



**Executive Summary Prepared by  
Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment  
for Scottsdale Bible Church**

**April 30, 2019**

## **I. Introduction, Scope, and Methodology**

Scottsdale Bible Church (hereinafter referred to as SBC) engaged GRACE<sup>1</sup> in September 2018 to conduct an independent investigation regarding allegations of child sexual abuse. As described in the Engagement Agreement, SBC asked GRACE to conduct an investigation “into the allegations of child sexual abuse disclosed by [Jane Doe’s parents] and how SBC responded to such disclosure.”<sup>2</sup>

In order to evaluate these areas, GRACE conducted 26 witness interviews with Jane Doe’s parents, SBC employees and volunteers, mothers from SBC’s MOPS<sup>3</sup> program, and other witnesses with relevant knowledge pertaining to the scope of this investigation. GRACE also reviewed the following documents: the Scottsdale Police Department offense report; the Phoenix Childhelp Child Protection Team Report; Jane Doe’s therapy records regarding her work with a Licensed Professional Therapist and Registered Play Therapist; medical records from Jane Doe’s pediatrician for January 27, 2017, February 1, 2017, and February 23, 2017; SBC records for Jane Doe’s attendance at MOPS and corresponding work schedules for male caregivers for November 2016 to January 2017; SBC’s personnel records for the Person of Interest; the Person of Interest’s social media; emails exchanged between Jane Doe’s parents and SBC representatives; text messages exchanged between Jane Doe’s mother and some SBC representatives; and an audio and video recording of SBC’s pastor’s announcement to MOPS attendees on September 13, 2018 regarding these events. In addition, GRACE investigators toured the Scottsdale Bible Church Shea campus areas<sup>4</sup> and viewed relevant areas related to the scope of this investigation.

Since this was not a legal proceeding and GRACE does not have subpoena or other powers, witnesses could not be compelled to speak, and some information (for example, the video recording of Jane Doe’s forensic interview) could not be accessed.

GRACE did not interview Jane Doe for several reasons. First, the child was of a young age<sup>5</sup> at the time of these events. Second, time has passed between the alleged events and the engagement for this investigation. Third, Jane Doe has received (and may continue to receive) therapy from a local Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist<sup>6</sup> in her local area regarding the reported disclosures.

GRACE reached out to the Person of Interest on multiple occasions via email, phone messages, and Facebook. He did not respond to any requests to be interviewed and had previously declined to participate in an interview with the Scottsdale Police Department’s investigation.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, GRACE cannot provide an analysis of the credibility of Jane Doe’s primary account or the Person of Interest’s primary account of the reported events, but instead provides an analysis of the additional information received related to this disclosure. In addition, pursuant to the scope of this investigation, GRACE provides findings and analysis related to how SBC responded to this disclosure.

In the pages that follow, GRACE first provides Findings (Part II), followed by Analysis (Part III), and Recommendations related to these issues (Part IV).

## **Part II. Findings**

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<sup>1</sup> Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment is also known as GRACE. Hereafter in this summary, we utilize our acronym GRACE. For more information about GRACE, see [netgrace.org](http://netgrace.org).

<sup>2</sup> See Engagement Agreement signed by SBC and GRACE representatives in September 2018.

<sup>3</sup> MOPS is an acronym for Mothers of Preschoolers. According to several interviewees, SBC has one of the largest MOPS program in the country. SBC’s total MOPS programming engages 400 to 500 mothers for MOPS, MOPS More, and MOMS in the Marketplace. The largest group is MOPS on Thursday mornings, which serves approximately 200 mothers and has approximately 200 children in childcare on Thursday mornings. SBC’s current programming has since transitioned to curriculum entitled MOMS instead of MOPS. For purposes of this report, the MOPS acronym is used as that was the title of the program at the time of the events in question.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Doe attended events at two of SBC’s campuses: the main campus on Shea Road and the Mountain Valley campus.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Doe turned 3 years old approximately two weeks prior to the disclosures, which are the subject of this investigation.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Doe’s therapist specializes in the assessment, evaluation and forensically informed treatment of childhood trauma and maltreatment. She provides psychotherapy for children with a variety of adjustment, developmental and psychiatric disorders. Her specialties include child forensic interviews, forensically informed therapy and therapeutic intervention, child maltreatment evaluations, and play therapy. She has a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree in Psychology.

<sup>7</sup> In addition, during the criminal investigation, the alleged offender retained an attorney who indicated that his client would not provide a statement to the police. GRACE draws no inference from the alleged offender’s lack of participation in the criminal investigation or in the GRACE investigative process.

## *Jane Doe's Disclosures*

The following findings relate to Jane Doe's disclosures and the criminal investigation that resulted therefrom.

1. On Thursday, January 26, 2017, three-year-old Jane Doe attended MOPS at SBC. After the conclusion of the program, her mother picked her up from SBC's childcare and as Jane Doe was sitting in their vehicle preparing to leave, she told her mother, "I don't like the man in the blue shirt and I want to show you the man in the blue shirt."<sup>8</sup> Her mother asked her "where is the man in the blue shirt?" and Jane Doe said, "On the playground with the kids." Jane Doe pointed to the playground. Her mother then told Jane Doe to show her who the man was the next time that they were at church. Paid SBC childcare employees for SBC's MOPS program wear blue polo shirts. That afternoon, Jane Doe was playing with her dolls at home. She enjoyed playing "church" because they went to church several times a week. Her mother reported that Jane Doe got out her female doll figures to be her teachers and then her mother said, "let's get the man with the blue shirt out. Show me where he goes." Her mother explained that Jane Doe then played with the dolls and Jane Doe put them in the car and said, "Okay the family's going to church." Her mother stated that Jane Doe put the figure for the man on the playground, and then Jane Doe just started playing with the dolls. Jane Doe demonstrated how she said she needed to use the bathroom, and the male figure said he would take her to the bathroom. Then, he took her to the bathroom. Then, Jane Doe said, "I'm all done," and the male figure said, "Wipe yourself." Jane Doe then motioned that they went right back in front of the playground area on the play set, and Jane Doe made the male figure say, "Straddle your legs." Jane Doe then did a straddling motion by opening her legs and then raising them. Then, they went back to the playground, continued playing, and the man caught her on the slide. Later that evening, her mother was getting Jane Doe ready for bed, and as she was putting a pull-up on Jane Doe, her mother told her, "You know no one's allowed to touch you here, in your vagina, and if anyone ever does, you always tell mommy."<sup>9</sup> Jane Doe then "stared" at her mother and "paused for a moment and then she said, 'The man in the blue shirt touched me here' and she pointed to her vagina." Her mother then told Jane Doe, "Thank you for telling mommy. I love you and I'll keep you safe" and put her in bed for the evening without questioning her further. Jane Doe's mother stated she was "in shock" but was still unsure of what to think. She discussed the matter with Jane Doe's father that evening. Jane Doe also texted her MOPS table leader and asked her if she knew who was in charge of childcare for MOPS so that she could follow up further.<sup>10</sup>

2. The following morning, January 27, 2017 at the breakfast table, Jane Doe and her parents were sitting at the table and as they were eating, Jane Doe said, "The man in the blue shirt is nice." Her mother stated, "Oh, he's nice?" Jane Doe then said, "No, he's not nice, he hit me." Her mother then asked, "Where did he hit you?" and Jane Doe began hitting her head multiple times with her hand. Jane Doe's mother noted, "it was weird because it had this bobbing motion with it" that was

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<sup>8</sup> Paid childcare workers at SBC wear blue polo shirts. Volunteers who work in childcare on Sundays may wear whatever they wish.

<sup>9</sup> Her parents explained that Jane Doe's mother had previously talked with Jane Doe about body safety and that she knew the anatomical names for her private parts.

<sup>10</sup> On Thursday, January 26, 2017 at 8:17pm, Jane Doe's mother texted her MOPS table leader, "Do you know who is in charge of childcare for MOPS? [Jane Doe] keeps telling me about a man in the blue shirt who was playing with the kids on the playground and who she didn't like. We roll [sic] played with the toys and she said he took the kids to the bathroom. I wanted to contact someone to find out additional information as both her teachers are female. Thanks." At 9:28 pm that evening, the MOPS table leader responded, "I do not know his name, but we talked about him at the last meeting and [Mom A] does know more about him. I do know that he cannot go to the bathroom alone with the kids and cannot change diapers, anything like that. I would ask [Mom A]. I understand your concern! I watched him on the playground when I did childcare." Jane Doe's mother replied, "Did you guys talk about it last week at the table like other moms had concerns too? Is he a teacher?" The MOPS table leader replied, "Yes, but [Mom A] said with the state law he can never be alone with a child at any time. And I am confident with SBC they would do a major background check on everyone. I would talk to [Mom A]. Or I can ask for you if you want me to!" Jane Doe replied, "I texted her so will discuss. A lot of people are still not right and it doesn't come up in background checks. The way [Jane Doe] is talking about him it made me really nervous. If others are concerned that scares me even more. Thanks. I will let you know how my conversation with [Mom A] goes." The MOPS table leader replied, "Yes, I would raise the red flag!" At 9:32pm, Jane Doe's mother texted [Mom A], "[Our MOPS table leader] told me to contact you and you may have information about this. Or, do you know who is in charge of childcare for MOPS? [Jane Doe] keeps telling me about a man in the blue shirt who was playing with the kids on the playground and who she didn't like. We roll played with her toys and she said he took the kids to the bathroom. I wanted to contact someone to find out additional information as both her teachers are female." The following day, on 1/27/17 at 4:42am, Mom A replied via text, "Hey [Jane Doe's mother]! I would contact [SBC volunteer coordinator] and [Minister to Women] about this one. Can I reach out to them and have them contact you? Let me know!" Jane Doe's mother replied, "Yes please. It is actually very serious what has happened and what she has told me. Can you please have them call me at [my phone number]." Mom A replied, "[The Childcare Supervisor] is in charge of moppets. She was forwarded your info and I left a voicemail for [the Minister to Women]. I'll have her call you directly. I'm so sorry you are going through this. I made phone calls right away and [the Minister to Women] was so very supportive to getting this resolved. I sure hope you heard from her. Please know I am here for you if you need to talk at all or just pray." Jane Doe's mother replied, "Thank you so much for your prayers. [The Minister to Women] did reach out to me. I am focused on my daughter right now and will be in contact when I can." Mom A replied, "I'll keep praying for you all [Jane Doe's mother]. I'm always here when you need."

“back and forth” which her parents found to be “really disturbing.” Her mom then asked where she was when he hit her, and Jane Doe stated, “A room.” Given her concerns, Jane Doe’s mother scheduled an appointment with Jane Doe’s pediatrician. When they arrived, Jane Doe’s parents spoke to the Physician Assistant and described what had occurred. The Physician Assistant explained that Jane Doe should be seen by a forensic pediatrician and that the next step was to file a report with the Scottsdale Police Department. Jane Doe’s parents, along with the Physician Assistant then made a report together from the physician’s office. Jane Doe’s parents then took Jane Doe home and they waited for the police to arrive. When the Scottsdale Police Department officer arrived,<sup>11</sup> she spoke to Jane Doe’s parents and set up appointments for Jane Doe to receive a forensic interview and a medical examination that same afternoon.

