



SCBC Sexual Abuse Task Force Response

**Submitted to the messengers of the
South Carolina Baptist Convention
Annual Meeting, November, 2022**

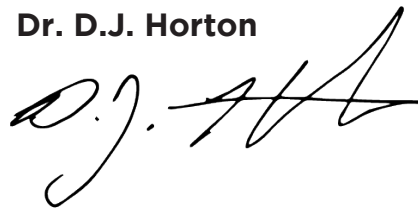


A NOTE FROM DR. D.J. HORTON

To messengers of the Convention,

On May 22 of this year, every one of us who cares deeply about Southern Baptists was affected by the release of the Sexual Abuse Task Force Report. Our denomination would never be the same. The primary emotions were deep sorrow and righteous anger. The report revealed much and caused much debate. However, amidst an array of reactions, there was a strong consensus in every circle that we must learn from this and do better. Southern Baptists are imperfect people but we have been historically and rightly defined by our commitment to the inerrancy of the Bible and the task of The Great Commission. Abuse of anyone, especially the sexual abuse experienced by survivors, is contrary to everything we hold dear about the gospel and the call of Christ on our lives to love and cherish one another, as those created by God in His image. This undergirding reality is the foundation for the content of this report. Your SCBC Task Force was given a simple charge take the report and findings from the national report, along with the best information available, and help South Carolina Baptists improve our ability to protect and care for survivors, prevent sexual abuse in affiliated churches and institutions, and properly respond to abusers in a redemptive way that reflects the heart and calling of Jesus Christ toward those we are blessed to minister to and alongside. This response is only the beginning of the work we all have to do.

Dr. D.J. Horton



TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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Senior Pastor First Baptist Simpsonville/Upstate Church



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RESPONSE

1. Our Priority | A Vision for redemption and restoration

- Our vision is that the affiliated churches of the South Carolina Baptist Convention would become the preeminent, transformative voice on the topic of sexual abuse not only because we are uniquely positioned, commanded, and empowered by the Holy Spirit biblically to speak and take action against this direct affront to God personally, but also because the heart of Christ in us won't allow us to be quiet and complacent.
- We believe we accomplish this vision most faithfully when we
 - RECOGNIZE where we have fallen short.
 - REPENT of any failures.
 - RECEIVE the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the truth of The Word of God, and the counsel of others committed to the gospel and this important cause.
 - RESPOND with diligence and urgency in implementing positive change.
 - RESTORE in our hearts and affiliated congregations a definition of God-honoring intimacy and a recognition of the image of God in others that makes sexual abuse easy to detect.

2. Our Process

December 2021-March 2022: Task Force assembled.

April 4, 2022-Task Force meeting #1

May 12, 2022-Task Force meeting #2

June 23, 2022-Task Force meeting #3

August 18, 2022-Task Force meeting #4

September 8, 2022-Task Force meeting #5

September 21, 2002-Task Force meeting #6

3. Our Plan

We divided our team into 4 sub-teams

Team 1: Protection and Care for Survivors | *A top priority is providing the proper response, protection, and care to those who experience abuse within the context of an SCBC church/ministry.*

Team 2: Preventive Policies and Practices for SCBC churches, institutions, and ministries | *Every church, institution, and ministry of the SCBC needs policies and practices in place to make every effort to prevent the threat of sexual abuse.*

Team 3: Proper Response and Prosecution of Abusers | *Responding to a sexual abuse allegation also involves an accused individual. Handling this individual properly is crucial for the health and healing of all involved.*

Team 4: Public Response and Potential Positions and Plans for SCBC Future | *Beyond the Task Force's report will be the need to offer SCBC any resolutions and recommendations for long-term plans.*

4. Our Prayer

- Remorse before the Lord for the pain and suffering of survivors in our state and the damage done to our witness as a body of believers.
- Repent before the Lord for any lack of attention and/or understanding of this tragedy within affiliated churches.
- Respond with a sense of urgency to do everything in our power in this present hour to help affiliated churches and ministry better prevent sexual abuse and protect survivors of sexual abuse.

