

Blogger-activist pastors to press SBC to deal with sexual abuse

April 18, 2007

Posted: 4/16/07

Blogger-activist pastors to press SBC to deal with sexual abuse

By Hannah Elliott

Associated Baptist Press

ARLINGTON (ABP)—With increasing national attention on Baptist churches' problems with clergy sex abuse, two pastors with an Internet following have said they intend to push for more comprehensive ways to address the problem in the 16-million member Southern Baptist Convention.

Oklahoma pastor [Wade Burleson](#) and Texas pastor [Benjamin Cole](#) intend to present a motion and resolution regarding the abuse problem at the annual SBC meeting, set for June 12 and 13 in San Antonio. The two have gained convention-wide attention in the past year for their blog-driven efforts to reform the denomination.

Burleson, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, Okla., will bring a motion calling for a study on the possibility of developing a database of Southern Baptist ministers convicted of sexual harassment and abuse. The motion will ask the SBC Executive Committee to report results from the

study at the 2008 annual meeting, scheduled for Indianapolis.

See Related Articles:

- [TV news magazine investigates sexual abuse in Protestant churches](#)
- [SBC response to ABC 20/20 segment on sexual predators in ministry](#)
- Blogger-activist pastors to press SBC to deal with sexual abuse

Cole, who leads Parkview Baptist Church in Arlington, will introduce a resolution titled “On Clergy Sexual Abuse.”

“Southern Baptists have not fully explored every option to protect our churches and our children from the threat of potential victimization and abuse at the hands of predatory clergy,” the resolution says. It also calls upon SBC-affiliated churches to “pursue every possible avenue in determining the moral character and ethical conduct of ministry candidates.”

Cole’s proposal also urges convention agencies, institutions and commissions to “take bold steps to educate Southern Baptists concerning the indications associated with and the reporting of child victimization.”

A segment on the April 13 edition of the [ABC News program 20/20](#) focused on clergy sex abuse in the SBC and other denominations. Prior to airing the report, ABC producers said the story explored the unique problem that the Baptist style of church government— whose cornerstone is the autonomy of

the local church—poses to denomination-wide efforts to combat the problem.

SBC president Frank Page was interviewed for the *20/20* segment. He wrote an open letter to Southern Baptists addressing the state of the problem, which he said is not “systematic and large-scale” in the denomination.

In the April 2 letter, Page said even one instance of sexual abuse is too much and urged local churches to take action against predators. He also called on churches to require background checks on national and state levels and to conduct “thorough reference checks” on when hiring ministers and other church staff.

“The local church is where accountability must be enforced,” he said. “I call upon every local church to develop written policy guidelines for the care of children and youth. I call upon every church to have a system or policy in place to deal with any accusations made. ... Simply put, there is no place in the church for persons who would take advantage of these relationships.”

Page has said the autonomy of the local church is a biblical mandate, so local churches must take it upon themselves to avoid, uncover and prosecute predators.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.