3. At 5:30pm on January 27, 2017, a forensic interviewer from Phoenix Childhelp interviewed Jane Doe. According to the Child Protection Team Report documenting this interview, Jane Doe “denied that the man in the blue shirt touched her.”<sup>12</sup> Afterwards, Jane Doe received a medical examination from a forensic medical doctor. This physician documented her findings<sup>13</sup> and noted that the assessment was “normal.”<sup>14</sup>

4. SBC also made its own report to Child Protective Services on January 27, 2017 immediately after learning of this disclosure. SBC reviewed and provided attendance records, employee schedules, and approximately 150 hours of video surveillance information to law enforcement and to Jane Doe’s parents. The Scottsdale Police Department initiated a criminal investigation, and the detective assigned to this case reviewed all of the available information related to the case including Jane Doe’s forensic interview, her Childhelp medical evaluation, SBC records and videos, and interviewed a number of witnesses with relevant knowledge including Jane Doe’s parents and SBC employees, volunteers, and childcare workers. The Scottsdale Police Department also provided Jane Doe’s parents with a list of potential therapists’ names. Jane Doe’s parents sent Jane Doe to a local Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist from this list. As Jane Doe made subsequent statements regarding these events, her parents informed law enforcement. The detective explained that a second forensic interview could be conducted at a later time if Jane Doe’s therapist determined that she was ready.

5. Only one male caregiver had been scheduled to work during MOPS on Thursday, January 26, 2017 (the day of Jane Doe’s initial disclosure) and that person soon became the primary Person of Interest. Since the Person of Interest was scheduled to work on Friday, January 27, 2017, the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry and the Childcare Supervisor asked the Person of Interest to come in early so they could have a conversation with him and let him know he could not work that day and would be placed on paid leave until the resolution of the investigation. The Childcare Supervisor recalled that during their conversation with the Person of Interest, the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry told the Person of Interest about the allegation. She recalled the Person of Interest was “really visibly shaken from that, and kind of stood up, and he just kept going back saying, ‘She went into the bathroom, I didn’t go with her, I just stood at the outside of the door, I never went in there with her.’ He just kept saying that, like walking through it himself and telling us what had happened, or just trying to explain that he didn’t do anything.”<sup>15</sup> At the time of the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry’s interview with

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<sup>11</sup> This patrol officer did not interview Jane Doe and instead set up an interview for her with a trained forensic interviewer.

<sup>12</sup> The forensic interviewer’s written assessment of the interview as documented in the Child Protection Team Report states, “[Jane Doe] is a 3-year-old female who stated that she does not like blue shirts. She was asked about a man in a blue shirt. [Jane Doe] stated, ‘I got to potty.’ She wiped herself, and then went on the slide and watered the plants. [Jane Doe] was asked what the man blue shirt did. She stated that she did not know. When asked where the man in blue shirt is, she stated that he is at the park. When asked what the man did at the park, she stated that he turns off the lights. She stated that she likes the man in the blue shirt. [Jane Doe] was asked to name body parts on a drawing. She was able to name body parts and identified her genital area as a ‘body.’ When asked if something happened to her body, Jane Doe stated that her mother puts medicine on her body and it hurts. She stated that it hurt when her mother touched it. She denied that the man in the blue shirt touched her.”

<sup>13</sup> Part of the assessment included notes by the physician about Jane Doe’s general appearance during the exam. The physician noted, “The patient was initially very cooperative and smiling during the exam, however when we began to talk about her genital area, [Jane Doe] began to cry and became distressed. We stopped the exam and got a snack. [Jane Doe] said she wanted her daddy, so we had [Jane Doe’s father] come into the exam room and he and [Jane Doe’s mother] proceed to calm and distract her. Ultimately she was able to cooperate on her mother’s lap without tears. Following the exam, [Jane Doe] commented that she had been scared the exam was going to hurt but with a smile said that it did not.”

<sup>14</sup> The physician’s report states, “[Jane Doe] is a three years [sic] old girl referred for evaluation of suspected sexual abuse by an adult male worker at the Mothers of Preschoolers group at a church. [Jane Doe] disclosed to her mother that the man touched her genital area but did not make a disclosure of sexual abuse during her forensic interview. The suspect’s name is not currently known. Her physical exam is normal. [Some information was removed for privacy, but the genital exam was normal.] Her anal exam is normal. A normal anogenital exam does not preclude or confirm the possibility of sexual abuse as described in the history. Many types of sexual abuse are not associated with physical findings significant enough to be found on physical exam.” A urinalysis for two common sexually transmitted diseases was also performed and yielded negative results.

<sup>15</sup> At the time of the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry and Childcare Supervisor’s conversation on 1/27/17 with the Person of Interest, it was believed Jane Doe had been assigned to the Person of Interest’s classroom on the previous day, Thursday, 1/26/17. After researching the room assignments and doing additional recordkeeping regarding this issue, SBC later confirmed that in fact Jane Doe was assigned to a different classroom from the

the detective, he also recalled the Person of Interest was “bummed and [asked] what was going to happen to him and if he was going to jail.”<sup>16</sup> The Pastor of the Children’s Ministry also told GRACE that when he told the Person of Interest that SBC had some video, the Person of Interest appeared to be “alleviated or happy” and said, “Oh ok, good.”

6. It was learned after a review of records correlating Jane Doe’s attendance at the Shea campus and Mountain Valley campus with employee schedules of male caregivers for November 2016, December 2016, and January 2017 that a couple of other male childcare employees had also been on campus when she attended various church activities.<sup>17</sup> First, with regard to Jane Doe’s visit to the Mountain Valley campus on November 6, 2016, no records exist regarding which classrooms were used and to what classrooms the staff were assigned. However, SBC records indicate that the primary Person of Interest in this case was assigned to work at the Mountain Valley campus on this date when Jane Doe was present, and her mother reported that she specifically recalled dropping Jane Doe off in the Person of Interest’s classroom on this particular occasion because that was the first time she had seen him as a caregiver. Second, after reviewing the records from dates Jane Doe was present on the Shea campus in November 2016, December 2016, and January 2017, Jane Doe was never assigned to a classroom with a male caregiver or with the Person of Interest.<sup>18</sup> While some opportunity for a male caregiver to have access to Jane Doe on the Shea campus was possible, it appears to have been limited. Opportunities for possible access by a male caregiver to Jane Doe on the Shea campus could have included periods in which classrooms of children combined for group activities, for example, during playground time or during group activities in the Warehouse (for example, for music or during a puppet show), although no one reported seeing this occur.

7. No video cameras existed at the Mountain Valley campus; however, SBC has a number of video surveillance cameras on the Shea campus. The Shea campus cameras were capable of capturing video footage of some relevant areas where child care exists. For example, video cameras monitored the hallways leading to and from the classrooms and outside the bathrooms. However, no cameras existed inside any classrooms or inside the bathrooms at the time of these events.<sup>19</sup> In addition, some cameras existed near the playground area; however, the cameras did not capture footage of the small playground area on the east side of the Discovery (E) building. SBC’s head of security, the Scottsdale Police Department detective, and Jane Doe’s parents reviewed the available video footage for the dates in question. The video footage that was available captured video of male (and female) caregivers interacting with children, but the footage did not depict any male caregiver alone with Jane Doe or taking Jane Doe to the bathroom.<sup>20</sup>

8. Caregivers who worked with the Person of Interest on the dates in question told law enforcement and GRACE that they did not recall seeing him have any contact alone with Jane Doe. Several witnesses indicated that due to SBC policy forbidding contact alone with children, they did not believe that the Person of Interest would have or did have any contact alone with Jane Doe.<sup>21</sup>

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Person of Interest on Thursday, 1/26/17. Therefore, at the time of their conversation when the Person of Interest reportedly made these statements to the Childcare Supervisor and the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry, it cannot be confirmed whether the Person of Interest was possibly referring to Jane Doe or to another girl he may have taken to the restroom.

<sup>16</sup> See SPD offense report, p. 1. of interview with Pastor of the Children’s Ministry, 2/1/17.

<sup>17</sup> Maps and childcare records synthesizing Jane Doe’s presence on two campuses (Mountain Valley and the Shea campus) with male caregivers during November, 2016, December 2016, and January 2017 were provided to law enforcement, the Doe family, and to GRACE.

<sup>18</sup> The only exception was a Sunday morning in December when a male caregiver volunteered in her Sunday School class. However, on Sunday mornings the volunteers are not required to wear blue polo shirts; the blue polo shirts are required for the paid childcare workers. In addition, the Person of Interest did not work on Sundays and therefore was not scheduled to work that day.

<sup>19</sup> After the police investigation concluded, SBC has since added cameras to the insides of classrooms. No cameras exist inside the bathrooms.

<sup>20</sup> The detective noted one exception regarding the Person of Interest in his report and explained, “As stated in my previous supplement, I was able to identify which caregiver believed to be [the Person of Interest] and I did not see him alone with any children at any time. The only exception to that was in the January 19th video where [the Person of Interest] could be seen walking from the group room to the hallway with a child. [The Person of Interest] was seen pointing toward a female caregiver who was at the hallway bathroom and the child walked to her. [The Person of Interest] then returned to the large room and did not reappear until he left with the group as they headed back to their individual classrooms.”

<sup>21</sup> Witnesses explained that SBC requires that caregivers work with another adult present, and that if an adult is required to leave the other adult (for example, to take a child to the restroom), the caregiver must take another child along so that the adult is not alone with the child. Regarding Jane Doe’s visit to the Mountain Valley campus on November 6, 2016, a caregiver told GRACE, “I didn’t see anything explicitly. I don’t remember him being missing. I know the cops had questioned me regarding that, and I feel like if I saw him missing from the class for a significant period, more than five minutes, I would acknowledge that. That’s something we’d automatically report to our team.”

9. In the weeks and months following Jane Doe's initial disclosure of information on January 26, 2017, Jane Doe made additional disclosures to her parents.<sup>22</sup> In addition, on February 23, 2017, Jane Doe complained to her mother that the man in the blue shirt put "a stick in her bottom" and asked her mother to check her. Her mother saw nothing but took her to the pediatrician the same day. Jane Doe likewise told her pediatrician she was worried she had a stick in her bottom, and "She says that it happened today 'by the man in the blue shirt.'"<sup>23</sup> The pediatrician noted an anal fissure upon examination; however per Jane Doe's mother, Jane Doe had passed a large stool the previous day. In addition, Jane Doe saw a Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist for approximately 25 to 30 sessions from February 2017 to September 2018 and documented her sessions in therapy records provided to GRACE.<sup>24</sup> The therapist told GRACE it was clear that Jane Doe met criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and that "the overarching theme in her play therapy was indicative of intrusive imagery in re-experiencing the trauma." The therapist explained that Jane Doe's play was often associated with fears "about bad people that are going to come in and take her or otherwise hurt her, steal her, or that she wasn't safe in some way, and that her parents, or her teacher, or me had to come and rescue her, and help her be safe. Or her imaginary friend had to help her be safe." The therapist also told GRACE that due to her training and expertise that she is "always looking to see if a parent coached or a parent led." The therapist stated she saw no indications that her mother ever coached Jane Doe in any way.<sup>25</sup>

10. Jane Doe's parents have documented a range of changed behaviors they observed over time since shortly before her initial disclosure was made. These have included some instances of enuresis,<sup>26</sup> encopresis,<sup>27</sup> nightmares, tantrums, hitting