RESOLUTIONS

1. We ask that a resolution be approved to support the development of the following S.C. laws:

- a. The removal of any legal barriers that prevent pastors, members of the clergy, and/or churches from disclosing certain information regarding sexual abuse to future employers.
- b. The illegality of any clergyman having sexual relationships, even with consent, with a person of their church outside of the confines of their marriage, due to their position of authority.

2. We ask that a resolution be approved to define sexual abuse for the SCBC as:

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity or harassment, with perpetrators exerting power over the other, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to a pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by any means. The absence of force or coercion does not diminish the abusive nature of the conduct.

(Further explanation is included in Appendix A of this response.)



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Recommendations

- 1. The Right Person: We recommend the creation and hiring of an individual SCBC position, with appropriate support, who is trained in trauma-informed care to provide ongoing support to South Carolina pastors and churches in the realm of sexual abuse education, prevention, and response.**

Further explanation:

- a. The Task Force understands that our state Convention empowers our Executive Director Treasurer (EDT) to structure and hire staff as needed to fulfill the vision/mission of SCBC. However, we ask the messengers to approve this recommendation directing the EDT to create and hire this position in response to the unprecedented challenge all affiliated churches and ministries face in preventing sexual abuse and protecting survivors when it occurs.
- b. As the position is developed it should include responsibilities such as:
 - The ongoing outreach and training to affiliated pastors, ministry leaders, and churches.
 - The ongoing distribution of best practices, policies, and procedures.
 - An availability to be on call and point of first contact when a person suspects, witnesses, or receives an accusation of sexual abuse within an affiliated church, ministry, or institution
- c. It is the task and authority of the EDT to work with the executive committee in the formation of a detailed job description and search process for the most qualified candidate. The task force emphasizes that the right candidate must be able to work compassionately and proactively alongside and for the good of all survivors: men, women, and children.
- d. Finally, should the next recommendation be approved, it is the will of the task force to serve in any way needed in the formation of the position and identification of the best candidate to serve SC Baptists.

- 2. The Task Force Continued: We recommend the current Sexual Abuse Task Force stay in place until the 2023 SCBC annual meeting for the monitoring and assistance of the implementation of this response. We further recommend that Mrs. Kathy Robinson be promoted from the position of vice-chair to the position of co-chair, sharing the role of chairperson with Dr. Horton.**

Challenges

1. Pastors

- a. We challenge pastors to create and champion a culture of “survivors first” when it comes to sexual abuse.
- b. We challenge pastors to know and understand South Carolina’s laws regarding abuse and mandated reporting, as well as reporting to the SBC database.
- c. We challenge pastors to take the initiative to inform themselves, and other leaders within their churches regarding forms of abuse, prevention, and the care for survivors of abuse.
- d. We challenge pastors to familiarize themselves with local authorities and have contact information for reporting abuse readily available.
- e. We challenge pastors, as mandated reporters, to immediately contact the proper authorities whenever abuse is disclosed or suspected and instruct their ministry leaders to do the same.
- f. We challenge pastors to inform other leaders, churches, or ministries about individuals who have been prosecuted or *credibly accused of sexual abuse.

2. Churches

- a. We challenge churches to put a plan in place to provide appropriate and ongoing care for survivors of sexual abuse.
- b. We challenge churches to report individuals who are prosecuted or credibly accused to the SBC database whenever it is appropriate.
- c. We challenge churches to develop and adopt appropriate policies for abuse education, prevention, and handling of abuse claims and occurrences including but not limited to background checks, waiting periods, classroom ratios, reporting procedures, bathroom policies, physical contact, information sharing, as well as other important matters.
- d. We challenge churches to employ some form of limited access agreement in the following situations:
 - **A member or attendee is on the sex abuse registry.**
 - **A member or attendee has a history of violating the church’s policies.**
 - **A member or attendee has been credibly accused of abuse.**
 - **A member or attendee is the subject of an investigation by the authorities or an independent third party.**

**For credibly accused definition, see Appendix A*



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Challenges Continued...

3. Associations

- a. We challenge Associations to work with the state Convention to provide regular training regarding sex abuse education, prevention, and survivor care.
- b. We challenge associations to actively encourage all affiliated churches to adopt appropriate policies necessary for survivor care and abuse prevention.
- c. We challenge associations to gather and distribute information to affiliated churches concerning local law enforcement and victim advocates, child protective services, counseling providers, and other appropriate authorities.

