



Office of the
President

Bart Barber
President



Friday, August 11, 2023

I am pleased to make the following announcements today.

Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force

The new makeup of the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force is as follows:

1. Josh Wester, Chair
2. Melissa Bowen, FBC Prattville, AL
3. Kris Buckman, Tri-County Baptist Church, Damascus, MD
4. Stephanie Cline, FBC Winter Garden, FL
5. Brad Eubank, FBC Petal, MS
6. Mike Keahbone FBC Lawton, OK
7. Kelley Lammers, Dell Baptist Church, Dell, AR
8. Jon Nelson, Soma Community Church, Jefferson City, MO
9. Gregory Wills, LaGrange Baptist Church, LaGrange, KY

I want to express my appreciation for Marshall Blalock, Cyndi Lott, and Jarrett Stephens for their prior service. Marshall, in particular, has served for two years—one on the Sex Abuse Task Force and one of the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force—and deserves the gratitude and affection of all Southern Baptists. His leadership of the Task Force as chair for the past year has been exemplary.

Cooperation Group

Although I am not yet prepared to announce the membership of the group created by James Merritt's motion at the SBC 2023 meeting, I am announcing today that the chair of that group will be Texas pastor Jared Wellman.

I expect to announce the remainder of the group's membership before the end of August.

I want to encourage our local associations and state conventions within the SBC family to press "pause" on any ongoing work they may be conducting or motions they may be considering that involve the nature of what it means to be a church in friendly cooperation with sister Southern Baptist churches.

These organizations are all autonomous, to be sure, and they have the right to define cooperation however they wish in their own respective spheres. The Cooperation Group at the SBC level has no authority to dictate to any of them on these matters, nor does the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nevertheless, I believe that the Cooperation Group, once named, will spend the remainder of this year engaged in high-quality research, dialogue, prayer, and contemplation about the nature of cooperation among Southern Baptist churches and our needs going forward. I believe that the work-product of this

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group will prove to be very helpful information for our local associations and state conventions to consider as they make their own autonomous decisions.

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