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<sup>22</sup> For example, her parents reported to Scottsdale Police and to GRACE: on 1/29/17 when Jane Doe woke up during the early morning hours and cried "mommy, mommy," her mother came to her, and Jane Doe said she wanted to keep the light on. When asked why, Jane Doe told her mother that the man in the blue shirt took a rest with her in a room with music, that they were "close" (Jane Doe demonstrated this by crossing her middle finger over her index finger) and that this occurred approximately five times. On 2/11/17, as Jane Doe was getting ready for bed, Jane Doe said that her "tee tee" (the word she uses for vagina) was hurting. Her mother gave her a wipe to use and asked her if she thought she needed some Desitin cream. Jane Doe said yes, and her mother gave Jane Doe some cream on Jane Doe's finger and when she put it on, "she made this heavy, quickened breathing. Like a moaning noise with it. It sounded like a sexual noise to [her mother]." That same evening just before bedtime, Jane Doe told her mother, "the man in the blue shirt drew on me with a pencil." Her mother asked, "Where did he draw on you?" Jane Doe "put her pointer finger in her mouth and she starting moving it around quickly and pulling it like in a quick motion in and out of her cheeks." When asked, "How did that make you feel?" Jane Doe said "sad" and then her mother said, "thank you so much for telling mommy. I love you." On 2/21/17, Jane Doe told her mother, "It hurts if other people touch my vagina. It hurt when the man in the blue shirt touched me here." Her mother then said "I'm so glad you told mommy. Others are not allowed to touch you there. And if someone does touch you there, you can scream too." Jane Doe then said, "That would have made my teacher mad." Her mother said, "It's okay to still scream if you can or feel like screaming so others can hear you and come." Jane Doe then stated, "One time the man in the blue shirt was going to get me and my teacher saved me." When asked how her teacher saved her, Jane Doe said, "She protected me." Her mother asked who her teacher was, and Jane Doe said she did not remember her name. On an occasion in February (exact date unknown), Jane Doe and her mother were in the car and as they drove past the aquarium, Jane Doe stated, "The man in the blue shirt hit me right before we went to the aquarium, and I was three." In the months following the closure of the police investigation, Jane Doe continued to make statements regarding her physical safety to her parents and to a relative about "the man in the blue shirt," for example, whether he could get into their house and whether she was safe. Another example was on 9/17/18 when Jane Doe asked her mother, "Can I play the matching game with my friends?" And [her mother] said, 'what's the matching game?' And she said, 'when you match body parts together, like your booty.' And [her mother] said, 'who taught you how to play the matching game?' And she just was quiet, like she wasn't going to tell me. And then she said, 'I played the matching game with the man in the blue shirt.' And [her mother] said, 'well, what did you do?' And [Jane Doe] said, 'well, we matched our nipples,' and she lifted up her shirt, and she said, 'and then we matched our belly buttons, and then we matched our privates.' And [her mother] said, 'I'm so glad that you told me about this game that you played. It's confusing, but it's not something we want to play with our friends. I'm sorry that he played that with you.' [Her mother] said, 'remember when we talked about our private parts, and how no one is supposed to touch them. If we played this with our friends, we'd be touching their private parts, and we want to keep our private parts to ourselves.' I said, 'you didn't know this because you were young but he shouldn't have played that game with you.'"

<sup>23</sup> Jane Doe's medical records, 2/23/17, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> In several of her therapy sessions, Jane Doe made statements about these events to her therapist. Some of these include: on 2/15/17, Jane Doe stated with a frown, "I don't like church anymore" and "the man with the blue shirt hit me." On 2/20/17, Jane Doe said in a play therapy session, "'the man in the blue shirt wanted to help the kids to the bathroom' and [Jane Doe] said 'No!' Then [Jane Doe] said, 'he took me to Disneyland' and that is where they were when he hit [Jane Doe] and we gave him a time out. Then she told the teacher she went poop in her pants and she changed her panties. Then she said 'I love you teacher' and hugged her." On 2/27/17, Jane Doe told the therapist, "The man with the blue shirt put a pencil in my bottom." When asked when that happened, Jane Doe said, "today." When the therapist asked where it happened, Jane Doe said, "at the store." Jane Doe was also asked how does it feel and she stated, "sad," and she provided the Person of Interest's first name as the person who did these things to her. The therapist noted Jane Doe was "resistant regarding what else happened." On 4/4/17, the therapist documented that Jane Doe made the following comments, including, "Why did we ask the man in the blue shirt not to leave church?" "I miss him, I want to write him a letter," "He loves me," "Why did he trick me?" and "Does he have a key to the house?"

<sup>25</sup> An extended Doe family member who was present with the family during the initial days of these events and who made several follow-up trips to visit the family also told GRACE that Jane Doe's mother and father were very concerned about not asking their daughter leading questions and were quite cautious about not taking phone calls with the police or with church people in her presence.

<sup>26</sup> Enuresis is defined as lack of control of urination, especially during sleep; bed-wetting; urinary incontinence.

<sup>27</sup> Encopresis is defined as involuntary defecation.

her mother, screaming, “acting out,” not wanting to lay down in the tub during bath time, repeatedly barricading herself in a room or at the kitchen table and saying “now nobody can get me,” anxiety about going to church, anxiety about who can get into her house or past their gate, anxiety about attending a new school, anxiety about being near men who were not her father, and changing her favorite color from blue to pink.

11. On March 29, 2017, the detective closed the investigation as “unfounded” based on the facts available to him at that time. The detective explained that the term unfounded means, “the elements of the crime cannot be established.”<sup>28</sup>

12. GRACE received additional data points regarding the Person of Interest. GRACE learned that in late 2016 and prior to the disclosure made by Jane Doe, the parents of John Smith,<sup>29</sup> another child the same age as Jane Doe who had regular contact with the Person of Interest made a statement to his mother, namely “Mr. [Person of Interest’s first name], pee-pee.”<sup>30</sup> The parents did not understand the statement and did not know what to think at that time. Upon questioning their son further, he said nothing more about it and showed no signs of trauma or negative feelings toward the Person of Interest. A couple of months later, John Smith’s father was informed of Jane Doe’s disclosure through SBC employees. John Smith’s father told an SBC employee, a trusted church friend, about his son’s disclosure and told the employee he was not inclined to report it, but asked his advice. In addition, John Smith’s parents asked their pediatrician about their son’s statement. All agreed that the disclosure did not need further follow-up. John Smith’s mother also told GRACE, “We assumed [the Person of Interest] had been vetted by the church and was safe to be a childcare worker.” In addition, Jane Doe’s parents learned of posts on the Person of Interest’s Facebook page linking directly to a blog that contained disturbing stories and content including a blog post that discussed “a Tyrannosaurus Rex kid molester” which was provided to SBC and to law enforcement on February 6, 2017.<sup>31</sup> Upon researching this blog further after the criminal investigation ended, Jane Doe’s parents found additional information on the blog, namely, a link to a 45-page story with more references to child sexual abuse.<sup>32</sup> Screenshots of the Person of Interest’s Facebook page link to this blog in September 2013, approximately a year before the Person of Interest was hired by SBC as a childcare worker.

### ***SBC’s Response***

The following findings relate to SBC’s handling of this matter in the days and months following Jane Doe’s disclosure.

1. On January 27, 2017, SBC contacted Child Protective Services immediately after learning of the disclosure<sup>33</sup> and began reviewing records and video surveillance to evaluate which persons had access to Jane Doe. In addition, after they determined which childcare employees or volunteers may have had contact with Jane Doe, they told the Person of Interest not to return to work pending the resolution of the investigation, and he was placed on paid leave. The Scottsdale Police

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<sup>28</sup> The detective told GRACE, “The long and short of it is I was unable to substantiate that a crime occurred. It wasn’t simply that I didn’t have enough evidence to move forward with it. I just wasn’t able to establish the elements of a crime. We had disclosure on the victim’s part, but beyond that, based on my interview or my interviews, my reviewing of video evidence and really kind of the limited disclosure that we had, and my discussion with the victim’s therapist and what not, I just couldn’t get to the point where I could even definitively say a crime had occurred.” As he noted in his report, he told Jane Doe’s family, “I explained repeatedly that I didn’t disbelieve what they were reporting but that I didn’t have any evidence to support it.”

<sup>29</sup> John Smith is a pseudonym.

<sup>30</sup> This child was not potty trained at the time and the statement occurred when his mother was pulling up his pull-up. The child referred to his penis as “pee-pee” and he also used the phrase “pee-pee” to mean going to the bathroom or “going pee-pee.”

<sup>31</sup> A post on the Person of Interest’s Facebook page from September 26, 2013 provides a link to a blog with a caption stating, “Welcome to my Blog” with a photo entitled *Finding Waldo: the Quest for the Impossible* by QBurt. Also connected to the Person of Interest’s Facebook page is a YouTube channel. On the landing page of the YouTube channel, the Person of Interest appears in a welcome video calling himself “QBurt” which bears the same name as the blog linked to his Facebook page. The photo icons linking the Person of Interest’s Facebook page to the YouTube channel are identical photos of a man sitting in a tree. The blog content has since been removed but was preserved prior to its removal. For example, some content from this post included the following: “Nothing indeed has been low enough for The Creep. He has raped a long list of women. And many small girls. The last being a 4-year old. Says The Creep: ‘I know I stand accused of all this. And you are right to accuse me. It’s all true down to the last diddle. I wish it weren’t, but such is life. I didn’t think it wouldn’t ever end this way; but if you gotta go, go like a man, I say.’”

<sup>32</sup> The blog post dated September 28, 2013 contained a 45-page story entitled, “The Creep of Dreamer’s Peak: the Tale of a Pervert.” At the end of the story, a paragraph indicates that the dedication is to “[first and last name of the Person of Interest].” The blog content has since been removed but was preserved prior to its removal.

<sup>33</sup> SBC’s Childcare Supervisor learned of the disclosure because on the evening of 1/26/17, Jane Doe’s mother sent text messages to a mother at her MOPS table telling her what her daughter told her and asking who was in charge of childcare. On 1/27/17, that mother informed the Childcare Supervisor and asked her to call Jane Doe’s mother. The Childcare Supervisor did not call Jane Doe’s mother but instead told her boss, the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry and they made a report to CPS and law enforcement on 1/27/17.

Department detective noted in his report that SBC “cooperated fully” with the investigation and provided SBC records, video, and witness interviews to police to aid with an evaluation of whether a crime occurred.

2. In the days and weeks that followed Jane Doe’s initial disclosure, Jane Doe’s parents met with church representatives and indicated that the care and support they received in initial meetings was helpful and much appreciated. For example, the Minister to Women asked Jane Doe’s mother if there was anything she could do during this difficult time. Jane Doe’s mother explained that since they were not able to go to church,<sup>34</sup> and they were streaming the church service videos at home, it would be helpful if someone could send them the coloring pages from Jane Doe’s Sunday School class. Those coloring pages were sent to Jane Doe for approximately ten weeks. Mrs. Doe noted her appreciation and explained, “That was really helpful.” In addition, during their first meeting in early February 2017, Jane Doe’s parents and other SBC witnesses explained that they met together with some SBC employees, including the top MOPS representative, the Pastor of the Children’s Ministry, the Head of Security, the Minister to Women, a pastor, as well as the elder chairman. Jane Doe’s parents felt the meeting was positive and described SBC’s overall response at that time as demonstrating “[c]oncern, listening, [and] empathy.” SBC also provided Jane Doe’s parents with video footage, maps of the property, and other requested information such as attendance records regarding this matter.

3. As the police investigation was pending, the Doe family desired that SBC make an announcement to parents regarding the existence of the criminal investigation. SBC asked the detective for his advice on this issue, and the detective told GRACE that he told SBC his preference was that an announcement not be made for a couple of weeks so that he could complete his investigation, with the caveat that the church consult their attorney and make whatever decisions they believed were best for their organization. Two weeks later, the investigation ended and the disposition was deemed “unfounded.” The detective explained in his report, “Based on the totality of this investigation I am unable to substantiate that a crime occurred. Based on the facts available to me at this time I find the allegation UNFOUNDED and have closed the report as such.” Because of this disposition, SBC decided not to inform parents of the allegation. SBC’s Senior Pastor told GRACE, “You know that they were very clear that they find no basis for the accusation and that they find it unfounded, capitals,<sup>35</sup> and that they are closing this report. So we felt like at that point, not that we didn’t want to stop caring for the [the Doe family] at all, but we felt, ‘Okay, this is that.’” The Senior Pastor also explained that communications with the Doe family “seemed to have broken down right after the police investigation, where we felt there was at least enough closure to move on, and they did not.”

