

As followers of Christ, it is our commitment to seek truth as commanded by our Lord, and to adhere to the authority of the Bible and its guidance on holding leaders accountable in their roles as shepherds. It is with this conviction in mind that we feel it is critical that we share the following information:

- Between July and August 2021, a member in good standing at our church as well as her advocate met with our prior Senior Pastor several times to report that as a minor she had been groomed and abused by our former Orchestra Director and later in his role as Praise & Worship Director.
- On September 1, 2021, our Senior Pastor reported these allegations to the Nash County Sheriff's Office. Current leadership has followed up on the case with the Nash County Sheriff's Office and found they are desiring to continue with the investigation.
- While there are many aspects yet-to-be-determined, our former Senior Pastor determined that some level of inappropriate communication took place between this minor and the former Orchestra Director. The former Orchestra Director was terminated by EBC as a result of the inappropriate communications with the minor and was reassigned from the classroom to remote teaching at his place of employment where he later retired.
- In January 2024, current leadership was made aware of additional allegations that were not reported to law enforcement back in 2021. An advocate for the Member reached out to EBC to express concern about how her initial report was received and previously handled by our prior Senior Pastor.
 - It was at this time that our current church leadership team was first made aware of additional allegations that include (1) the report about our former Orchestra Director's alleged abuse toward the Member; and (2) that according to the Member, a former Praise & Worship Minister serving at EBC from January 1, 2010, to June 20, 2010, also engaged in sexual abuse with her when she was a minor.
 - Additionally, a request was made that our current policies and procedures for abuse prevention and response be analyzed to ensure they are consistent with best practices.
- The additional allegations against the Praise & Worship Minister have prompted current leadership to file an additional report to the Rocky Mount Police Department and with the Nash County Sheriff's Office.
- Following Matthew 18, we have initiated contact with both accused men to hear their response. They have denied these allegations and have expressed their willingness to engage in an investigation of these accusations.

At EBC, we believe that our theological principles must guide our response to allegations and instances of abuse. We adhere to the belief that as followers of Jesus, we must embody justice, truth, compassion, and humility in our actions. In accordance with these principles, the leadership at EBC—comprised of our Pastoral Staff, Deacon Council, and relevant staff members—has taken the following steps:

- We have engaged with experts in this field, including a nationally recognized Christian attorney and advocate who has assisted the Southern Baptist Convention's Abuse Reform Task Force, and additional legal experts of national distinction who have extensive experience helping with churches in similar situations.
- To date, we have ensured that all alleged crimes have been properly reported to the correct authorities and leadership at EBC has communicated with law enforcement to express our desire and willingness to fully support any investigations and actions taken by law enforcement.
- We have also communicated with all material parties involved, notifying them of the steps we will be taking.

By taking the aforementioned actions - including gathering input from the Member, consulting with experts, collaborating with our leadership team, and considering the practical implications of our theology - we have come to the conclusion that a complete and unbiased investigation with the Nash County Sheriff's Office and the Rocky Mount Police Department is imperative. This has been the consensus of the EBC leadership team. EBC will fully cooperate with this investigation which will allow the facts surrounding the abuse reports to be examined, the circumstances of the occurrences to be determined, protect the Member from possible litigation and for justice to be served accordingly.

Also, EBC will be retaining GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment), a non-profit investigations organization, as well as Zero Abuse Project, another experienced and well-respected non-profit organization "committed to transforming institutions in order to effectively prevent, recognize, and respond to child sexual abuse":

- To analyze our current policy in the areas of preventing abuse and addressing allegations and instances of abuse and to provide recommendations for policy and practice improvements.
- To advise on next steps and assess the dynamics in this statement.

Our fundamental aim remains unchanged: to honor God above all, demonstrating our dedication and steadfastness in this matter. We affirm that as followers of Christ, we are tasked with being led by the Spirit as we seek to illuminate darkness and uphold truth.

We are heartbroken over these reports and have grieved over what has been shared with us up to this point. We ask our Church community to pray for God to bring truth to light, profound healing of the broken-hearted, and redemption and repentance of those in need of our Savior's grace. Our objective remains to see Truth and that light be shed into the dark places.

If you have any questions, please send them to our Executive Pastor, Gene Davis at gene@englewoodbaptist.com

If you have information relevant to this matter, please contact the Nash County Sheriff's Department at 252-459-4121 or Sheriff Keith Stone at 252-885-6161 Cell.