

# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

• FARMERS BRANCH •

Sam Underwood  
Pastor

January 18, 2006

Ms. C. Brown  
c/o Mr. Curt Cukjati  
Martin & Cukjati  
1802 Blanco  
San Antonio, TX 78212

Dear Ms. Brown,

On behalf of the deacons, the current ministers and the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Farmers Branch, I express to you this church's most profound regret for the very serious sexual abuse that we have come to believe our prior youth and education minister, Tommy Gilmore, inflicted on you when you were a girl in the church youth group. We are very sorry for the harm and suffering that this caused in your life. We know this apology cannot even begin to undo that harm or give back all that was stolen from you, but we hope that it may be of some help in your healing process.

We are sorry for the fact that, though informed, in a general way, of Gilmore's conduct, a church leader in 1969 did not realize the seriousness of what had occurred or its effects on you.

We want you to know that we are unaware of any report, complaint or allegation prior to yours concerning ministerial misconduct by Gilmore. Nevertheless, if there is any person who considers himself or herself to be under any obligation of silence with regard to anything Gilmore did while employed by this church, the church now releases any such person from any such obligation, whether contractual or informal in nature. We also urge anyone who was victimized as a minor by any Southern Baptist minister to report it to civil authorities no matter how long ago it occurred. We understand that an anonymous report can be made at [www.victimpower.org](http://www.victimpower.org). Clergy abuse victims may also find support and information at [www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org).

Persons such as yourself who are victimized by a church leader have been betrayed, as are members of their families. Our congregation places a high value on nurturing our youth and we are deeply grieved by what happened to you. We wish we had responded better. Therefore, we are also sending this apology to your mother and your sisters, and to some others who were in the youth group during that time. Additionally, we will be sending this letter to certain churches which you have represented to us, that Gilmore was employed or affiliated with after his employment with the First Baptist Church of Tyler.

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A church leader who was also here during Gilmore's tenure was able to substantiate that sexual contact with Brown as a minor occurred in 1969. Our response, while probably not unusual among churches, was inadequate and less than compassionate. Therefore, we are providing you this letter in the hope that it symbolizes our commitment to learning from this experience.

Southern Baptist churches are autonomous. There is no supervising authority to hand down rules or enforce policies. This independence necessarily means that each congregation bears the responsibility for educating itself and for appropriately dealing with reports of clergy abuse. We know that your road to healing has been made more difficult because you yourself, as the victim, had to take on the burden of trying to educate us. We hope that by providing you this apology, some other church may wind up being better educated, with the result that some other victim may be spared some of the anguish that you have gone through. We do not object to your sending a copy of this letter to other congregations where Gilmore worked.

Clergy sexual abuse of the young is a scourge. It must be confronted and condemned. Church secrecy is not a responsible option. Instead, churches should respond with outrage and righteous anger at such crimes against kids committed by church leaders they trust. Again, we wish we had responded better. We hope other churches will take time to consider how to appropriately deal with issues of clergy sexual abuse, and we hope denominational leaders will consider the need for a means by which autonomous congregations may responsibly share information about clergy predators. We also pray that you may find peace and comfort from the sincerity of our efforts.

Sincerely,



Mike Floyd  
Chairman of Deacons  
First Baptist Church of Farmers Branch