4. South Carolina Baptist Convention

- a. We challenge the SC Baptist Convention to maintain a list of trauma-informed counselors that are licensed in the state of South Carolina as well as a list of qualified, independent, third-party investigators for issues that are inappropriate or immoral but not illegal.
- b. We challenge the SC Baptist Convention to provide regular training for affiliated associations, churches, and pastors.
- c. We challenge the SC Baptist Convention to maintain a webpage with a digital toolbox, containing resources, training opportunities, videos, and a church assessment tool.



RESOURCES

****The content in the following pages is available as helpful information only. It is not a part of the response to be approved and accepted by the SCBC messengers at the annual meeting.***

This section of the report is designed to provide you with tangible, practical, and applicable steps to equip your affiliated church to better prevent sexual abuse, provide care for survivors, and respond appropriately to abusers/those credibly accused. First, is a chart summarizing some of the most important steps. More detailed information follows and at the end is a list of resources, highly recommended by our task force, that provide additional information in the areas of sexual abuse education, prevention, and survivor care. Here is an outline of the content which follows.

Tiered Chart:

Visual aid of summarized important steps

Best Practices:

Prevention: Before Ministry Happens

Monitoring: During Ministry

Response: Once an Accusation or Inappropriate Behavior Has Occurred

Additional Resources:

Links, Media, Books

***Disclaimer:** These best practices are provided for general information purposes only and are not a substitute for professional advice particular to your facts and circumstances. Furthermore, each affiliated church or ministry is different and these best practices should be considered with your particular affiliated church or ministry's circumstances in mind. In particular, not all of these best practices are currently feasible for all affiliated churches or ministries but we hope that a sincere evaluation of an affiliated church or ministry's capabilities and resources are considered to implement best practices that are lasting and effective.*

No one viewing these best practices should act or refrain from acting based solely on the content herein of these best practices without seeking professional legal counsel or professional consultation regarding the affiliated church or ministry's specific needs. The South Carolina Baptist Convention expressly disclaims all liability relating to actions taken or not taken based solely on the content of these best practices.

PREVENTION

Tier 1

- Review existing and/or establish policies within your affiliated church
- Mandatory background checks for any person working with or supervising minors
- Train leaders and volunteers specifically about sexual abuse education, prevention, and proper care for survivors
- Offer clearly written guidelines for appropriate interactions, touch, and relationships

Tier 2

- Require written application for volunteers working with minors
- Require members or attendees to be actively involved for six months before serving minors is permitted
- Review law changes annually and inform leaders and volunteers of applicable changes to policies and procedures
- Plan a sexual abuse recognition, lament, and healing day for the entire affiliated church

Tier 3

- Require leaders to provide character references and speak with those references
- Utilize local Child Protective Services personnel to provide further training for leaders and volunteers

MONITORING

- A minimum of two volunteers always be in every setting when overseeing minors
- No adult and child alone together in a bathroom
- Follow Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) diapering guidelines

RESPONSE

- Clear mandatory report policy in place and understood by all leaders
- Leaders are trained to properly respond to an accusation by caring first for the survivor

- Volunteer safety team and/or paid uniformed officers present
- Manned check-in stations for parents
- Only parents and approved volunteers are allowed in areas where minors are being supervised

- Up-to-date list of local law enforcement and other authorities on hand and distributed to leaders
- Detailed reporting process given to all leaders

- Cameras monitoring all public spaces and classrooms
- Adults are not permitted to use designated bathrooms for children

- Form, equip, and empower a sexual abuse task force liaison team

BEST PRACTICES

PREVENTION: Before Ministry Happens

1. Review existing policies

- a. It is highly recommended each affiliated church consults with their insurance company to receive a sample policy for the construction of its church policies and procedures. Your insurance company would prefer to support you as you embark on policy building.

