



Alabama Baptist Convention  
**State Board of Missions**

# **The Christian Response Task Force Report**

February 2, 2015

This information is designed to help autonomous Baptist churches think through vital issues and formulate their own internal policies. This resource, like all past and present resources from the State Board of Missions, is not binding on local congregations, which are entirely self-governing.

# **The Christian Response Task Force Report**

## **Introduction**

Alabama Baptist churches, their leadership and members, are rightly concerned about what is happening in our nation concerning same-sex marriage and the homosexual rights agenda. In an effort to provide some options for a Baptist church to protect its biblical values on these issues the following information is provided.

### **I.**

#### **A Potential Marriage Statement for Churches**

##### **Bylaws**

We believe that marriage is a union between one man and one woman, following biblical principles (Gen. 2:19-24, Lev. 18:22, Matt. 19:4-6, Rom. 1:18-27, Eph. 5:22-33, Heb. 13:4). We believe that God sanctions only the union in marriage of a man to a woman. Therefore, this church recognizes only a wedding compatible with those standards.

##### **Policies**

1. Due to our belief in the biblical teachings about marriage, same sex couples will not be married in any facilities or on any properties owned by the church.
2. Ministers of \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church will not perform any same sex marriages whether on or off church-owned properties. Doing so would be grounds for termination.

### **II.**

#### **Attendance**

If your church is contacted by a person who wishes to attend and brings up a shock factor statement such as, "I am gay, and I am bringing my partner," consider inviting them to your worship with the following response: "Anyone wanting to visit our worship is not only welcome but is encouraged to attend."

### **III.**

#### **Membership**

Churches may want to consider one or more of the following options regarding the issue of church membership:

1. When a person desiring membership, who is not well known by the pastor, comes forward during the invitation, it may be wise for the pastor to delay presenting him/her for church membership.
2. When a person desires church membership, they may be voted on by the church at the next business meeting. No one will be granted church membership at the end of a worship service.
3. When a person desires church membership, the individual is placed under watch care until there is adequate time to deal with the individual's decision and desire to join the church.
4. When a person desiring church membership comes forward during the invitation, the individual is directed to a spiritual counselor who will deal with the individual to ascertain his/her decision. Following the service, the pastor would meet with the prospective member and the spiritual counselor. Upon completion of this process, the prospective member may be voted upon later by the church regarding his/her membership.
5. When a person desires church membership, they are encouraged to attend a membership orientation class, during which time they are under watch care. The purpose of the orientation class is to assist the prospective member in understanding their commitment to Christ and the church and to explain the church's doctrine, ministries, practices and values. Upon completion of the class they may be presented for membership.

## **IV.**

### **Leadership**

While there may already be a homosexual in the church's membership, would a church want a person in a position of lay or ministerial leadership who is a practicing homosexual or a person who is promoting the acceptability of a non-biblical sexual lifestyle? One means of preventing such an individual from being in a leadership role is for the pastor to be involved in the nominating process. A pastor is often aware of information others may not know.

Caution should be taken in characterizing a person's sexual behavior without credible evidence. If addressing such an issue is necessary, two church leaders should be involved: a key lay leader and a pastor or other staff minister. Absent an admission of homosexual conduct, great care should be taken before such conduct is attributed to a person or openly discussed.

A considered statement for the bylaws or policy manual may be, "Each paid or volunteer leader shall be Christ like in conduct following the standards in the Bible."

### **Conclusion**

The Lord's Church and the Lord's churches face challenging days. As God's people, we are to be salt and light transforming the culture while not being conformed to the culture. Let us be true to our Lord and His Word while showing compassion and care to those for whom He died. Let us speak and practice the truth in love to the glory of the Lord and to the health of His Church.