**Voluntary Religious Covenant Marriage (VRCM)**

A Policy Proposal to Restore Ecclesiastical Authority in the religious covenant of Marriage:

[Your Name] | [Email or Phone] | [Affiliation, if any]

1. **The Problem**

American marriage is in crisis:

- Married households declined from 80% in 1949 to 47.1% in 2024

- Less than 20% of adults under 30 are married

- U.S. fertility rate sits at 1.7 children per woman, below replacement

- Divorce, cohabitation, and family instability remain widespread

- The state has assumed exclusive control over marriage—displacing religious authority, destabilizing covenantal unions, and weakening family structures

1. **The State’s Role in the Decline**

- Licensing laws shifted marriage from covenant to contract (1900s–1920s)

- Family courts replaced ecclesiastical adjudication (1910s–1930s)

- No-fault divorce removed permanence (1969–present)

- Federal incentives rewarded court-based marital breakdown (1970s–1980s)

- Legal redefinition of marriage blurred sacramental distinctions (2000s–2015)

- Result: Civil marriage offers neither permanence nor spiritual jurisdiction, driving young adults away and eroding trust in the institution

1. **The Solution**

Voluntary Religious Covenant Marriage (VRCM)—a parallel legal path for couples who desire to marry under religious covenant by a church of their choosing rather than civil contract.

**Key Features:**

1. Voluntary Election: Couples opt in; VRCM is recorded for tax, immigration, and inheritance purposes

2. Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction: All disputes handled by the religious institution that solemnized the marriage—not civil family courts (except in criminal matters)

3. First Amendment Compliance: Respects religious freedom without altering civil marriage law

4. Legal Recognition, Not Legal Control: The state recognizes the union but does not regulate its internal covenant terms

**Why It Matters**

- Reinforces religious freedom and institutional integrity

- Creates a faith-based alternative to a failing state model

- Encourages long-term stability and accountability

- Requires no changes to existing civil marriage—it’s additive, not adversarial.

**thecodeofthecovenant.org**

