

Task Force assembled to assist churches in combatting sexual abuse

*By William Perkins
Editor*

Mississippi Baptist Convention President Lloyd Sweatt has appointed a Sexual Abuse Task Force (SATF) and charged members with providing “recommendations, guidelines, and/or suggest a process of making organizational changes to better protect members of, or those who attend, Mississippi Baptist churches, all in an effort to make individual churches safer.”

In the Task Force’s second meeting recently at the Baptist Building in Jackson, Sweatt laid out the impetus for its organization. “The reason... is to positively respond to the recommendations given from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee to sexual abuse allegations and [the independent investigation conducted by] Guidepost Solutions.

“These recommendations were part of the SBC’s annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif., on June 14-15, 2022. The recommendations also came from The Sexual Abuse Task Force selected by SBC President Ed Litton following the 2021 SBC annual meeting.”

The Southern Baptist Convention has been rocked lately with accusations that sexual abuse allegations were ignored or marginalized for years by some of the convention’s institutions and member churches.

Sweatt, pastor of Meadowood Church, Amory, urged the Task Force to come up with recommendations that will help local churches focus on:

– *Recognizing* an abusive situation before it occurs, with

available tools such as Ministry Safe and Protect My Ministry.

- *Responding* to an abusive situation.
- *Repairing* damage arising from an abusive situation.
- *Restoring* fellowship in the aftermath of an abusive situation.

SATF members appointed by Sweatt include:

- Brad Eubank (chairman), senior pastor, First Church, Petal.
- Melanie Benson, counselor and member of East End Church, Columbus.
- Don Gann, senior pastor, First Church, Oxford.
- Laura Gee, children's ministry coordinator, First Church, Vicksburg.
- Johnny Mattox, associate vice president for academic affairs, Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain.
- Jim Phillips, senior pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.
- Wade Phillips, executive pastor, Northcrest Church, Meridian.
- Will Wall, mission strategist, Pine Belt Association, Hattiesburg.
- Lydia Warren, retired attorney and member of Crossgates Church, Brandon.

The Task Force may be contacted in care of Brad Eubank, SATF Chairman, 992 MS-42, Petal, MS 39465.