

U.S. Department of Justice to investigate SBC

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) – The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee has confirmed that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has initiated an investigation that will include “multiple SBC entities,” according to an Aug. 12 statement from SBC entity leaders and SBC President Bart Barber.

The DOJ investigation is believed to be related to revelations that certain SBC entities have for decades mishandled sexual abuse allegations within the SBC, as detailed in an independent report ordered earlier this year by the Executive Committee.

“Individually and collectively, each SBC entity is resolved to fully and completely cooperate with the investigation,” the statement reads.

“Our commitment to cooperate with the Department of Justice is born from our demonstrated commitment to transparently address the scourge of sexual abuse,” the leaders wrote, adding that their willingness to cooperate should send the message that they are taking sexual abuse seriously.

“While we continue to grieve and lament past mistakes related to sexual abuse, current leaders across the SBC have demonstrated a firm conviction to address those issues of the past and are implementing measures to ensure they are never repeated in the future,” the statement reads. “The fact that the SBC Executive Committee recently completed a fully transparent investigation is evidence of this commitment,” the leaders added.

The leaders asked for prayer and for God’s wisdom as they proceed. “While so many things in the world are uncertain, we

can be certain that we serve a mighty God. Nothing, including this investigation, takes Him by surprise.

“We take comfort in that and humbly ask you be in prayer in the days and weeks ahead. Specifically, we ask God to grant wisdom and discernment to each person dealing with the investigation.” The statement is signed by:

- Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.
- Jason K. Allen, President, Midwestern Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.
- Bart Barber, SBC President; Pastor, First Church, Farmersville, Texas.
- Paul Chitwood, President, SBC International Mission Board, Richmond, Va.
- James K. Dew, President, New Orleans Seminary, New Orleans.
- D. Hance Dilbeck, Jr., President, Guidestone Financial Resources, Dallas, Texas.
- Kevin Ezell, President, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, Ga.
- Adam W. Greenway, President, Southwestern Seminary, Ft. Worth, Texas.
- Jeff Iorg, President, Gateway Seminary, Los Angeles, Ca.
- Brent Leatherwood, Acting President, SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, Nashville, Tenn.
- Ben Mandrell, President, Lifeway Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn.
- Willie D. McLaurin, Interim President, SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.

- R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
- Sandra Wisdom-Martin, Executive Director-Treasurer, Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary, Birmingham, Ala.

The announcement comes two months after messengers to the SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, Calif., passed a resolution, On Lament and Repentance for Sexual Abuse. Southern Baptists also voted overwhelmingly to adopt a report that approved recommendations toward addressing and preventing sexual abuse in the Convention.

The SBC spent nearly \$2 million on an independent investigation conducted by Guidepost Solutions, which submitted its report in May. Send Relief, the compassion ministry of the SBC, has committed \$4 million for the implementation of messenger-approved actions and to support survivors of sexual abuse.

Requests for comment from Guidepost Solutions and the DOJ were not returned by the time of publication. This story will be updated to include information as it becomes available.

Full Statement

The SBC Executive Committee recently became aware that the Department of Justice has initiated an investigation into the Southern Baptist Convention, and that the investigation will include multiple SBC entities.

Individually and collectively each SBC entity is resolved to fully and completely cooperate with the investigation. While we continue to grieve and lament past mistakes related to sexual abuse, current leaders across the SBC have demonstrated a firm conviction to address those issues of the past and are implementing measures to ensure they are never repeated in the future. The fact that the SBC Executive Committee recently completed a fully transparent investigation is evidence of

this commitment.

We recognize our reform efforts are not finished. In fact, those efforts are continuing this very moment as the recently announced Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force begins its work and as each entity has strengthened its efforts to protect against abuse. Our commitment to cooperate with the Department of Justice is born from our demonstrated commitment to transparently address the scourge of sexual abuse.

While so many things in the world are uncertain, we can be certain that we serve a mighty God. Nothing, including this investigation, takes Him by surprise. We take comfort in that and humbly ask you be in prayer in the days and weeks ahead.

Specifically, we ask God to grant wisdom and discernment to each person dealing with the investigation.