2. Complete background checks and applications with references for staff and/or volunteers who work with those 18 years and younger

- a. **Written Application Form** – This written application should have at a minimum the applicant's name, address, the names of other organizations where the applicant has worked or been a volunteer, a full explanation of any prior criminal convictions and the names of two or more references with contact information. Written applications are suggested for all staff members and volunteers having custody or supervision of minors.
- b. **Confirm Identity** – If an applicant is unknown to you then require an applicant to provide photographic identification (such as a state driver's license).
- c. **Contact References** – Contact each person and organization listed as a reference on the written application and request a written reference from those contact.
- d. **Background Checks** – There are numerous companies that provide criminal background checks for minimal cost. It is recommended that all applicants for staff positions and those seeking volunteer opportunities which include custody or supervision of minors be subject to a background check before beginning their work.
 - **Additional background check options:** educational background, employment history, motor vehicle records; social security number check, credit history; and professional licenses and certifications could apply depending on the position applied for.
 - **Six month rule:** affiliated churches and ministries may reduce the risk of incidents of sexual abuse by adopting a policy restricting eligibility for any position or volunteer activity involving the custody and control of minors for a period of time, such as six (6) months. This policy gives the affiliated church or ministry a greater opportunity to evaluate and observe applicants. This waiting period would also serve to repel those seeking immediate access to vulnerable groups.

3. Membership – While membership processes vary in affiliated churches it is a wise practice to connect membership status of volunteers to a responsibility with minors.

4. Training for Staff and Volunteers

- a. Require ministerial staff and key volunteers, who work with minors and adult populations vulnerable to abuse, to be educated and trained in the areas of sexual abuse prevention, identification, and care. Examples of training are: *Darkness to Light* video training and *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused* handbook and video training.
- b. Recognizing and Responding to Abuse: Reporting Process Training - have a local qualified counselor or law enforcement representative train leaders on the process of mandated reporting.
- c. Meet in person to review policies with leaders and volunteers annually, including:
 - Code of Conduct (in person and social media)
 - Defining appropriate interactions
 - Reporting procedures

5. Shadowing

- a. If possible new volunteers should shadow experienced staff/volunteers for a period of time (2-4 weeks minimum) before they are ready to serve without supervision. This allows for opportunities to observe a new volunteer's behavior and ascertain his/her readiness to serve within a ministry.
- b. At a minimum, experienced staff/volunteers should regularly move through ministry areas that include minors and adult populations vulnerable to abuse, to establish presence and to observe interactions between staff/volunteers and ministry participants. See also, Monitoring Best Practices on the following page.

6. Sexual Abuse Recognition, Lament, and Healing Day

- a. Host an annual event across our state to keep issues in front of affiliated churches.
- b. Through hosting this 'day' find out who in your church is a survivor and talk through this with them. Invite their thoughts and suggestions as you build the best practices in your church. Out of this, a biblical support group surrounded in scripture can care for these survivors long-term.



MONITORING: During Ministry

1. Observation

- a. If you observe suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations immediately report your observations to your leader.
- b. Interrupt the behavior immediately.
- c. Report to the ministry leader, supervisor, director, or other authority.
- d. Reports can also be made anonymously.
- e. If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of leadership.
- f. Document the report.
- g. Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

2. Volunteer Safety

- a. Each room has two, unrelated, volunteers – one must be at least 18 years of age.
- b. All volunteers must be at least 12 years of age (matched with a volunteer at least 18 years of age). Middle schoolers may serve in a class of 2-year-olds and above.
- c. Volunteers/leaders may never be alone with a child in private.
- d. There should be a safety team and police presence.
- e. When necessary, there should be coach and/or coordinator presence.
- f. Install cameras.
- g. All check-in areas should be manned with safety team presence.
- h. Children should receive a security tag upon entry.
- i. Establish class ratios to allow proper supervision.
- j. Junior and adult leaders should have identification on at all times while serving.
- k. Restrict access to areas where minors are being supervised.
- l. All areas that are not being used for ministry opportunities should be locked and off-limits.