4. The Doe family believes their daughter was abused by the Person of Interest at SBC and believed it was important for SBC to inform parents whose children had contact with the Person of Interest so parents could look for possible signs of abuse and seek help for their child. In the months that followed the closure of the police investigation, some SBC leaders including the Minister to Women and the top MOPS leader expressed that Jane Doe’s mother “created fear,” stirred up “gossip” and shared “misinformation”<sup>36</sup> by “sharing something that is unfounded” with other parents.<sup>37</sup> A few MOPS

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<sup>34</sup> Jane Doe’s parents stated that it was recommended by law enforcement that they not attend the church while the investigation was ongoing.

<sup>35</sup> The offense report had the word “unfounded” in all capital letters.

<sup>36</sup> One such example of alleged misinformation was when the top MOPS leader claimed the Doe family had falsely asserted that an SBC pastor had seen the Person of Interest at a splash pad watching children and had waved at him. The MOPS leader told GRACE that after checking around, this did not happen. However, an SBC pastor interviewed by GRACE stated that he and his wife had seen the Person of Interest during the early evening hours of April 29, 2017 sitting at a bench facing a splash pad looking at children run around in the water. Both interviewees told GRACE that the Person of Interest was sitting at a park bench with a young woman who appeared possibly to be a girlfriend, as he had his arm around her. The church employee and spouse stated they were in the same public area as the Person of Interest for approximately 30 to 40 minutes, and they noted that he and the woman did not appear to be babysitting or supervising any children at the splash pad, but he was simply watching the children play in the water. The children were approximately ages one to seven or eight and were wearing bathing suits and summer clothing. The interviewees left the area before the alleged offender did. No indication exists from witnesses interviewed by GRACE that the SBC pastor “waved” at the Person of Interest, or that the Doe family has reported otherwise.

<sup>37</sup> The Minister to Women told GRACE, “Well, I would never try to control one of my women. Everybody’s truth is their own truth. It was- it is difficult when somebody is sharing something that is unfounded, that causes a tremendous amount of fear to go through. So, I wasn’t crazy about the fact that she was creating fear, although we never asked her not to share, or put controls on her, or told her she was wrong. We just stood in the truth that we knew. She would share it with such- so confidently that it did cause a lot of moms a lot of fear. So, [Jane Doe’s mother] created a lot of conversations for us all over the map, but that’s just how things like this go down.” She also told GRACE, “I can’t imagine that we would say, ‘You can share it. You can’t share it.’ But what we did say was, just the truth that we knew. ‘At this time nothing has been substantiated. The protocols are strong. We believe your children are safe. We’re open to any new information.’ Yeah. But I don’t know if somebody- I think [the Senior Pastor] and his, he went through all the facts when he addressed moms. ‘Cause some of the stories, and I can’t remember specifics, things get really crazy and outlandish as the gossip grows. And [the Senior Pastor] asked them to stick with the facts. He said, ‘I’m going to give you the facts, so you know what the facts are. So, when you speak about this you’re sharing about the facts. And I’m going to ask you not to grow this story into something else.’”



mothers told GRACE that the top MOPS leader and the Minister of Women communicated “it absolutely did not happen at SBC” and that sharing information would needlessly worry parents.<sup>38</sup> Some interviewees believe that Jane Doe’s parents were perceived by SBC as “troublemakers.”<sup>39</sup>

5. Though the Senior Pastor did not believe that an announcement regarding the investigation was needed, eventually he did speak publicly about these events to MOPS on September 13, 2018.<sup>40</sup> The Senior Pastor indicated to the MOPS group that the purpose of his announcement was to put an end to “misinformation” and “gossip”<sup>41</sup> and to assure parents that their children were safe at SBC.<sup>42</sup> The Senior Pastor also stated that individuals with relevant information should report it to law enforcement and to GRACE.<sup>43</sup> While GRACE was told indirectly that some mothers felt good about the announcement, some mothers directly reported to GRACE that they felt angry and betrayed that SBC had not informed them sooner.<sup>44</sup> One mother explained she still attends SBC despite her disappointment it had not been addressed earlier,

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Because it became this underground thing, and some of the things that were coming back to us were not true. But I can't tell you specifically what those things were.”

<sup>38</sup> For example, one MOPS leader recalled a conversation where she stated she met with the Minister of Women and the top leader of MOPS, and “I was told to keep this hush-hush, because we didn’t want it to alarm all the moms in MOPS.” She explained how she felt about this, stating, “That’s a hard one, because yeah, you don’t want to scare all these parents if there isn’t a situation, but yet part of me felt like the church should’ve addressed it, but it was never addressed. But I understand their point of view too, not wanting to scare the parents... I spent many nights crying to my husband about it, because he’s the only one that I could really talk to. Hurting for [Jane Doe’s mother]. Hurting for her daughter and her husband.”

<sup>39</sup> An SBC employee told GRACE, “I think in [Jane Doe’s mother’s] desire to come to the truth she was perceived as a troublemaker, kind of like stirring up the pot unnecessarily and causing whispering among the MOPS. I think the leadership, [the Minister to Women], I think she wanted them to squash that.” A MOPS mother told GRACE, “But [SBC] basically made that lady a pariah, and her family, and they spread a lot of gossip and rumors. I heard stories from other moms that, ‘Oh, well the dad did it.’ Well, okay, now you’re just spreading rumors, and you’re taking down their credibility so everyone thinks it never happened.”

<sup>40</sup> The Senior Pastor explained to MOPS his initial decision not to announce the investigation a year and a half earlier and stated, “Now, this is really important for you to understand ladies because this is where it all comes down to my decision and I’ve done this for a long time. I chose at that time, and I would choose it again, that at that point in the investigation where the best of the best Scottsdale Police had not been able to turn up anything and we’ve already dragged this twenty eight year old caregiver through the mud. I mean his life is changed forever because we released him permanently based upon this investigation just ‘cause we just wanted this to be as clean as possible. I felt it would not be helpful for me to share this with everybody in our church. Not because I was hiding anything at all, I mean we are very authentic and upfront. I put victims first in every scenario like this, but putting victims first means that we take the claims seriously, we investigated. And if we don’t find anything it’s not very helpful then to share that with everybody because it’s hard to do so cryptically without mentioning names and people, and dates, and occurrences and it creates more questions and confusion than not. You need to hear this ladies, if ever anything happens on this campus, and it hasn’t yet, but if it ever does and we substantiate that a harm came to any child here you would know about it. And you would know about it from me because we don’t hide anything here; we are a family, we are a church and we’re in this together. But we do investigate certain things, this is one of the most serious, from time to time behind the scenes. And when we don’t find anything, we don’t find it very helpful, in fact it creates more problems than not, to communicate it with everybody especially when we are dealing with victims of alleged accusers and things like that. And so I chose at that time not to share this publicly and we thought we would be just fine. The family over the last year has not, just to put it mildly, that has not settled well with them. They think that there is more work to be done.”

<sup>41</sup> The Senior Pastor told MOPS, “In church circles, especially one as large as this, sometimes information gets shared. I call it the underground communication network, sometimes the Bible calls it gossip. Sometimes information gets shared that starts to take on a life of its own, the facts are not correct and myself has to step in and sort of say, ‘here’s what’s happening, here’s why,’ and yet usually it’s over a subject or an issue that I wasn’t planning on addressing such a large group about. And you’ll understand why as we go along. But we had to make a decision this week that on the opening day of MOPS, I needed to talk to you about this because some of you are already aware of the issue and there’s some misinformation that is out there.”

<sup>42</sup> The Senior Pastor told MOPS, “We have protocols, we have procedures, in addition to all the loving and caring that goes on that gives me assurance that our children here at our church are safer, and this is not an overstatement, than anywhere else in society or culture today. My wife was a school teacher for twenty years, my daughter was a school teacher for five years. I’m intimately familiar with the whole public school system. I’m a big fan, private as well but I would match up the way that we care for our children here, the protection we put around them against any other organization in culture. And again it goes back to our training, our background checks of every single person that is involved with your child. We do full background checks, they are well trained and we have protocols and procedures that make it so that there’s no chance that there is harm that could ever come to a child. That’s our commitment to you but sometimes that claim is challenged.”

<sup>43</sup> The Senior Pastor told MOPS, “Second thing I have to ask from you if you do have any information, if you ever hear of anything that you’re concerned about here or an alleged abuse, and again it happens so very rarely. But if ever that happens or if it’s happening right now in you, can I encourage you to do something? If you want to you can go to one of two places tell us, and if you heard me earlier if you tell us we will report it immediately. Or report it yourself. The one thing that this family, well many things, but right, is that they needed to report it. That was a good thing to do. Because we are concerned about your kids just as much as anybody else. If you report it, it will be investigated. If you have any information on this scenario please report it to us or during the investigation to GRACE, or again to the Scottsdale Police Department. The third thing I would ask you to do, is to remember. I started off on this note, ladies, this is a very isolated incident. And it’s one I usually would not have usually brought to you because, again, we haven’t found anything to bring to you. And I believe, in fact I know this is the case, that your children are in incredibly good care here at this church. I’m not just saying that I’ve been through a lot of children’s ministries with my own babies and this place overdoses on love and care and protection for your children. That’s why so many of you are here and we stand committed to that.”

<sup>44</sup> A MOPS mother told GRACE, “They were not acting in the best interest of the mothers, of the kids, they were acting in the best interest of the church. The church is there to serve the people, they were not serving the people, they were serving themselves. That is very disappointing, that is

but a few told GRACE they left SBC permanently specifically because SBC withheld this information from them.<sup>45</sup> Another mother told GRACE, the failure to make an announcement to parents in the MOPS program put her in a bind with friends who found out later that she had known this information and had not disclosed it to fellow mothers. This resulted in her leaving SBC for a period of time.<sup>46</sup>

6. Regarding the issue of SBC's care and concern for the Doe family, the Senior Pastor explained that SBC involved several "key staff, especially in the first three or four months, to provide whatever pastoral resources we could to [the Doe family] throughout all of this."<sup>47</sup> SBC also paid for some of Jane Doe's counseling fees and initiated this independent investigation as a demonstration of love and concern for Jane Doe. Despite these positive and appreciated interactions with SBC,<sup>48</sup> the Doe family and other witnesses explained that SBC's key missteps related to poor or lacking direct communication from key leaders about significant issues. First, Jane Doe's parents expressed they were particularly hurt<sup>49</sup>

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just so disappointing. It's disgusting to me.... I don't care, mass hysteria or not, that's something you have to deal with, when you get a molester case, you got to deal with it, you got to let people know. Covering it up makes it worse. It's like when you lie. You should have just told the truth. To me, that was a lie. Omission of the truth is a lie. I know their side, that they didn't want to cause mass hysteria, they didn't want to cause stress to the mothers. I think those are all excuses, and I think everybody knows it.... Yet, I see a whole church making excuses, and not being accountable for something. Even if that guy didn't do it, you still could have done 20 different things differently. I mean, everything I hear, to me, is not wanting to admit you did something wrong, and using excuses." Another MOPS mother severed ties with SBC "after hearing both sides of the story" and told GRACE, "Whether or not it happened or not, God knows what happened. I wasn't there at that moment in time, so I don't know. But it is the church's responsibility to give families resources to deal with this.... I understand if there's an allegation that's not true from their perspective, or if there's an investigation that's active, but I think if the church wants to equip moms to be better moms, which is what they say, and if - I just think about a church in general, has the responsibility and the duty to their congregation."

