

# IMB President Platt initiates sexual abuse investigations

July 26, 2018

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—David Platt, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board, announced he has initiated two "thorough, outside, independent" investigations into the mission board's handling of any past sexual abuse allegations and into its policies of zero tolerance for such abuse.



David Platt

Platt also issued a public apology to Anne Marie Miller, who alleged sexual abuse by an individual who subsequently became an IMB missionary yet was not reported to authorities following a 2007 IMB inquiry into the matter.

Platt spoke with Miller before releasing [the statement](#) publicly, according to an IMB spokesperson. Miller subsequently sent an affirmation of Platt's actions.

## **‘Extremely disturbing’**

“Many facets of this situation are extremely disturbing,” Platt said of [charges filed](#) against Mark Aderholt for sexual assault of a child under 17 stemming from a 1996-1997 relationship when he was 25 and of the 2007 IMB investigation.

Aderholt, who later served at two Arkansas churches and with the South Carolina Baptist Convention, was arrested July 3 in Fort Worth and released on bond.

Platt stated he is “commencing a thorough, outside, independent examination of IMB’s handling of past actions—including this case and any other similar situations. In addition, I am commencing a thorough, outside, independent examination of IMB’s present policies to ensure that our current commitment to zero tolerance for child abuse, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment is completely and consistently enforced across IMB today.

“Further, I am presently in conversations with leaders of other churches and ministries, particularly within the SBC, to establish practical ways we can and must prevent situations like this in the future,” Platt stated. “Any attempts to minimize, ignore, cover up or overlook child abuse, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment are absolutely intolerable, and we must take action together now to ensure safety and support for every person employed or affected by a church or ministry.”

## **‘Contributed to such hurt and pain’**

Addressing Miller, Platt stated: “I want to publicly apologize for the pain and hurt that Anne Miller has specifically suffered in this situation. I will not presume to know the variety of other emotions and challenges that she,

those around her, and others who have walked through similar situations have experienced. Further, I want to apologize for various ways we in the IMB have contributed to such hurt and pain through our response to this point.

“In addition, I want to publicly thank Anne Miller for the courage she showed in approaching IMB in 2007, and the courage she is showing even now. I realize the actions I have outlined above cannot remove her hurt and pain, or the hurt and pain of others who have experienced similar situations. But I am committed to doing all that I can so that her courage, and the courage of others like her, will prevent hurt and pain among others in the future.”

## **‘Finally have an ally’**

Miller, in a response emailed to Baptist Press, said: “I am grateful for David Platt’s immediate and thorough response upon his return from Africa today. His apology and the action of obtaining third-party investigations into my case and all other similar cases demonstrates his commitment to not tolerating sexual abuse or misconduct in any capacity.

“Furthermore, the conversations happening in the IMB and in convention leadership encourage me that abuse survivors will finally have an ally in the church as we pursue healing. It’s my prayer that past and present survivors receive the support we need and the policies which result from these changes will prevent future victims from becoming so. I am excited and hopeful for the future of the SBC and am thankful for the many voices who are encouraging and inciting change along the way.”

Platt concluded his statement asserting: “We must do better. In the IMB. In the SBC. In any church and any ministry, we must do everything we can to protect children and adults from abuse and harassment, and we must do everything we can to hold anyone who is guilty of these things fully

accountable.”

Platt, at the outset of his statement, recounted he had “just returned from the last couple of weeks in sub-Saharan Africa” and had met “immediately with IMB trustee leaders.”

Because there is an ongoing criminal investigation “with which IMB is committed to full cooperation,” Platt said, “it is wise, for the sake of everyone involved, for me to refrain from commenting on specific details in this case.”