3. Bathroom Safety

- a. There are assigned **kids** and **adult** bathrooms on every campus.
- b. Approved signage must be in place.
- c. Children are supervised by sound while in the bathroom.
- d. Children of a similar group/age and gender may use the bathroom at the same time.
- e. The number of children in the bathroom should correspond to the number of stalls.
- f. Adults may not enter the bathroom with a kid alone.
- g. If a child needs assistance, volunteers should stand at the door and offer help with another volunteer observing.
- h. Center for Disease Control diapering guidelines should be posted and followed.

RESPONSE: Once an Accusation or Inappropriate Behavior Has Occurred

1. Reporting

- a. Document all calls and conversations
- b. Be knowledgeable of and obedient to mandated reporting laws in one's affiliated church or ministry location.

2. Responding to The Supervisor With Care and Honor

- a. Provide a list of local law enforcement, qualified counselors, and attorneys well-versed in sexual abuse situations to provide additional emotional support to the child and/or caregiver.
- b. Listen to them with **humility, empathy, and compassion**. Stay present with them (and don't jump ahead too quickly.) Express deep remorse about what happened to them.

The priority is caring for the survivor, NOT protecting or prioritizing the church, institution or the abuser. This is what Jesus modeled.

- c. Provide suggested responses to express care, honor and assurance:
 - “Thank you for telling me what happened. I believe you. It took great courage for you to share this. You’re bringing something dark and evil out into the light. What happened to you is NOT ok and it’s NOT your fault. I am so sorry you have suffered this way. This grieves the heart of God. He loves you and cares deeply about you. He will carry you through this and we’re going to walk through this with you. We’re going to do whatever we can to keep you safe. I’m going to call people who will help make sure you’re safe.”
- d. Ask open-ended questions
 - “Would you like to tell me more?” or “What happened next?” If it’s a child, simply listen to what he/she voluntarily shares. Don’t prod further. It’s best not to ask the child-specific questions. Best practice is for the child to be interviewed by someone certified in forensic interviewing.
- e. Look for opportunities to ask questions designed to give the survivor choices, a voice, and the ability to control the situation. Even simple questions like whether they would like someone else in the room or not.
- f. Take the time to summarize and clarify.

2. Responding to The Supervisor With Care and Honor Continued

g. Safety and Support

- Assess their emotional/physical state. Do they need emergency help (911/hospital). If so, call 911 immediately.
- Make sure the church environment is safe. Adhere to safeguards that your church has approved. Make sure the alleged perpetrator can do no more harm while the authorities investigate.
- Recommend trauma-informed counselor for child and parents or adult survivor (provide previously prepared list of recommended counselors).
- Assure survivor that you will provide ongoing support for them and their family by connecting them to the church-appointed support person and by taking steps to ensure their continued safety. Be prepared with at least one male and one female trained and equipped in ministering to survivors and their families.

3. Responding To the Perpetrator *(as defined as confirmed or credibly accused)* ***This assumes the alleged offense happened on church property, at a church-sponsored event, or involves a survivor that is an attender or member of the church.***

a. Safety of survivors and vulnerable others is a priority

- Ideally, the perpetrator should not be allowed on campus.
- Under no circumstances should church leadership ask the survivor and perpetrator to participate in a “reconciliation” or any other meeting involving both parties.

b. Communication

- Share this situation in person with people on a need-to-know basis in order to protect the survivor’s privacy to the maximum extent possible. That would include Security/Safety Team, Children’s Minister, Student Minister, Senior Leadership, and, depending on the situation, parents of minors who came in contact with the perpetrator.
- Designate a point person (staff member or lay leader) to respond to questions that arise.
- When you do talk about it (per above bullets), use the opportunity to reiterate the church’s commitment to safety of minors and vulnerable others.

c. Counseling

- Encourage/recommend biblical counseling (ideally with someone experienced in this area) for perpetrator, given our commitment as the Body of Christ to discipleship and care.
- If the perpetrator’s family is part of the church, suggest counseling for them as well.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

It is the responsibility of each affiliated church to select which resources are utilized in creating safe environments for attendees. Below is the list of the most helpful resources discovered during the research of the task force.

