

NOTE: Churches should check this sample document with an attorney in their respective state.

SAMPLE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

Please Note:

This sample constitution is intended to serve as a guideline for your church to help in drafting a church constitution. The primary purpose of a church constitution is to set forth the spiritual foundations of the church. It is a statement of faith and beliefs. It is not required by law that a church have a constitution nor does the law mandate what a church constitution is to contain. The church constitution can serve a valuable purpose by stating the church's values and beliefs.

Please note that the articles of incorporation are the legal document by which the church corporation was created. It is not the best nor the most appropriate document in which to place the church's statement of faith. The church bylaws of the church are a legal document serving to provide operational guidelines and rules. Care must be taken to assure that the provisions of a church constitution are not inconsistent with those legal documents.

Finally, any of the provisions of this sample may certainly be changed. The constitution your church adopts should state what you want it to state.

NOTE: Idaho churches should check this sample document with an Idaho attorney.

Constitution of XXXXXXXXXX Church

Preamble

We declare and establish this Constitution for the purposes of:

- A. Preserving and making secure the principles and core values of our faith;
- B. Assuring that the activities, decisions, ministries, and all aspects of the Church and church life are founded upon and guided by those principles and core values and are consistent with *The Baptist Faith and Message* as most recently adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention; and
- C. Describing the relationship of this body to other bodies of the same faith,
- D. The church is incorporated in the State of Utah as a non-profit church established exclusively for religious and charitable purposes. Those purposes are described in the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the Church. The Church acknowledges its legal responsibilities as a non-profit corporation to comply with applicable federal and state laws and to abide with its articles of incorporation.

Article I. Nature

The church is a not-profit corporation of the State of _____ organized for religious, educational, and charitable purposes with the protections entitlements provided under

A. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances;

B. Article 1 of the [*Utah*][*Idaho*] Constitution granting protections of religious liberty and freedom of speech.

C. In accordance with the teachings and commands of God and as set forth in the Bible, the church engages in expressive association to advocate the tenets and practices of the Christian faith and to glorify God through our faith, love, trust, conduct, and obedience.

D. The Church, as a separate legal corporate entity understands that it is or may be subject to certain applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations, subject to its protections under the First Amendment.

Article II. Purpose Statement

As a Christian religious, educational, and charitable organization, the intent of this church is to glorify and obey God and its purposes include, but are not, limited to,

[Other wording and other purposes can be included but be sure that they are consistent with the purpose provisions of the articles of incorporation and the bylaws..]

Article III. Statement of Faith

Based upon our understanding of and belief in the Bible as God's Word and proceeding under God's grace and guidance, the Church enunciates the following statement of faith and beliefs.

1. The Holy Scriptures and Biblical Authority

We believe that:

- a. The Bible is the living, holy and inspired Word of God;
- b. The Bible is the authority and guide under which the church shall operate; and our policies, conduct, core values, actions, and teachings are to be consistent with the Bible and the Christian faith.
- c. We believe that the Church is called to be faithful to God's Word in all things.

2. Baptist Faith and Message

In addition to the following statement of faith, the Church accepts and is in essential agreement with *The Baptist Faith and Message* as most recently adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, but it is understood that neither document exhausts the extent of our faith.

3. God

4. Grace

5. The Church

6. Salvation

7. Baptism

8. Lord's Supper

9. The Lord's Day

10. The Kingdom of God

11. Evangelism and Missions

12. Stewardship

13. The Family

14. Marriage and Sexual Misconduct

a. Marriage

Based upon God's Word as set forth in the Bible:

- 1) We believe that marriage means only a marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive marriage union and covenant relationship.
- 2) We believe that any other form of purported marriage is sinful and is spiritually and biblically forbidden. We believe that any relationship between men or between women in a purported same-sex marriage is contrary to God's Word and is sinful.
- 3) We believe that any other teaching or definition of marriage is a rejection of and contrary to God and His Word.
- 4) The Church shall not directly or indirectly, recognize, endorse, promote, or support any other concept, practice, or definition of marriage.

b. Marriage Ceremony and Facility Use

Because of our beliefs on marriage as stated in the foregoing paragraph, we also believe that a wedding ceremony should be considered a religious service and reflective of our Christian beliefs. We further believe that:

