4:18-21).

Sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to those named above, are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Lewd conduct; transgender behavior; and the creation, distribution, or viewing of pornography are incompatible with God’s purpose for human sexuality.

[OPTION TWO]

Recognizing that we all struggle with sin, our church will provide an environment that welcomes people who struggle with sexual sin. We will seek to love all people in Jesus’ name, pointing them toward Christ’s power to forgive and heal. While the Bible teaches that those who engage in sexual immorality sin against their own bodies, we also recognize that sexual sin is not characterized in Scripture as being more severe than other forms of sin. We will seek God to discern ways that we can directly and indirectly minister and share God’s love with those who struggle with every kind of sin. We also recognize that there is a difference between temptation

and behavior and that, while temptation is sometimes unavoidable, we are responsible for our behavior.

Church Practices Derived From This Policy

For Membership in Our Church

1. No member of our church may enter into a sexual union other than Biblical marriage as defined by this policy without being subject to church discipline.
2. No person practicing a sexual union other than Biblical marriage as defined by this policy can be considered for membership in the church.

For Our Staff

1. Every minister or other staff member employed by the church shall affirm the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church.
2. Ministers employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal and/or loss of ordination for violating this statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality or by officiating at a marriage ceremony that violates the letter or the spirit of this policy.

Use of Our Facilities:

In a general way, and as a result of the religious beliefs described above—beliefs to which we must practice fidelity—it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports, or allows a same-sex union, a polygamous union, or any union that constitutes child abuse. Specific policies that express this include the following:

1. Only those applicants whose marriage is in accord with the Biblical view of marriage expressed in this policy will be approved for weddings in our church facilities. In making use of our facilities they shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy.
2. Only ordained or duly licensed clergy approved by this church and conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this policy shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on our church property.
3. The church may decline any application for use of the church facilities when there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral, or legal reasons.