

Mississippi Baptists continue trek to sexual abuse prevention

By Tanner Cade

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Mississippi Baptist leaders continue to address sexual abuse prevention in each congregation across the state.

During the 2023 Annual Meeting in Jackson, the Sexual Abuse Response Team (SART) Report concluded a long year of meetings setting vital resources in motion for Mississippi Baptists.

Brad Eubank, Chairman of SART and Pastor at First Church, Petal, began the team's report with their priority for redemption and restoration.

"Our hope is that the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention would become one of the leading voices on the topic of sexual abuse in the SBC not only because we are called to do so by the Lord 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."

One of the points from the SART report encouraged the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board to form a new ongoing group that works as an advisory team as well as a small number of MBCB staff members to act as a response team. Soon thereafter, Mississippi Baptist Convention President, Bill Hurt, brought together members to form the newly named Sexual Abuse Advisory Team. Next, Dr. Shawn Parker, MBCB's Executive Director-Treasurer, appointed MBCB staff members to work as a Crisis Response Team in tandem with the advisory team.

Sexual Abuse Advisory Team

Monday, May 13, the advisory team met for the second time in 2024 at the Mississippi Baptist Building in downtown Jackson.

“The Advisory Team is working diligently to come alongside the Crisis Response Team in assisting churches who contact us about a potential sexual abuse issue,” said Hurt. “The Advisory Team is comprised of individuals who deal with these issues on a daily basis in their careers; therefore, their expertise is critical to our Crisis Response Team.”

Advisory team members include: Breck Ladd, First Church, Madison, Chair; Doug Gunn, First Church, Jackson; Allison Champion, Hardy Street Church; Ben Hamilton, West Heights Church; Sara Kitchens, First Church, New Albany.

The MBCB staff working alongside the advisory team includes: Jon Martin, Chief Strategy Officer; Angie Boydston, Preschool / Children’s Ministry Consultant; and John Pace, Leadership Department Director.

Church Safety for Minors Workshop

A day after the Advisory Committee meeting, the scheduled Church Safety for Minors Workshop took place on May 14 at Country Woods Church, Byram.

The workshop was led by Greg S. Love, MinistrySafe Co-founder, and James Reeves, Texas pastor and Fearless Series author.

MinistrySafe was founded by attorneys and sexual abuse experts to reduce the risk of sexual abuse in churches, camps, schools, and ministry programs. Love led the first half of the workshop addressing the steps to prevention. He described the importance of awareness training including: screening, procedures, oversight, and background checks.

The second half of the workshop was led by Reeves as he addressed the importance of survivor care. Reeves shared his

vision for the Fearless video series for men and women.

“I never dreamed that in this stage in my life that God would make it possible to have an impact on our denomination in this particular area,” expressed Reeves. “What Greg does is vitally important. We have to get this protection thing going, but if the narrative is ever going to be flipped then survivor care is very important.”

Funding for the workshops is provided by the Christian Action Commission and the Cooperative Program.

Special Session June 11th in Indianapolis

Mississippi Baptists are one of three states sponsoring a lunch gathering discussing the importance of reporting sexual abuse during the Southern Baptist Convention’s upcoming Annual Meeting.

The session titled “Overcoming Obstacles to Reporting Abuse” is led by MinistrySafe’s Greg Love and Kimberlee Norris. This special session addresses legal reporting requirements, common obstacles, and how to overcome these obstacles.

All Mississippi Baptists are invited to attend the lunch Tuesday, June 11, at noon in the Indianapolis Convention Center in Room 143-145. Registration is required. To register, please [click here](#).

Resources for Sexual Abuse Prevention can be found at mbcb.org/sart.