

SBC Resolution on Lament and Repentance for Sexual Abuse

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse is an abomination before God and an affront to the teachings of Scripture (Psalm 11:5; Proverbs 6:16-20; Mark 7:20-34; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 1:15-17); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse grieves Christ and contradicts the heart of the gospel (Mark 12:31; 1 Corinthians 6:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse abandons the demands of Scripture for the holy living of God's people (1 Corinthians 6:18-19; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Timothy 1:8-11); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse is a violation of the Imago Dei, dishonoring and degrading human dignity, especially in those most vulnerable among us (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:6; Psalm 8:3-5); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse causes harm to those who are entrusted to the church's care and protection (Proverbs 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3-5; Micah 6:8; 1 John 3:16-18); and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention declared in our 2021 Resolution "On Abuse and Pastoral Qualifications" that sexual abuse "is an action repugnant to the teachings of Scripture and reprehensible even to those who are not believers"; and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse perpetrated by pastoral leaders or church members is a violation of the sacred trust for pastoral leaders and all believers to care for and minister to people (Psalm 82:3-4; Proverbs 28:13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse in the church is a failure of personal and public witness (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 5:1-15; Ephesians 5:25-27); and

WHEREAS, Sexual abuse has occurred in and among our churches, sometimes at the hands of church members and sometimes at the hands of pastoral leaders; and

WHEREAS, In too many cases our convention of churches has failed to care well for those who have been abused; and

WHEREAS, Our responses have at times sought first to protect the reputation of our leaders, churches, and institutions rather than to care for survivors of sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, Our institutional responses have at times caused irreparable personal harm to survivors of sexual abuse, leaving them feeling isolated, powerless, and without a voice; and

WHEREAS, We have failed to educate and thus adequately prepare church leaders to respond to abuse; and

WHEREAS, Our churches have failed at times properly to report cases of abuse to the appropriate authorities (Romans 13:1-7); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Anaheim, California, June 14-15, 2022, denounce in the strongest possible terms every instance of sexual abuse, those who perpetrate abuse, and those who seek to defend or protect these perpetrators; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm the Bible's teaching to seek justice for those who have been harmed, protect the vulnerable, and honor the dignity and worth of survivors of sexual abuse (Genesis 1:26, Psalm 82:2-4, Isaiah 1:17, Micah 6:8); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we publicly lament the harm our actions and inactions have caused to survivors of sexual abuse; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we publicly apologize to and ask forgiveness from survivors of sexual abuse for our failure to care well for survivors, for our failure to hold perpetrators of sexual abuse adequately accountable in our churches and institutions, for our institutional responses which have prioritized the reputation of our institutions over protection and justice for survivors, and for the unspeakable harm this failure has caused to survivors through both our action and inaction; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we publicly repent and acknowledge our need for comprehensive change in caring well for survivors of sexual abuse; and be it further

RESOLVED, That amid our failures, we express our hope in Christ, who never fails to care for those who have been harmed, that he watches over the vulnerable members of our churches, that he can bring healing to survivors of sexual abuse, and that he can bring both retributive justice to perpetrators of sexual abuse and restorative justice to survivors of sexual abuse; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we prayerfully endeavor to eliminate all instances of sexual abuse among our churches; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to the ongoing moral demands of the gospel in relation to sexual abuse, observing the command of our Lord to "teach everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20), including the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27, 34-35); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call for churches to teach the importance of honoring one another and treating one another virtuously in the area of sexuality so churches can become safe places that protect the vulnerable; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we give of our time and resources to bind the wounds of the broken, hold accountable perpetrators of sexual abuse and those who seek to defend them, and care well for survivors of sexual abuse; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we recognize and appreciate the work and advocacy of sexual abuse survivors, repent of our resistance and neglect of their efforts, and unreservedly apologize to survivors mentioned in the report, including Christa Brown, Susan Codone, Megan Lively, Jennifer Lyell, Anne Marie Miller, David Pittman, Tiffany Thigpen, Debbie Vasquez, Hannah-Kate Williams, and Jules Woodson, for our not heeding their collective warnings and taking swift action to address clergy sexual abuse sooner.¹

¹ *These are the survivors mentioned in the report who have given their consent to have their names listed.*