Education/Awareness/Training

- *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused Handbook*
- Darkness to Light Training, www.d2l.org
- How Much is a Little Girl Worth? by Rachel Denhollander
- Ministry Safe, <https://ministrysafe.com>
- Praesidium Academy, www.praesidiuminc.com
- ECAP (The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention), www.ecap.net

Prevention

- Protect My Ministry, <https://www.protectmyministry.com>
- On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church by Deepak Reju
- The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries by Basyle Tchividjian & Shira M. Berkovits
- Praesidium Academy, www.praesidiuminc.com
- ECAP (The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention), www.ecap.net
- Ministry Safe, <https://ministrysafe.com>

Response

- *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused Handbook*
- Responding Well - A Guide to Women's Ministry Leaders
- GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment, <https://www.netgrace.org>
- DSS Published Mandatory Reporting Guidelines

A list of further resources, as recommended by the National Task Force, can be found at sataskforce.net.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

SEXUAL ABUSE EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLES

Sexual abuse includes fondling, lewd or lascivious exposure or behavior, intercourse, sodomy, oral copulation, penetration of a genital or anal opening by a foreign object, pornography, prostitution, and any other sexual conduct harmful to one's mental, emotional, or physical welfare. These acts may be forced upon a person or the person may be coaxed, seduced, and persuaded to cooperate. The absence of force or coercion does not diminish the abusive nature of the conduct.

Sexual abuse also includes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can take various forms – from looks and words to physical contact of a sexual nature. Examples of sexual harassment (non-exhaustive list) include: attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape; sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format; sending sexually suggestive communications in any format; sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes; making inappropriate sexual gestures, such as pelvic thrusts; unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person; staring in a sexually suggestive manner; repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex; rating a person's sexuality; making sexual comments about appearance, clothing, or body parts; name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation; making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

SOUTH CAROLINA MANDATED REPORTER

Mandated reporters must report suspected child abuse or neglect when, in their professional capacity, they receive information giving them reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect. The South Carolina Attorney General's Office has concluded that "professional capacity" is not limited to a particular physical location, but applies when mandated reporters are working within the scope of their employment when they receive the information. The mandate to report child abuse and neglect does not require the reporter to know for certain that a child has been abused or neglected. The requirement to report is triggered when the mandated reporter has a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. If it's physical or sexual abuse also call law enforcement.¹

If you discover OR suspect sexual abuse - Observable marks of abuse. You may see a child (or adult) with bruises, scars, broken bones, or a flinch reflex to movements from a nearby adult. You may notice highly sexualized or aggressive behavior in a child too young to understand the significance of their actions. You may notice artwork or writing with themes that reveal an awareness of abusive behaviors and pain that are beyond what is age appropriate. **The law requires you to make a report as soon as you have REASONABLE SUSPICION.** Note: a report is not an accusation, but rather a request to investigate a situation.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

CREDIBLY ACCUSED

A credibly accused pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer includes one who has confessed in a non-privileged setting, who has been convicted in a court of law, or who has had a civil judgment rendered against them.

Additionally, an independent third party who has been hired by any church or other Baptist body, may determine, by preponderance of the evidence following an inquiry, that a pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer is credibly accused. A “preponderance of the evidence” is the legal standard required for a civil judgment.²

¹ Children’s Law Center University of South Carolina’s School of Law, Mandated Reporter Guide (June 2018), page 2. <https://dss.sc.gov/media/1903/dss-brochure-1955-jan-19.pdf>

² Southern Baptist Convention National Task Force. “Updated Task Force Challenges and Formal Recommendations.” Task Force Updates, 8 June 2022, <https://www.sataskforce.net/updates/task-force-challenges-and-formal-recommendations-sn54p>

APPENDIX B: RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION 6: EXHORTING AFFILIATED SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES TO DEVELOP BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS AND POLICIES TO CONFRONT SEXUAL ABUSE

WHEREAS, the South Carolina Baptist Convention 2022 Sexual Abuse Task Force (Task Force) recognizes the devastating impact of sexual abuse on society, as well as on affiliated churches and their congregations; and

WHEREAS, as part of its commission to acknowledge sexual abuse and to equip South Carolina Baptist Convention member churches to work to prevent, report, and facilitate healing from the effects of sexual abuse in their congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Bible deems sexual assault/abuse as sin against God (Genesis 34); and