<sup>45</sup> One such mother who no longer participates in MOPS at SBC stated, "And somebody had posted on the Scottsdale Bible website about how they were going to handle [another situation] and they were going to do it with dignity and grace, it would be so transparent, yada yada. Well, it just really struck a nerve with me, because it just felt like whether or not something happened on that campus, it didn't feel like the proper information was given to us as moms.... I think it's terrible to have mothers of children hearing rumors and nothing to be addressed. And if something did happen, I think the most- several moms have been upset because we could've talked to our children at that time. They're three years old, you know? So, I showed a picture of this man to my three-year-old, but this was a year and a half ago now. And I just, I don't know. I just felt like it was- there's 200 women that go to this ministry at this giant church and I just feel like it would've, they probably would have lost some of the following. Or it would've been another media story about the church. I don't know. It just kind of has disgusted me.... And these are our children. We're there because we're moms and we care about our children and we care about being the best mothers that we can. We want them in a safe environment. I don't know. I really feel, again, and I take the stance, of course I kind of sympathize with [Jane Doe's mother], but I take the stance of whether it happened or not, I just am upset that it was kept from us."

<sup>46</sup> This mother told GRACE, "Yeah, initially when the accusations were discussed, they immediately removed him from the property, they immediately called in an investigation, they immediately involved the police. So, I felt like in the beginning [SBC] did a great job, they jumped, they did what they needed to do, they really turned it over to authority but it was that message of delivering after the follow up, the buttoning up, the disclosure which I think is really, really important and they didn't do that. So, originally I thought that they handled it really well but now in hindsight I'm like man they could have done a better job because that message that [the Senior Pastor] gave two months ago would have been received a lot differently two years ago. It really made people more upset, I think, than it would have if it was in the middle of it.... It had been so long. And you're thinking like 'my kid was in that class and I was never told.' That would break a trust barrier with me with Scottsdale Bible for sure if I was in those shoes. So, that's pretty interesting this is all coming out delayed. So, I thought that that was interesting that now two years later they make the announcement. It's like where was that two years ago? You know and it puts us in a hard spot because when moms are calling you and they're like 'how come you didn't tell me that?' Now they're mad at us personally so, all of a sudden us bystanders that are just part of the program are part of it and being frustrated at and mad at and 'why didn't you tell me, I thought we were good friends, you should have told me.' So, it was hard and I don't think Scottsdale Bible is looking at that perspective of the group of us that are being dragged through the rocks with this whole thing for sure.... I think I really hope that Scottsdale Bible learns a better process of handling situations like this and making sure that the communication is heard because they have the ability to do it, I think just chose not to and to really learn to support those that are involved because I get it, it was an investigation, but they could have been there a lot more for us as we tried to heal. They noticed that I wasn't going to church, that I wasn't going there every Sunday, that I wasn't involved, I wasn't going to any meetings, nothing. And there was nothing, there was no phone call, there was no outreach, nothing. I had to do a lot of healing on my own. They probably should have invited us to have counseling there or through a third party because it really affected us. There was nothing of that conversation. I know that they offered it to [Jane Doe's mother] but there were a lot more of us that were in it with her, it takes a lot to rock me and it rocked me for a while for sure."

<sup>47</sup> The Senior Pastor included in this list the Minister to Children, the top MOPS leader, the Minister to Women, the Pastor of Ministry Leadership, a pastor from another campus, and the Head of Security.

<sup>48</sup> The Minister to Women told GRACE, "I feel like the Elders listened to every word they said. They responded to their emails in a timely manner. We made sure that people came around [Jane Doe's mother]. We listened to her, we prayed for her, we prayed for the women that were conflicted around her, 'cause she's very convincing. And so, I feel like we cared for her well, whether or not she believes we did or not. We had a lot of people caring for her. The Elders cared and prayed for her well. So, I think our church did well there."

<sup>49</sup> Jane Doe's mother explained to an SBC representative in April 2017 that their hearts were grieving about this lack of direct communication and noted, "I did hear from [the Pastor of Ministry Leadership] on behalf of the Elders last week. I am deeply sad and hurt by how the Elders responded and what they have decided. Just so sad and grieving. We had reached out to the Elders to speak with them and opened our hearts to them. We have an 11 year history with our Elders and they didn't even have the desire to follow up with us directly and have a conversation with us about their decision. It deeply hurt us. It felt like they didn't care about us and were almost just slamming the door on us. I honestly have just been pouring tears over it this week. We still have had no follow up from any of our elders since our meeting. We're not even sure how to respond or what the next step

when, after a significant meeting with Elders in March 2017, in which Jane Doe's parents requested feedback on how SBC planned to handle this matter, the Elders did not respond to several emails over a three-week time period, prompting them to initiate a call to SBC to find out if their emails had been received. In the phone call with their SBC point person, they learned that none of their requests would be granted.<sup>50</sup> SBC's point person for the Doe family indicated that the delay in the Elders' response was not intentional but related to the fact that the Elders only meet as a group together once a month and therefore could not have delivered the news in person sooner. In addition, because the point person had served SBC as an elder, the Elders believed communications with the Doe family through this point person was appropriate. Second, SBC's failure to communicate in September 2018 and inform the Doe family that the Senior Pastor would be speaking to MOPS about the investigation was another major disappointment because they had asked and desired that an announcement be made to parents for over a year.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the Senior Pastor's comment to over 200 mothers at MOPS that he had been "intimately involved" in the investigation was particularly hurtful to them because "...to lay it out there that he was intimately involved, makes it sound like, [we] had a relationship. If he walked in the room right now, I would say, 'Hi, my name is [Jane Doe's father], we never met.' I just don't know that that's intimately involved."<sup>52</sup> Finally, though SBC assigned a pastor to Jane Doe's family to be a support for them during this time, this pastor was already a close family friend and was in the process of transitioning out of SBC. This pastor told GRACE, "SBC should have been involved rather than punting this to a guy who's on his way out the door anyway (i.e., me). Because no one really followed up with me to see how they're doing.... It feels like from my perspective, it was kind of given to me like, hey, you take care of them and then we won't have to. But I was on my way out of SBC."<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the Doe family reported feeling that SBC "... could only love us to a certain extent. To the extent that it didn't impact the church, their organization."

7. As previously noted, on February 6, 2017, Jane Doe's parents notified SBC of the Person of Interest's Facebook page, which contained links to a blog, with one blog post containing a story with references to a "Tyrannosaurus Rex kid molester." After the police investigation closed on March 29, 2017, a SBC's Human Resources representative told GRACE she verbally terminated the Person of Interest on the phone; subsequently, however, the Person of Interest submitted a letter of resignation dated May 4, 2017 which was placed in his personnel file. A few months later, Jane Doe's parents found additional information they had not previously seen on the blog and shared the newly discovered information with SBC on August 1, 2017. The newly discovered information was a link to a 45-page story with graphic references to child sexual abuse. On August 2, SBC responded, "As for the blog entry you forwarded, we agree that the imagery and content is disturbing. Our desire is to employ men and women who seek to display Christlikeness in every area of their lives, and these writings do not live up to that standard." None of these issues related to the Person of Interest were addressed in the Senior Pastor's communication to MOPS in September 2018.

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to take." This SBC representative replied she was genuinely sorry regarding the miscommunication about the role of the Elders and that the Elders' role was not to respond to them directly, but through the Pastor of Ministry Leadership due to his role as their liaison. She also noted the fact that he had served as an SBC elder for many years.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Doe's parents explained that they met with a group of Elders and other SBC representatives on March 7, 2017 and made three requests: 1) that the church begin interviewing caregivers and supervisors. 2) that other parents be notified that an investigation was happening. 3) that the Person of Interest be fired. As for requests 1 and 2, SBC indicated that it could not grant those requests at that time because they did not want to interfere with the law enforcement investigation. As for request 3, SBC indicated that it was a personnel matter and would not be shared. SBC did however tell the Doe family that the Person of Interest was on leave and they did not anticipate him returning in the future. When asked if they could be informed if the Person of Interest did return, SBC said yes.

<sup>51</sup> Jane Doe's father noted, "That is why [the Senior Pastor's] message to the MOPS Moms was so hurtful. How could he address 200+ moms without even speaking with us or notifying us he would be making an announcement? It was a huge heartbreak."

<sup>52</sup> He further explained, "My wife and I have had no contact with [the Senior Pastor] regarding my daughter's allegations. We have sent emails to the senior pastor email address and we never received a response. He never spoke to us over the phone or in person. In fact, this is the first time we have ever heard him mention it or acknowledge that he knew. Would that be considered 'intimately involved'?" Jane Doe's mother similarly explained, "I feel like even when [the Senior Pastor] spoke [at MOPS] I felt there was still kind of hope still. When we hadn't heard from him and for him to be up there and not even have the decency to notify us that he would be speaking. Or to reach out to us. To speak to hundreds of women and say that he was intimately involved since day one... He's never called us, we sent an email to Senior Pastor and he's never emailed us... I was notified by the [Minister to Women] day one that he was aware of everything. But to not even make a phone call first, or be like, 'I want to meet with them before I talk with 200 women.' I don't even know how many people were in the room but it was surprising to me. And I think I still grieved at that point. Even that many times later it hit me. It still hurt. It was just like a week of processing grief."

<sup>53</sup> He also noted, "I was really, again I didn't view the pastoral care I was giving to them, it was like an agent of Scottsdale Bible church. I kind of was like, these are my friends, I'll talk to them. I wasn't getting anything from SBC leadership on any direction, anything really. I just was like no one ever checked in with me on how they, hey how are they doing? I didn't really see myself as an agent of the church, I just was doing it because they are friends."

8. The SBC childcare supervisor in charge of interviewing, hiring, firing, scheduling, and training childcare workers at the time the Person of Interest was hired stated that his social media was not screened because that was not a part of their hiring protocol. The Person of Interest submitted a written employment application and background check<sup>54</sup> for a childcare position on September 2, 2014. SBC's application inquired about special skills and qualifications acquired from employment or other experiences that may qualify the applicant for this position. In the blank space, the Person of Interest explained that he has "very good writing and reading skills, as I am an author of several books, so when it comes to story time, let me read and you'll watch the story book come to life." Several individuals GRACE spoke with indicated that the Person of Interest talked often about being an author and writing stories, however, no indication exists that this comment about story writing in his application was followed up. In addition, the SBC representative who hired the Person of Interest told GRACE they did not screen his social media before hiring him. Accordingly, the blog links to stories about referencing child molestation were not discovered.

9. The Doe family and several other parents reported that the totality of SBC's response to these events had a negative spiritual impact on them.<sup>55</sup>

### **Part III. Analysis**<sup>56</sup>

#### ***Jane Doe's Disclosures***

Jane Doe has made a number of troubling statements to her parents, to a Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist, to a physician, and to some secondary family members. Determining the context and substance of her disclosures is particularly challenging given her age. At the conclusion of the law enforcement investigation, the detective was not able to determine that a crime occurred and therefore closed the investigation as "unfounded." Closing a case as unfounded does not mean that no crime occurred; rather it means that law enforcement could not substantiate whether a crime occurred with evidence that is generally acceptable in criminal cases.<sup>57</sup> The following points of analysis relating to Jane Doe's disclosures are notable points of consideration.

First, we note that on January 26, 2017, the evening of her initial disclosure, she told her mother that the man in the blue shirt touched her vagina. However, she had also indicated earlier in the day that the man in the blue shirt took her to the bathroom and told her to "wipe" which raises a question about whether any touching as she relayed it could have been a reference to bathroom wiping. In addition, on the morning of January 27, 2017 when describing to her parents that the

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<sup>54</sup> The background check indicated he had no criminal record.

