

HOW CAN NC BAPTISTS RESPOND?

An independent investigation of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee was initiated by messengers at the 2021 SBC annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn. The motion came in response to public allegations that committee members and staff defamed sex abuse survivors, bullied advocates and resisted reforms.

The motion, which was approved by a nearly unanimous vote, required SBC president Ed Litton to [form a task force](#) to hire a third-party to conduct the investigation and release its findings through an unredacted report. The nine-member task force, led by N.C. Baptist pastor Bruce Frank, selected Guidepost Solutions for the investigation. The full report can be [reviewed here](#). Following the release of the report, N.C. Baptist Executive Director Todd Unzicker released [this statement](#).

We grieve that many sex abuse survivors over two decades were met with resistance, stonewalling and outright hostility by SBC Executive Committee leaders. Those actions are awful, shameful, and sinful.

It is important to remember that nearly 15,000 Southern Baptist messengers voted to launch this inquiry last year. What we received is what we asked for – transparency. The truth, while difficult, will ultimately help us walk forward in the light.

We encourage everyone to pause and seek the Lord before making decisions about changes to their support of missions through their giving. Now is the time for reflection, repentance, studying the report and asking for God's wisdom in the decisions that lie ahead for the SBC. It's important to remember that this is not an investigation into the SBC but the SBC Executive Committee. The annual meeting is next month and I suspect the messengers will make sweeping changes, so I encourage all churches to go to Anaheim, if possible, and wait to make decisions after that time.

Remember that we are N.C. Baptists on mission together. No matter what happens in other state or national conventions, we will stand on God's Word, follow the Holy Spirit, and put the Great Commission on our backs with Revelation 5 as our destination.

HOW ARE NC BAPTISTS ADDRESSING THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE?

In 2018, multiple sexual abuse cases came to light that led some Southern Baptist leaders and entities to launch initiatives that address the issue on a broader scale. N.C. Baptist pastor and SBC president at the time, J.D. Greear, [formed an advisory group](#) on sexual abuse, domestic violence and related issues. He [called for reforms](#) at every level of Baptist life.

In 2019, the *Houston Chronicle* published a six-part investigative news story titled "[Abuse of Faith](#)," that found more than 700 cases of sexual abuse in Southern Baptist churches over a 20-year period.

N.C. Baptists joined other state conventions in 2019 to affirm a [statement of principles on sexual abuse](#). Those agreed upon principles, which were also adopted by local associations and Southern Baptist seminaries, included commitments to raise awareness and offer training to churches and convention staff for survivor care and abuse prevention.

N.C. Baptists have upheld those commitments by creating [print and digital resources](#) to help survivors, as well as [safety and security resources](#) for your church.

N.C. Baptists have also developed procedures to [remove convention leaders](#) charged with serious misconduct. "[Caring Well](#)" materials have been promoted by the *Biblical Recorder* and convention staff.

In 2021, N.C. Baptist President Micheal Pardue [introduced a motion](#) to the board of directors' executive committee that directed Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Unzicker to conduct a comprehensive review of all internal policies, procedures and external materials related to preventing sex abuse and caring for survivors. The motion, which passed unanimously, stipulated that the review must include consultation with survivors, subject matter experts and a cross-section of N.C. Baptists.

State convention leaders solicited proposals from multiple organizations that specialize in corporate assessments related to sexual abuse, harassment and other behaviors. [Guidepost Solutions](#) was selected [to assist the convention](#) in order to ensure its review is conducted with objectivity, competence and trauma-informed practices. The review is [currently underway](#), and convention staff members are engaged in regular communication with Guidepost, providing information and documents in a proactive manner.

N.C. Baptist leaders are also engaged in collaborative efforts with Baptist leaders at the state and national levels who are involved in similar work regarding sexual abuse. To date, discussions have covered best practices and potential action steps, such as the following:

- curating a referral list of Christian counselors with trauma-informed services,
- sharing information with state lawmakers about the importance of legislation that defines clergy abuse and enables churches to share information about sexual predators,
- promoting resources and materials for survivors,
- collecting information from churches about the status of sex abuse policies and procedures,
- identifying potential training resources for convention staff, and related topics.

Updates will be provided to N.C. Baptist staff, directors, officers and churches as important developments arise. A report that includes actions taken and further recommendations will be presented to the N.C. Baptist board in September and to convention messengers at the annual meeting in November.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Unzicker". The signature is stylized with a prominent horizontal stroke at the top.

Todd Unzicker

Executive Director-Treasurer

Baptist State Convention of North Carolina