WHEREAS, explicit passages address non-consensual sexual acts as sexual assault and a violation of God's law (Genesis 12:10-16); and

WHEREAS, sexual assault/abuse can result in physical and emotional trauma, shame, and loss of self-worth (2 Samuel 13); and

WHEREAS, every life has been created in the Image of God and has worth, dignity, and value (Genesis 1:27); and

WHEREAS, God ordained the sexual union between a husband and a wife (Genesis 2:24-25), for their pleasure, with the intent to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28), and to symbolize the one-flesh relationship between Christ and His Church; and

WHEREAS, anyone who has experienced sexual abuse, can find hope, healing, and freedom in Christ (Luke 4:18-19) because He will deliver the needy, the afflicted, and the oppressed and rescue them (Psalm 22:24; Psalm 34:18), and

WHEREAS, the Sexual Abuse Task Force has defined sexual abuse as:

Any sexual activity or harassment, with perpetrators exerting power over the other, making threats against another, or taking advantage of victims. Sexual abuse also includes acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by any means. The absence of force or coercion does not diminish the abusive nature of the conduct.;

therefore, be it

APPENDIX B: RESOLUTIONS

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers to the South Carolina Baptist Convention meeting in Irmo, South Carolina, on November 14-15, 2022, exhort churches and their leaders to recognize the potential effect sexual abuse can have on individuals and their congregations; to develop biblical definitions of sexual abuse; and to develop and/or strengthen policies and procedures to acknowledge, prevent, report, and facilitate healing from the effects of sexual abuse in their congregations consistent with Holy Scripture and applicable law.



APPENDIX B: RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION 7: STRENGTHENING AND CLARIFYING LAWS CONCERNING PASTORS AND CHURCHES REGARDING SEXUAL ABUSE

WHEREAS, those in pastoral ministry are entrusted with the responsibility, under the authority of Christ, to serve, shepherd, and guard those whom the Lord entrusts to their care (1 Peter 5:1-4); and

WHEREAS, Scripture makes clear that overseers must be above reproach keeping watch over the congregations they serve as those who will give an account and, therefore, will receive a stricter judgment (1 Timothy 3:1-7, James 3:1, Hebrews 13:17); and

WHEREAS, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BFM)*, Article XV, condemns “all forms of sexual immorality” and states, “We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, [and] the abused”; and

WHEREAS, laws and codes of professional ethics in South Carolina prohibit sexual relationships between professionals such as physicians, psychiatrists, attorneys, and their patients/clients, even with consent, because the position of authority held by the professional creates an unhealthy opportunity for abuse; and

WHEREAS, various states have passed laws that criminalize sexual acts between pastors and those under their care and make no exception for the consent of the victim since members of the clergy are in a position of trust, which is broken when the one in authority engages in a sexual act with the victim (such states include Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin); therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of the 202nd session of the South Carolina Baptist Convention meeting in Irmo, South Carolina, November 14-15, 2022, encourage lawmakers to pass legislation to provide consistent definitions and classification of sexual abuse by pastors, as sexual abuse committed by pastors constitutes a clear abuse of authority and trust; and be it further

RESOLVED, we encourage South Carolina lawmakers to remove barriers to the free flow of information between churches and other entities about employees and volunteers and, in so doing, empower churches to prevent sexual abuse; and be it further

APPENDIX B: RESOLUTIONS

RESOLVED, that while we hold convictions about and affirm local church autonomy, we also believe that it is both important and biblical (1 Corinthians 14:33) to develop a culture of transparency and mutual responsibility between churches, so that affiliated churches are not places for predators to hide, as we, “contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death,” seeking “to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love” (*BFM*, Article XV); and be it further

RESOLVED, that while in this world we must face the temporal consequences of sin, such as disqualification from ministry, we joyfully acknowledge that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven and no person who cannot be restored to Christ (Psalm 103:12, Ephesians 1:7-8); and be it further

RESOLVED, that we encourage churches to be proactive in vetting all volunteers and staff by using in-depth background and reference assessments to thwart any abuse; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that we work to discover and implement effective methods to protect the innocent and assist victims and survivors of abuse and preserve the witness of Christ’s Church.