<sup>55</sup> Jane Doe's father stated, "I mean, everything has changed. I mean, why would we do this to ourselves? It's been terrible. It's been horrible. We lost everything. We were at the church for 11 years. We told you about how we served there, and because of this incident we lost our church home, the people that prayed for us. We lost friendships. We can't take her to a church Sunday school anymore without feeling like something's going to happen to her." A MOPS mother told GRACE, "It's definitely impacted me spiritually. I feel like I have a little bit of a wall up, because it feels kind of painful to me. It just feels like I just kind of got duped, to be honest. I'm still trying to go to my [other] church, but there's a little wall up and there's some pain there." Another MOPS mother explained, "Going to Scottsdale Bible really brought me closer to the Lord. It was amazing, I loved it. I told everyone. I was just like, 'It's not too churchy, it's not feeling like they're pushing something on you, it's just a great feeling, it's an amazing thing.' I look back now and think, 'Was that all fake? Were they just trying to get the numbers, and bring you on?' Yeah. It totally colored my view, and it's sad, because I thought of this myself, I'm like, that's too bad, because I loved that church, and I loved everything they did, but now I just see it completely with different - I don't have the rose colored glasses on. I think that they're just doing things to - I don't necessarily think that they don't love God, I would never say that, but it's more- it seems superficial to me more now, and it seems more like the Televangelists, like it's all for show, and playing on your emotions. I'm like, that's so sad, because I loved that. I still am going to church, I'm going to [another church], and I'm trying - I haven't lost faith, but I've lost faith in that church. It seems more like- the glasses are off, and I see it in a different light. That's kind of sad, because I still think that they do amazing things there. I know that they probably brought a lot of people closer to God that were never there, and that's awesome. I just wish they didn't do cover ups of children being molested." Another MOPS mother told GRACE, "It was bad. I was terrified. It questioned my faith for sure. It questioned my church that I've known and loved for so long that I'm super involved in. It caused me to lose trust in leadership there that I'm like I don't know if I believe them. And it really questioned me dropping my kids off at their child care. And it's still a concern in my mind and I hate to pinpoint men but just statistically if there's a man in my class and I don't feel comfortable dropping my kids off, I won't."

<sup>56</sup> GRACE is a third party non-profit that engages in independent investigations to assist faith communities with appropriate responses to abuse disclosures. Though GRACE employs investigators with prior law enforcement and legal experience, GRACE is not a law firm and does not provide findings related to "guilt" or "innocence" as would a court of law. GRACE therefore makes no findings related to whether an alleged crime occurred, as that is what law enforcement officials, prosecutors, juries, and judges are permitted to do. We do however provide a summary of the relevant data points along with a reasoned analysis so that the reader may be properly equipped with understanding the facts gathered from the perspective of experts who regularly work in the field of child sexual abuse, and particularly abuse disclosures alleged to have occurred within a faith community.

<sup>57</sup> Victor Vieth, *Investigation and Prosecution of Child Abuse*, 28 (3rd Ed. 2004).

man in the blue shirt “hit” her, she bobbed her head backwards and forwards in a manner that caused her parents to fear she was describing a sexual encounter. Disclosures of this nature can be too vague for criminal prosecution for a variety of reasons, including the fact that various potential defenses must be ruled out.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, when Jane Doe was forensically interviewed at Phoenix Childhelp, she denied that “the man in the blue shirt” touched her anywhere. Jane Doe’s statements to her therapist (e.g., that the man in the blue shirt “hit” her and “put a pencil in her bottom”) and to her pediatrician (that “the man in the blue shirt put a stick in her bottom today”) have not at this point yielded greater clarity about these matters. Jane Doe’s verbal and demonstrative descriptions nonetheless raise the possibility that Jane has been exposed to sexualized behaviors.

Second, Jane Doe has exhibited a number of behaviors which can be consistent with sexual abuse.<sup>59</sup> As described by her Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist, Jane Doe meets the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and many of these adverse behaviors were observed not only by her family but also by her therapist. However, it should be noted that these behaviors are also relatively common in non-abused children.<sup>60</sup> While these behaviors are not dispositive of sexual abuse, Jane Doe appears to have described and associated one or more than one negative childhood experience(s) with “a man in a blue shirt.”

Third, Jane Doe received an initial medical evaluation from Childhelp on January 26, 2017 and no medical evidence of abuse was obtained. Since medical evidence is extremely rare in cases of child sexual abuse,<sup>61</sup> abuse cannot be ruled out due to the absence of medical findings.<sup>62</sup> Jane Doe also saw her pediatrician on February 23, 2017 because she feared “a stick” was still in her buttocks, and the physician noted an anal fissure. This physical finding however likely has little relevance relative to SBC child care because it had been almost a month since she attended SBC and because it may also be consistent with passing a hard stool, as the physician noted in her police interview.

Fourth, GRACE found no evidence to question the veracity of Jane Doe’s disclosures or to question the veracity of her parents. Also, GRACE found no evidence that Jane Doe’s parents overtly coached Jane Doe into making an outcry of abuse. If there had been intentional coaching,<sup>63</sup> it is likely Jane Doe would have made clearer and more consistent statements over time about sexual abuse, or that Jane Doe would have made a clear and specific outcry during the forensic interview. Jane Doe’s Licensed Professional Counselor and Registered Play Therapist who regularly interacted with Jane Doe and her mother for a year and a half indicated that due to her training and as a regular part of her practice, she looks for any attempts by parents to coach children, and she saw no indicators that Jane Doe was ever coached. The age of the child however leaves open the possibility of source monitoring issues.<sup>64</sup> As summarized by one researcher, young children, especially those younger than five, are more likely than older children and adults to confuse what they have been told with what they have experienced. A relationship between source monitoring abilities and suggestibility has been established in children.<sup>65</sup> In this case, Jane Doe’s parents have appropriately spoken to Jane Doe about personal safety, and there have also been at least some conversations about the possibility of sexual abuse by an alleged offender. Moreover, Jane Doe has received a forensic interview, medical examinations, and therapy related to the possibility of abuse, and it is possible Jane Doe has heard her parents or others discuss the possibility of sexual abuse. While the

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<sup>58</sup> Defenses are worded differently by state and depend on the nature of the alleged touching, but for example, a person who engages in contact without any intent to arouse or gratify (e.g., a parent who aids a child in bathing, or a physician or nurse who engages in contact for a medical purpose only) may not be guilty of child sexual abuse, depending on the laws of the state and the circumstances of the alleged touching.

<sup>59</sup> John E. B. Myers, *Evidence in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*, 3rd Ed, 511 (1997).

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 511-516.

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of a quality medical assessment in a possible case of child sexual abuse, see Martin Finkel, *The Medical Evaluation of an Alleged Childhood Sexual Abuse Victim*, in Rich Kaplan, Et Al, *Medical Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; A Resource for Professionals Working with Children and Families* 41-57 (2011).

<sup>62</sup> Nancy D. Kellogg, Shirley W. Menard and Annette Santos. *Genital Anatomy in Pregnant Adolescents: Normal Does Not Mean Nothing Happened*. DOI: 10.1542/peds.113.1.e67 *Pediatrics* 2004;113:e67. (“Despite definitive evidence of sexual contact (pregnancy), only 2 of 36 adolescents had genital changes that were diagnostic of penetrating trauma.”) See also Heger A, Ticson L, Velasquez O, Bernier R. *Children referred for possible sexual abuse: medical findings in 2384 children*. *Child Abuse Negl.* 2002;26:645–659 (“Examination findings in children and adolescents presenting with sexual abuse histories are normal up to 96% of the time.”).

<sup>63</sup> In this context, coaching is generally defined as giving encouragement to report something which is false.

<sup>64</sup> As a simple example of source monitoring issues, consider this scenario. A set of parents take their children on a trip to Disneyland. Several years later, the parents have another child, a boy. Their son grows up hearing the parents and older siblings discuss the trip to Disneyland and describing the thrill of riding on Dumbo the Elephant. Moreover, the boy sees pictures and other evidence of the event. Soon, the child is telling his friends how he went to Disneyland because he has difficulty monitoring the source of his information.

<sup>65</sup> Erna Olafson, *Children’s Memory and Suggestibility*, in Kathleen Coulbourn Faller, *Interviewing Children about Sexual Abuse* 10, 20, Oxford University Press (2007).

possibility of source monitoring issues cannot definitively be ruled out, it is also important to note that source monitoring events are more often associated with positive (such as a Disneyland trip) than negative events (such as sexual touching).<sup>66</sup>

Finally, GRACE found no evidence that the Doe family or Jane Doe had any motive to report false information or to hurt SBC. To the contrary, as several witnesses, including Jane Doe's father told GRACE, "There's just no reason. What benefit did we get out of it? I don't want it to be true. I didn't want it to be true the first day when we got pulled into all this with the police, and on that first day ... It's just been a nightmare ever since we've been living, and no justice at the end of it." Other witnesses similarly described Jane Doe's parents' 11 year history and affection for SBC and noted that they considered SBC "family," noting that they had no reason to bring a false allegation to end their relationship with the church family they dearly loved.

### *Identity of an Alleged Offender*

Determining the identity of a person who may have committed abuse is of primary importance in any investigation so that abuse can be stopped. As noted in the police report, a number of individuals (male and female) had access to Jane Doe at SBC.

First, when identifying a person who may be responsible for the commission of a potential crime, the reported victim's statements regarding the identity of an alleged offender must be considered and evaluated. In this case, Jane Doe identified "a man in a blue shirt" in her initial disclosure to her mother on January 26, 2017. In addition, this identification occurred as she sat in SBC's parking lot after leaving MOPS, and she pointed and stated the man was on the playground. In addition, about two weeks after this event, her parents said Jane Doe sang a song about "the man in the blue shirt" and provided a name. The name was consistent with the first name of the person which had been identified as the primary Person of Interest. During therapy, Jane Doe also provided this same name with her prior descriptions as "the man in the blue shirt." While certainly "a man in a blue shirt" encompasses many individuals capable of fitting this description on or off the SBC campus, it is notable that Jane Doe has consistently referred to an offender as "the man in the blue shirt" and that many of her adverse behaviors and fears as documented by her therapist and parents have been associated with attending church or whether "the man in the blue shirt" can get into her home.

Second, unquestionably, video footage is a primary source of information that can be useful in any investigation. As noted, no footage captured any instances of direct contact between Jane Doe and any male caregiver for any of the dates reviewed by her parents, SBC, and law enforcement.<sup>67</sup> However since a number of relevant areas (e.g., bathrooms and classrooms) were not captured by video on the Shea campus and no video existed on the Mountain Valley campus, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about whether or not any abuse occurred in locations where no cameras existed.

Third, SBC records and witness testimony indicate that access to Jane Doe by male caregivers was limited since only one male caregiver (the Person of Interest) was assigned to Jane Doe's classroom on only occasion in November 2016 when she attended the Mountain Valley campus.<sup>68</sup> As noted, no witnesses recalled seeing any male caregiver alone with Jane Doe. They also explained that adults are not permitted to be alone with children per church policy. While policies like this are important and are designed to prevent abuse, this policy must never be relied upon as a basis for believing that abuse cannot occur in group settings. In fact, studies show that abusers often commit their crimes in the presence of others.<sup>69</sup> These dynamics are often exploited by offenders to decrease the likelihood that the child will be believed and increase a

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<sup>66</sup> *Id.* at 23 (noting that research "suggests it is easier to cause preschoolers to make source misattribution errors about positive events than about negative ones.")

<sup>67</sup> Available video footage from the Shea campus was reviewed by law enforcement, SBC's Head of Security, and the Doe family for the following dates: November 17, 2016, December 1, 2016, December 8, 2016, December 15, 2016, January 19, 2017, and January 26, 2017. The detective noted that these dates "encompassed every day that [Jane Doe] was on [the Shea] campus, excluding Sundays, when she would have been supervised by paid caregivers including [the Person of Interest]."

