



## Johnson Ferry

Dear Johnson Ferry,

On Sunday, May 22, 2022, a report issued by the Sexual Abuse Task Force (SATF) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and Guidepost Solutions, a third-party entity hired to conduct an independent investigation, found a decades-long history of mishandling sexual abuse claims by the SBC Executive Committee (EC). The report is not an exposé but rather the result of concerned Southern Baptists asking for transparency in dealing with claims of “resistance, stonewalling, and even outright hostility” on the part of some within the EC. In other words, messengers to the SBC’s annual meeting in June 2021 asked for this report.

The results of this investigation are both heartbreaking and infuriating. The report found patterns of neglect on the part of some who placed protecting the institution’s liability over protecting children and others who suffered various forms of sexual abuse. Many leaders, to be sure, raised concern for years, and their efforts should be applauded. But regardless of what we do next, there are countless survivors of sexual abuse who will forever have to live with the trauma and pain inflicted upon them by the very people they should have been able to trust. We need to care for these survivors, pray for them, and do what seems wise to help them heal through God’s redeeming grace.

The 2022 Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting takes place on June 14-15 in Anaheim, CA. I will be preaching as a part of the Pastor’s Conference on Monday, June 13, and I covet your prayers. We will have a chance as “messengers” to collectively lament as we consider what is necessary for our Convention to move forward. I doubt any one measure over those two days can fix what will take years to do, but I pray we can start the process of exposing, repenting, changing, and healing. I pray our zeal for the Great Commission will match our zeal for the Great Commandment.

You may wonder what all of this means for Johnson Ferry? As autonomous bodies, Southern Baptist churches are in voluntary cooperation with the SBC, and, at this point, Johnson Ferry has no plans to sever that relationship. At the same time, we also have to look within. We currently have policies regarding sexual abuse in place at Johnson Ferry but are looking for better ways to train our staff and volunteers. We desire to be a place that cares for the abused rather than being one that perpetrates abuse. I was told this week that 90% of the 47,000 Southern Baptist churches have no codified policies and procedures for dealing with abuse. If true, then shame on our Convention. Thankfully, Johnson Ferry is not among the negligent. We take this matter seriously and want to provide the safest environment possible for people to find truth, belonging, and purpose in Jesus.

Please take time this week to pray for the survivors, our Convention, our church, and our leadership. I love you and am grateful for all God is doing in this church. I rejoice in this season when I see so much life, growth, and spiritual fruit at Johnson Ferry. Yet, we also know there are appropriate times to mourn and lament together. That time has come.

Your Pastor,

Clay Smith

Additional information: The report from Guidepost Solutions is available [here](#). The EC has established a hotline for allegations of abuse within the SBC and for survivors to seek help: 202.864.5578