- 1) Neither the pastor nor any pastoral staff member, employee, officer, or leader of the Church shall officiate, perform, conduct, or participate in a marriage ceremony or related event or celebration other than a Christian marriage between a man and a woman.
- 2) The premises and facilities of the Church shall not be used for any marriage ceremony or related event or celebration other than a Christian marriage between a man and a woman.
- 3) For the purposes of this Constitution, "related event or ceremony" includes, but is not limited to, a reception, rehearsal, meal, activity, or celebration of the marriage or its anniversary.

c. Sexual Standards and Misconduct

We believe that:

- 1) God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other and that God forbids sexual relations or intimacy outside of the marriage of a man and a woman.
- 2) The Bible declares that sexual misconduct is sinful and offensive to God. "Sexual misconduct" includes, but is not limited to, adultery, fornication, homosexual acts, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault, incest, and pornography.
- 3) Attempting to lower or otherwise compromise God's sexual standards to society's preferences is sinful in God's sight.

d. Values

- 1) We believe that
 - a. the presence, employment, or appointment of any pastor, minister, leader, staff member, employee, or volunteer who engages in or publicly endorses, supports, or advocates in favor of any sexual misconduct or who shall officiate, perform, conduct, or participate in a marriage ceremony or related event or celebration other than a Christian marriage between a man and a woman; or
 - b. the use of the Church premises, resources, and facilities for a purported marriage other than a Christian marriage between a man and a woman would:
 - i. Significantly affect the Church's ability to advocate its viewpoints and beliefs;
 - ii. Be in derogation of the Church's expressive message;

- iii. Be a significant burden upon the Church's right to oppose or disfavor what it believes to be sinful conduct; and
 - iv. Be detrimental to the preservation of the function and integrity of the Church and to providing a sound biblical role model to the Church members and the community.
- 2) We believe that homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the values embodied in the Church's core values and this Constitution and also with biblical standards. Therefore, we do not want to promote, endorse, or support in any way homosexual conduct as a legitimate and acceptable form of behavior or to be perceived in any way as promoting, endorsing, or supporting such conduct.

e. Love

- 1) We believe in the love and grace of God for all people and that God forgives repentant sinners. Unrepentant sexual misconduct is incompatible with Christian standards and biblical values.
- 2) As Christians, who are ourselves sinners redeemed by the grace of God, we must reach out to those persons who are struggling with homosexuality or other sexual misconduct, offering them the word of hope that is the Gospel to the end that they may experience true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ.

15. Sanctity of Life

16. Cooperation

17. Covenant

18. Core Values

19. *[Other items which the Church deems important to state]*

Article IV. Congregational Form of Church Government, Autonomy and Cooperation

1. Congregational Form of Church Government

The Church shall have a congregational form of government which means that the government of this church shall be vested in its members.

2. Church Autonomy

The Church is an autonomous entity and body, meaning that the Church shall not be subject to the authority of any other ecclesiastical or legal body or entity.

3. Cooperation with Other Organizations

NOTE: Churches should check this sample document with an attorney in their respective state.

The Church believes that there is a need for mutual counsel and cooperation as is common among Southern Baptist churches and organizations.

As a Southern Baptist Church, this Church therefore will associate and affiliate with other churches and organizations of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, and the local Gideon Baptist Association. This may include cooperative participation and support of ministries, missions, and activities; participation in and support of the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention; sending messengers to the annual meetings of those organizations; and other matters of mutual counsel and cooperation.

The Church may, as led by the Holy Spirit, engage in cooperative activities with other churches and organizations of like faith.

Article V. Amendments

This Constitution may be amended as follows:

1. Proposals for Amendment

a. Proposals for the amendment of this Constitution must be presented in writing at a duly called regular or special meeting. Each proposal shall include:

- A description of the specific article or section of this Constitution to be amended;
- The specific wording of the proposed amendment;
- A description of the purpose of the proposed amendment.

b. Copies of the proposed amendments together with a notice of the meeting at which the proposal will be considered and a vote taken shall be made available to and distributed to all members at least 2 weeks in advance of that meeting

2. Action on Amendment

To be adopted, the proposed amendment must be approved by the affirmative vote of 75% of the Church members present, provided there is a quorum of Church members in attendance.

This Constitution was duly adopted at a regular (special) meeting, for which due notice had been given to the Church members, upon the affirmative vote of 75% or more of the Church members present with a quorum in attendance, on the ____ day of _____, 20__.

Moderator

NOTE: Churches should check this sample document with an attorney in their respective state.

Church Clerk