<sup>68</sup> The detective noted in his report, "none of the interviews provided any substantive evidence that the accused was ever alone with the victim, or had opportunity to be alone with her. None of the interviews provided any substantive evidence that the accused molested or engaged in sexual contact with the victim."

<sup>69</sup> According to one study 54% of child molesters admitted that, on one or more occasions, they had sexually abused a child with another child in the room and 23% had molested a child with another adult in the room. Anna Salter, *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists and Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children*, Anna Salter, 2003. Dr. Larry Nassar's sexual abuse of victims in the presence of their parents during physical exams is a highly publicized example of this frequent dynamic. <https://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/readers/2018/02/08/larry-nassar-victim-mom-abuse-testimony-letter/319425002/>.

child's feelings of helplessness about the abuse. In addition, the increased risk of getting caught can enhance an offender's own excitement about the offense.<sup>70</sup>

Last, gathering as much information as possible about a suspected crime from all perspectives is critical. The primary Person of Interest was a key witness and he provided no statement to law enforcement or to GRACE, which he certainly had a right to do. Not having a key witness's perspective on these events however creates a vacuum of information that cannot be filled at this point. The blog posts with stories about sexual abuse associated with the Person of Interest's Facebook page raise a number of questions, but neither confirm nor rule out his identity as a possible offender. These issues also raise serious questions about the Person of Interest's character, judgment, and suitability for working with children.

While access to Jane Doe by a male caregiver appears to have been limited in this particular situation, the totality of these data points do not rule out the possibility of abuse on SBC's campus.

### ***SBC's Response***

#### *Prioritizing Child Safety through Immediate, Healthy, and Transparent Communications*<sup>71</sup>

In Mark 9:37, Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me." These are striking and powerful words from the Son of God himself. The plain reading of this passage simply means that our embrace of God is demonstrated and exhibited by how we love His little ones. We love Him through the loving of His children. Put another way, we reject God by and through pushing away His children. The culture of a church that is committed first and foremost to Christ is a church that will move mountains to love and protect the vulnerable. While one could debate whether or not Jane Doe was abused at SBC, what is not debatable is SBC's obligation and responsibility to do everything in its power to protect its most vulnerable. In these circumstances, SBC responded in some positive ways, however some of their responses were notably lacking.

On a positive note, SBC childcare staff instinctively knew it was right to report information regarding possible child sexual abuse to the authorities. They cooperated with the law enforcement investigation by providing staff records, child attendance records, video surveillance, and other requested information to the police. They also provided this information to Jane Doe's family for their review, paid for some of Jane Doe's counseling, and initiated this independent investigation. SBC has also added additional new video cameras in a number of places where cameras did not previously exist at the time of these events. These responses were very helpful to law enforcement and to the Doe family in the aftermath of this disclosure.

Unfortunately, SBC missed an important opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to protecting children when it failed to communicate with SBC parents about a criminal investigation regarding an abuse allegation of abuse on its campus involving an SBC child and an SBC childcare worker. Law enforcement's request that an announcement not take place while the detective was interviewing witnesses must always be respected and followed. However after the investigation concluded in March 2017, SBC should not have waited for 18 months before informing parents about relevant information regarding one of its childcare workers. Regardless of the disposition of Jane Doe's case, the Person of Interest had regular access and contact with minors, and SBC parents should have been immediately informed about a matter involving these precious souls. Communicating with parents was particularly important since SBC admitted not screening the Person of Interest's social media and, as noted by the Pastor of the Children's Ministry, he would not have been hired had they known about the blog links on his social media.

Communicating to parents proactively, immediately, and transparently provides a number of important messages. First, the communication would have provided parents (and any individual) with an opportunity to immediately assess whether

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<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 19:13-15 states, "Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'" This gospel passage is perhaps one of the most sobering illustrations of how we can spend a lot of time with Jesus and still overlook the intrinsic value of those who are greatly valued and loved by Him. It's not because the disciples didn't care about these children. It appears that they acted on a belief that the little ones interrupting Jesus were less important than the adults who were in the audience. The response of Jesus to their rebukes could not have communicated any clearer how much he values those who others overlook or disregard.

the Person of Interest or any other person had harmed their child.<sup>72</sup> A number of eye-opening studies have found that the likelihood of sexual offenders having more than one victim is very high.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, other studies confirm that child abuse is disclosed at a very low rate, possibly around 5%.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the importance of empowering parents to speak to their children about sexual abuse (or if a parent is uncomfortable in doing so, actively encouraging parents to connect to local resources who can speak to the child about abuse) cannot be more clearly underscored. Every passing day that abuse remains undisclosed is a day that a silently suffering child could be receiving the professional help they so desperately need.<sup>75</sup> Second, the communication, even shortly after the police investigation, would have provided SBC with an outlet to actively encourage any and all individuals with information about the Person of Interest to report it immediately to law enforcement. This was particularly important since the police had recently collected evidence in this case. Third, it would have demonstrated love and care for the Doe family, to other parents, and to watching survivors by reinforcing truth and transparency. The Doe family repeatedly expressed that they very much wanted SBC to make an announcement and Jane Doe's father noted, "We wanted the story to come out as one narrative (the church and the alleged victim's parents), but we were told that wouldn't happen." Instead, SBC communicated to Jane Doe's family that SBC is a safer place for offenders than it is for the wounded.<sup>76</sup> Fourth, an announcement would have communicated a strong message to any and all sexual offenders that the church does not tolerate abuse, that it does not protect sexual offenders from justice, and that it cares more for the vulnerable than it does its own reputation and image.<sup>77</sup> Instead, SBC's lack of immediate, transparent, and proactive communications risked saying to abusers that child safety is not the church's highest priority and therefore they may continue to operate undetected at SBC.

In addition, some of the content of the Senior Pastor's announcement to MOPS in September 2018 communicated a number of problematic messages. First, telling parents "We do full background checks, they are well trained and we have protocols and procedures that make it so that there's no chance that there is harm that could ever come to a child..."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> As previously noted, GRACE draws no conclusion here about the Person of Interest. The information discussed here is to provide general educational information regarding sexual offenders for faith communities.

<sup>73</sup> In the late 1980's, Dr. Gene Abel conducted one of the first and most significant studies of sexual offenders. Many consider it "the classic study on undetected sexual offenses." (Anna Salter, *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists and Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children*, Anna Salter, 2003.) In this study, Dr. Abel and his team asked voluntary sex offender clients how many total offenses they had committed. (Notably, to encourage accurate and truthful disclosures, they guaranteed confidentiality in a number of ways: the interviewers did not have the subject's names; researchers obtained a federal certificate of confidentiality that prevented the results from being subpoenaed into any federal court in the country; and the master list was kept outside the country in any case.) In the study, researchers interviewed a total of 561 offenders about sexual offenses which included exhibitionism, voyeurism, adult rape, and child molestation. These 561 offenders admitted to more than 291,000 sexual offenses of all kinds and more than 195,000 victims. A smaller group of men who were composed only of 232 child molesters admitted attempting more than 55,000 incidents of molestation. Of these, they claimed they had been successful in 38,000 of these incidents. This group of 232 men reported having more than 17,000 total victims. Men who molested out-of-home female children averaged 20 victims. Men who molested out-of-home male children averaged 150 victims each. Most of these offenses had never been detected. Abel computed the chances of being caught for a sexual offense was at 3%. Gene Abel, et al., Self-Reported Sex Crimes on Nonincarcerated Paraphiliacs, 2(1) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 3-25 (1987). A number of other studies report similar results: an "iceberg of undocumented offenses beneath the tip of official records" (Weinrott and Saylor, 1991); Emerick and Dutton, 1993); (Janes, 1993); (Underwood, Patch, Cappelletty, and Wolfe, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> Considered the "classic study of adult women in the population," (Salter) Dr. Diane Russell found that 28% of women had been molested as children before they reached the age of 14 and 38% of women had been molested before they reached the age of 18. This study included physical contact offenses only (and excluded exhibitionism and nonviolent contact between peers). Of these, only 5% of the child sexual abuse had ever been reported to law enforcement. See Russell (1984; 2000); see also Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith (1990); Salter (1992); Wyatt and Powell (1988). According to various studies, approximately 9% to 16% of boys in the United States are molested before they reach the age of 18. See Badgley (1984); Salter (1992); Timnick (1985a; 1985b). The Finkelhor study found that 33% of women and 42% of men failed to report that they had been sexually assaulted until asked (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, and Smith, 1990). Lawson and Chaffin (1992) reported that 57% of children who were interviewed by hospital staff after finding STDs failed to disclose that they had been sexually assaulted.

<sup>75</sup> According to most estimates, approximately 20% of the population has experienced some form of sexual abuse before turning 18 years old. Christian communities are no exception. *Id.*

<sup>76</sup> Jane Doe's mother explained in an email to SBC on 6/15/18, "Leadership has chosen to put faith in the video footage of the hallways. And ultimately support a man who wrote stories about 'raping 4-year-old girls,' 'sucking the [private parts] off of young boys,' and being 'a world renowned child molester' instead of believing and supporting the victim. This makes no sense to me."

<sup>77</sup> As one parent told GRACE, "One child not being molested is worth that church no longer being in existence. Obviously that wouldn't have happened, but it was all about the public image, and that is the most concerning thing." Another witness stated that institutions that fail to bring these matters out into the open communicate "a greater fear of men than they [have] of God."

<sup>78</sup> The Senior Pastor also stated "We have one hundred and forty cameras on campus here, where every area is monitored. So, again, we've overdosed on security here and we want to protect our children. So if procedures and policies were followed, then that would be a very strong indication that nothing could happen to a child." However the Senior Pastor did not inform parents that SBC added a number of cameras after the law enforcement investigation ended due to the fact that SBC's main campus did not have cameras inside any of the classrooms, on one of the playgrounds, or on the Mountain Valley campus at the time of the investigation.



gives parents a false sense of security about SBC protocols<sup>79</sup> and background checks<sup>80</sup> and was particularly misguided given SBC's knowledge at that time about the Person of Interest's social media. One parent told GRACE, "Scottsdale Bible Church deemed [the Person of Interest] as fit to care for children, so I'm gonna trust that." Second, SBC leadership's disproportionate emphasis on reassuring parents that SBC's protocols and policy make it so "there's no chance"<sup>81</sup> that harm could ever come to a child reinforces inaccurate stereotypes about how abuse can occur, enabling offenders to exploit those dynamics of trust and offend more easily. Third, it creates an unrealistic and inaccurate view that abuse does not happen within Christian environments by communicating the improbability that abuse could occur at SBC. Churches that communicate unrealistic or inaccurate viewpoints about abuse, even if done unintentionally, often silence victims from disclosing abuse that occurs within these environments. Christian organizations must always remember that while having child safety policies and protocols are very important in processing issues that arise, no policy or protocol can, by itself, prevent abuse. It is always the attitudes, the culture, and the priorities of an institution that will have the greatest impact on safety.

### *Prioritizing Child Safety through Screening and Education*

Closing screening gaps regarding all employee and volunteer applications is unquestionably a critical starting point for preventing abuse. While background checks are important, thoroughly vetting individuals who want to work with SBC's most vulnerable must be a top priority. While one can never assume that the disturbing sexual content in the blog linked to the Person of Interest's Facebook page proves any nefarious conduct, the content connected with his social media should have given the church greater alarm about his access and contact with SBC's children and a heightened sense of awareness that screening those who work with SBC's most vulnerable is of utmost importance.

