

# broken trust:

## confronting sexual misconduct

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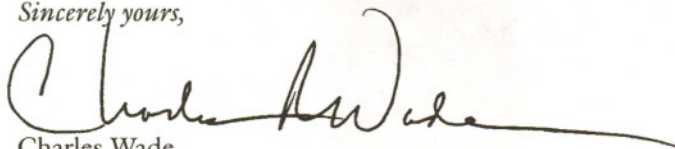
*Dear Friends:*

As I came to work at the Baptist General Convention of Texas, I was aware that many ethical issues would arise. This booklet has been written to address one of those issues: clergy sexual misconduct.

This problem is not unique to the BGCT, but we are far from immune from it. Too often, we receive reports from churches where the sexual misconduct of the pastor or another staff member has damaged the life of the church and many individuals. When churches discover such behavior, it is frequently swept under the carpet and kept a secret, thus doing further damage to the churches and to the individuals involved.

It is my hope that we can help churches become more aware of clergy sexual misconduct and the seriousness of its impact on the church and her members. We will assist the church, the perpetrator, the victim and the related families in every possible way. We offer this booklet with suggestions for churches and ministers.

*Sincerely yours,*



Charles Wade  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
BAPTIST GENERAL CONVENTION OF TEXAS





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## confronting sexual misconduct

*Dear Friends:*

Clergy sexual misconduct is a serious problem in church life. While ministers live and serve with great integrity, some engage in the irresponsible exploitation of members who are in need of their spiritual guidance. According to one recent national survey of ministers, 35% had engaged in sexually inappropriate behavior. The Baptist General Convention of Texas receives frequent phone calls from churches and from Directors of Missions concerning clergy sexual misconduct. (Ninety-six percent of sexual exploitation by professionals is by a man in power who capitalizes on a woman's trust. The masculine pronoun is usually used in this material when referring to sexual misconduct.)

Clergy sexual misconduct occurs when a person in a ministerial role engages in sexual contact, threats, or sexual behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer. The betrayal of trust involved creates ripples of grief and mistrust that do damage far beyond the specific situation.

In Baptist life, the burden of responsibility for monitoring church staff behavior falls directly on the local congregation. Congregations should conduct background checks on prospective staff and assure appropriate supervision of all staff. If there is a complaint of sexual misconduct, the church must act immediately to investigate and intervene properly and responsibly.

Congregations need to develop policies which are clear and include definitions of terms and standards of conduct. Every church should have a clear policy concerning the reporting of misconduct and assuring that there is due process in the assessment of complaints.

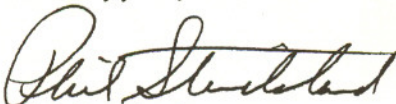
**The BGCT is seeking to assist churches in dealing with this problem in four ways:**

1. Education and awareness materials
2. Help with counseling for the perpetrator, the victim and their families when needed
3. Expert assistance to local churches when requested
4. Establishing a clear BGCT policy concerning handling sexual misconduct reports

The Committee was coordinated by Ann Tucker, a volunteer for the Christian Life Commission, who spent innumerable hours on this project. The Committee was also assisted by Dr. Joe Trull, retired professor of Christian Ethics from New Orleans Seminary. Dr. Trull is the author of much of the material the Committee has prepared. He is also co-author of an outstanding book on clergy ethics.

Sexual misconduct by ministers is a betrayal of the profound calling that ministers have to provide spiritual guidance. The Christian Life Commission offers this material with a prayer that it is frequently read and seldom needed.

*Sincerely yours,*



Phil Strickland  
DIRECTOR  
CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION



# crisis guidance

**W**hen there is sexual misconduct by a minister in a local church, the church is urged to immediately seek the best expertise and resources available. On some occasions, the Director of Missions will have special training on how to deal with this situation in local churches. If that is not the case, however, a request can be made to the Baptist General Convention of Texas for assistance. People trained in particular skills for

assisting churches in sexual misconduct situations can be made available by the BGCT to help your church, the perpetrator and the victim. Information about this assistance can be obtained through the Ministers Counseling office or the Christian Life Commission.

Churches are encouraged to cover the expenses and honorarium for the persons sent by the Convention. However, if the local church is unable to do so, the Convention will cover

the expenses and honorarium for two people to assist the church for two days.

The background and skills of the persons sent to the church will to some degree depend upon the particular situation at that church. In some cases, legal skills may be needed while in other cases conflict mediation may be the most helpful. This assessment will be made through consulting with those individuals in the church that request assistance.

## counseling for victims and their families

### affected by clergy sexual abuse

**W**hen charges of sexual misconduct are levied against a minister, the church leadership needs to investigate thoroughly, and if such charges are found to be true, they should contact the office of Minister/Church

Relations of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 214/828-5185.

When victims of clergy sexual abuse, and/or the families, desire counseling, the church is encouraged to provide resources for such counseling. If this is not financially feasi-

ble, the church leadership should contact the office of Ministers Counseling Service of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (214/826-6591) to make an appointment or make arrangements through them for a referral and counseling subsidy.

## two year restoration program

### ministers counseling service

**1st Stage 6 months** – weekly counseling (no ministry employment). Career Assessment instruments are given and interpreted as a part of this counseling. Spouse is encouraged to attend at least half of these sessions (marriage strengthening).

**2nd Stage 6 months** – once a month counseling; work through

“Ministerial Ethics” (re-entry document) – (volunteer ministry in local church).

**3rd Stage 6 months** – counseling as needed (paid ministry as an assistant to some full-time staff member).

**4th Stage 6 months** – counseling as needed (continued paid ministry as

an assistant – begin initiative to re-enter fulltime ministry).

**5th Stage For duration of ministry** – check in with the Coordinator of *Ministers Counseling Service* annually for update of ministry.

DEPARTMENT OF THE BAPTIST  
GENERAL CONVENTION OF TEXAS



# information regarding known offenders

The Baptist General Convention of Texas maintains a file of cases of clergy sexual misconduct. The Convention relies on local churches to provide information about such cases. A case is put into the file only when a minister **confesses** to the abuse or sexual misconduct; there is a **legal conviction**; or there is **substantial evidence** that the abuse took place. The issue of whether substantial evidence is present is always reviewed by Convention attorneys.

## THE INFORMATION IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER:

"In keeping with the mission and a spirit of public service, the Convention endeavors to maintain records of allegations of sexual abuse or sexual improprieties by members of the clergy. We do not have the resources to make independent investigation of these allegations nor can we vouch for the accuracy of the information reported to us. Churches are advised to investigate the background of potential employees or members of the clergy independent of the Convention and not to rely exclusively on any information provided by the Convention."

The information concerning whether a particular individual is in the file can be obtained by an inquiry from an officer of the church, including but not limited to the Chair of Deacons, chairs of personnel and search committees, and the church's legal trustees. Information can be obtained by contacting the Minister/Church Relations Office at the BGCT.

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