

Iowa Baptist church is open to gay weddings

by [Bob Allen](#) in the [February 6, 2013](#) issue

An American Baptist church in Iowa City has announced that it will perform same-sex weddings, presumably the state's first Baptist congregation to do so since Iowa's Supreme Court legalized gay marriage in 2009.

The *Des Moines Register* said December 29 that First Baptist Church in Iowa City, a 50-member congregation founded in 1840, recently joined the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. It is the first Iowa church to align with the group formed in 1993 to support churches that are welcoming and affirming of people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

"We see love as valued by God, whoever it's between," Pastor Dorothy Whiston told CBS News affiliate KGAN-TV in Cedar Rapids. "It's always wrong to say that there's some group of people, for whatever reason, by virtue of who they are, who are excluded from any opportunity. I would say that's certainly true of marriage as well."

The website of First Baptist Church, which is affiliated with American Baptist Churches USA, describes the congregation as an "open and inclusive community of faith" characterized by "radical hospitality."

"People of all ages, cultures, personal backgrounds, political affiliations, socioeconomic circumstances and sexual orientations are welcome and active in this church," the website says. "God places a call on all of us to serve the causes of compassion and justice in our local communities and throughout the world. Together, we can live in covenant for the sake of the work we are called to do."

Whiston, who began as part-time interim pastor in July 2010 and became permanent pastor on August 1, 2011, said allowing gays to get married in the church is the next logical step in the number of services the congregation already provides to the LGBT community. —ABP