



Response to the Southern Baptist Convention Sex Abuse Allegations

Like many of you, I am reading and processing the broadly published and widely circulated report from a third-party investigation commissioned by the Sexual Abuse Task Force of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and released on Sunday, May 22, 2022.

This report has received national media attention, and is a topic of concern and conversation for everyone associated with the SBC.

Without question, the information presented is among the most shocking, disturbing, and frustrating reflections on our denomination we have ever had to face and address. Sexual abuse is wrong and should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

One of our greatest strengths in SBC life is the freedom of autonomy in every local church. We do not have a hierarchy of authority over our churches. Each church owns its own property, calls its own pastor, and shares resource and responsibility for its mission and ministry. Southern Baptists are bound by a common statement of faith and a chosen partnership for mission endeavors locally, nationally, and globally. However, the benefits of such autonomy may have contributed to a liability of accountability in our response and effectiveness to handle this type of crisis.

The information and accusations found in the document published by the SBC represent an enormity of pain that cannot and must not be ignored. We grieve for those whose hidden pain and shame need to be acknowledged and addressed, and earnestly desire to see hope and healing for the future. To this end, we stand in strong opposition to any action or activity that disrespects and dishonors the character of the Just, Righteous, and Holy God we represent and those created in His image.

We are people who stand under the authority of the Word of God to give witness to the testimony of Jesus Christ. Sadly, moments like this indict and implicate everyone associated with the SBC, although there are thousands of pastors, churches, leaders, and volunteers who have never been indecent or inappropriate in their behavior toward others. They have led and served with enduring integrity and an unwavering pursuit of fidelity and purity. This is a heavy burden of consequence for all of us.

As a local church, we, at Warren, have been vigilant in our efforts to guard and care for our children and family members. We are about help and healing, not hiding. While we have specific policies in each ministry area to provide direction and instruction for ministry leaders and volunteers, let me remind you of the following:

- Every person who works and interacts with children must be Safe Haven approved (including background check) and participate in a ministry safety orientation before he/she can serve with children or students.
- While children are in our care, they are never left alone with an adult. There will always be two adults present. If those two adults are related as family, there must be a third unrelated adult present.
- Warren is a “mandated reporter” to the state for evidence or suspicion of abuse and/or neglect.
- Each of our offices have windows in the doors to maintain visual accountability for our ministers and members in private meetings, and we have monitored security cameras covering the majority of our campus and facilities.
- We have a set of guidelines and policies regarding social media posts, transfer of media content, and texting between ministry staff, adult leaders and students.
- Finally, for nearly 25 years, Warren has provided a sexual abuse support group. While this is not intended to be a high-profile ministry, this group is for women who have suffered sexual abuse and is facilitated by a clinically-trained pastoral counselor.

At Warren, we are resolved to be a people of integrity and authenticity of faith, hope, and love. We will consistently review our standing policies and look at ways we can be proactive in protecting our children and families as we look beyond this defining moment of shame associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Let me remind you once again, we are not Southern Baptists by ownership, but through a chosen partnership of cooperation based upon a common statement of faith for Great Commission impact. In the face of doctrinal, moral, or missional drift, our allegiance is first and foremost to the Word of God and the ongoing work of the gospel—not to a denomination.

Warren has a heart and love for the CSRA, the United States, and for the nations around the world. We believe in the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the answer to the hurt and healing needed at this time.

Dr. David H. McKinley, Pastor-Teacher
Warren Pastoral Leadership Team