Conducting a rigorous and thorough screening process for all applicants is important because these individuals have regular contact with the vulnerable. Accordingly, maintaining internal screening processes is a critical need especially as it relates to potential sexual offenders because sexual offenders possess unique characteristics that make the commission of their offenses possible. As Dr. Anna Salter explains, deception and secrecy are the "lifeblood of sexual aggression."<sup>82</sup> Appreciating, therefore, the danger of offenders is even more important for Christian organizations<sup>83</sup> because "[i]t is

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<sup>79</sup> GRACE was not asked to do a comprehensive audit of policy and procedures and the findings and analysis herein therefore should not be interpreted as such, but instead relate specifically to the scope of this investigation. However, blanket statements like the one referenced above are not necessarily consistent with evidence provided to GRACE on a few occasions. For example, one SBC pastor told GRACE, "There was never a super organized childcare system. It was probably poorly organized and so some people show up, different people show up and it wasn't always the best in terms of organization. I would say that probably went to also speaks to just how policies were followed. I mean we had policies, they weren't always followed, you know how that works. I mean it's the best of intentions, but I'm certain teachers were left alone in the rooms with kids. If you got the impression that this was a crack crew on top of things that would not be accurate from my assessment. They were lacking some organization just overall.... I think there's the general sense of we have a policy and so it's on paper, so therefore it must have been done." GRACE investigators visited the SBC Shea campus and made a couple of similar observations. For example, during a campus tour, SBC employees showed investigators around the campus and a church employee explained that Jane Doe's parents had improperly speculated that a door leading to a café/store area could have been unlocked and could have provided the Person of Interest with access to molest their daughter. As the SBC employee approached the door in question with GRACE investigators, the employee pointed to the door and noted this was not possible because per common practice, the door was always locked. He then attempted to demonstrate that the door was always locked but discovered that he was at the wrong door. GRACE investigators and the church employees then looked down the hallway and observed that the correct door leading to the café/store was not only unlocked, but had been propped open prior to our arrival for an undetermined period of time. On another occasion during the campus visit, a church employee told GRACE, "All the rooms have kind of a map that explains [evacuation procedures]." However, when the witness went to retrieve the binder to show it to GRACE in the classroom where the comment was made, the maps were missing in the binder.

<sup>80</sup> A parent who volunteered with SBC told GRACE that though SBC claimed to follow policy regularly, her volunteer experience was otherwise. She explained, "I have had a lot of disagreements with a lot of people regarding this because [a person] said they background checked everybody and they didn't because I had served there a dozen times, I've never been background checked. I can name five people that I know that have never been background checked that had been working there.... And just some of the things that I've served, I know as a rule two adults should be taking one child to the bathroom. Well I served in the twos class and I took a child to the classroom and I was the only one to check and they said it's because they didn't have enough staff. They were like no, no and I'm like I thought two of us needed to go. And they were like no, no, no just go, just go real quick. So, that was alarming to me too."

<sup>81</sup> The Senior Pastor again reinforced this sentiment when he told mothers, "One, they were looking for the fact of [inaudible] protocols and procedures followed by the staff and volunteers of Scottsdale Bible Church because they understood, and we understood, that if they were, there was not a chance that a child could be harmed here."

<sup>82</sup> Anna Salter, *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists and Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children*, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Dr. Anna Salter explains, "One molester, who was himself a minister, said 'I consider church people easy to fool... they have a trust that comes from being Christians... They tend to be better folks all around. And they seem to want to believe in the good that exists in all people.... I think they want to believe in people. And because of that, you can easily convince, with or without convincing words.'" *Predators, Pedophiles, Rapists and Other Sex Offenders: Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Ourselves and Our Children*, Anna Salter, 2003.

precisely our lack of knowledge and understanding that gives predators their edge.”<sup>84</sup> The combination of not knowing the truth about a person’s background and not understanding the dynamics of offenders is what makes predators so dangerous, particularly in religious settings. As ugly as these truths may be, being fully aware of the reality of an applicant’s background is one of the best and most important ways we can protect ourselves and our children. Believing that a person we know is capable of misconduct is usually difficult to accept. As Dr. Diane Langberg explains, “[w]e may think we know people, but God says we do not.”<sup>85</sup> The deep longing for truth to be exposed and justice to be served should be the heart’s desire of every congregation. Ongoing education about the dynamics of abuse is a critical investment in SBC’s people. Just as SBC maintains its grounds or fixes a broken window, screening employees and volunteers, along with engaging in regular safeguarding education must be an ongoing commitment for the health of any organization committed to preventing abuse and supporting survivors. Educating all demographics of the church body about the dynamics of abuse and the dangers of how offenders operate must be a top and ongoing priority for institutions that draw and serve the vulnerable. An institution’s failure to be proactive about these issues means that its people are more vulnerable to exploitation, offenders are not held accountable for known offenses, and SBC risks communicating the message that the church is a safe place for sexual offenders to operate unnoticed.

### *Prioritizing Child Safety by Caring for the Wounded*

When sexual misconduct allegations emerge within any institution, that institution, particularly one which calls upon the name of Jesus, must take proactive and appropriate steps to care for those who are wounded by it. Undoubtedly, SBC demonstrated love and care for the Doe family in several ways which included providing video and other requested information to them during the law enforcement investigation, meeting and praying with them, paying for part of Jane Doe’s counseling, and initiating this independent investigation.<sup>86</sup> However, the Doe family and other witnesses detected that some of SBC’s responses did not demonstrate authentic care during this momentous time.<sup>87</sup>

First, because key leaders such as Elders and the Senior Pastor have the authority to make critical decisions that impact the wounded and the church’s response to misconduct, listening to, learning from, and establishing direct lines of communication about how the church will learn and grow from past mistakes is one of the most significant ways churches can demonstrate authentic love and respect for the wounded.<sup>88</sup> Second, for survivors, silence about sexual abuse is often associated with secrecy and shame. Institutional responses that discourage “gossip” or which otherwise lack full transparency can cause victims and their families to feel isolated and devalued because the response fails to prioritize the disclosures of abuse. Additionally, these messages often minimize the likelihood other survivors will disclose misconduct for fear of being labeled a “troublemaker.” Finally, the church has the obligation to care for and nurture the soul. How the church responds to misconduct allegations (whether “proven” or not) can have a profound impact on a church goer’s relationships with the Church and even God. Most tragically, Jane Doe,<sup>89</sup> her family,<sup>90</sup> and a number of other parents<sup>91</sup> have been wounded by SBC’s response to these events.

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<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

<sup>85</sup> Diane Langberg, “Sexual Abuse in Christian Organizations.” See <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b0a335c45776ee022efd309/t/5be936628a922d4a291eb2af/1542010466315/Sexual+Abuse+Within+Christian+Organizations+-+Langberg.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> The Senior Pastor noted, “We brought GRACE in out of love and deference for [the parents of Jane Doe].”

<sup>87</sup> As her father noted, “It’s just been a nightmare ever since we’ve been living, and no justice at the end of it.”

<sup>88</sup> The Doe family provided to GRACE a number of specific examples they believe would have demonstrated love and care in an authentic and meaningful way, and are quoted directly here: “1) Follow-up from the Elders 2) Prayer with us in person, via phone, etc. 3) Spiritual questions asked from the pastors. Like how is this impacting your spiritual life? Marriage? Your daughter’s spiritual life? 4) Be sent any resources biblical or support related 5) Notes with verses in the mail 6) A stuffed animal for [Jane Doe] 7) Stopping by for coffee 8) Offering to come over to watch a streaming service with us 9) When they found out we were sad of there [sic] lack of response, picked up the phone. 10) Education for themselves about sexual abuse 11) Education for Mops regarding talking to your kids about body safety 12) Training for the Care-givers on how to prevent and look for sexual predators 13) Notifying us about the positive changes they were making, not a form letter sent to the entire congregation. 14) Sending a worship song via email 15) Meet [Jane Doe] 16) Tell us specifically what they are praying for us about 17) Inquire about [Jane Doe’s] counseling instead of just sending the check.”

<sup>89</sup> As noted during several play therapy sessions, three year old Jane Doe expressed to her therapist, “I don’t like church anymore.”

<sup>90</sup> Email from Jane Doe’s father to an SBC pastor on 4/30/18, “We did not leave the church due to the police report findings. We loved our church and it was our family for 11 years and our hearts are still broken about how our family handled loving us during this difficult time.” He also explained to GRACE, “[T]his is something we’re going to live with forever. I mean, so we lost everything. I mean, we lost the way of life. I mean, we can’t just send her off and hope, pray that God’s going to take care of her. I mean, we do, but there’s a limit to that. We grab her after school, and we’re eyes on her the rest of the time.”

<sup>91</sup> See Footnote 55.

A church's failure to prioritize child safety by caring for the wounded creates several significant problems: it puts children and vulnerable individuals at risk; it harms survivors by reinforcing feelings of shame, blame, worthlessness, and helplessness because the church appears to place concerns like institutional reputation or concerns for the offender over the needs of survivors; it creates a safe haven for abusers, rather than the abused; and it communicates to others, particularly perpetrators, that safety is not the church's highest priority. The bottom line is that churches that are vocal about the realities of abuse by addressing it transparently through education, sermons, support, and care for survivors are communicating a clear message: your pain is not too much for us to bear. You who have survived it will not be forced to survive it alone. Transforming our churches and faith communities into places of refuge for those who have been violated, judged, and marginalized is what the gospel is all about. If God is our refuge, then our churches must be the places where these precious souls find safety and rest.

### **Conclusion**

Holy Scripture teaches us that the very nature of Jesus is defined as both truth and light.<sup>92</sup> As children of God, we are each called to live in truth and light, both personally and institutionally. The failure to properly address these events fails to reflect the love and truth of Jesus. We commend Scottsdale Bible Church for demonstrating a commitment for both truth and light by courageously initiating this Independent Investigation. We also encourage leadership and SBC's membership to learn from this difficult season as it seeks God's wisdom and strength in transforming its community into a refuge for children and vulnerable people.

Respectfully Submitted on this 30th day of April, 2019.  
GRACE

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<sup>92</sup> John 14:6 and 8:12.

## Part IV. Recommendations

1. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership outline a plan demonstrating authentic repentance (i.e., actions and words)<sup>93</sup> addressed to Jane Doe and her parents and to other parents who have been hurt by SBC's response.
2. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership document the Person of Interest's personnel file with the social media information referenced in this report so individuals requesting a volunteer or employment reference are aware of it.
3. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership communicate these report findings to all MOMS (formerly called MOPS) groups.<sup>94</sup>
4. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership engage child protection experts to provide child safeguarding training to all MOMS groups.
5. GRACE recommends SBC engage child protection experts to conduct a thorough physical property inspection of all its campuses to identify and evaluate any and all vulnerable areas.<sup>95</sup>
6. GRACE recommends that SBC's Security Team regularly review the functionality of all video cameras<sup>96</sup> and camera placement to ensure that all cameras are capturing footage for the appropriate areas.<sup>97</sup>
7. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership complete a screening check<sup>98</sup> of every person engaged in childcare at SBC. Such a screening includes more than just a criminal background check and should be developed with the assistance of law enforcement and child protection experts. Screening should include all employees or volunteers who have contact with individuals 17 years of age or younger.<sup>99</sup>
8. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership pay for outside counseling for Jane Doe and pay for those who were wounded by the church's response to these matters.<sup>100</sup>
9. GRACE recommends that SBC leadership discuss ways SBC can have transparent and healthy conversations that address all forms of abuse including sexual abuse, family violence, non-physical/verbal abuse, and its effects on children and vulnerable adults. This includes seeking out regular opportunities to listen to and serve survivors.

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<sup>93</sup> Repentance, when founded on truth and humility, is best illustrated by: 1) empathy for those who have been wronged and damaged by sin and failures, 2) an awareness that the offense is against the goodness and holiness of God, not merely a behavior that hurt others, and 3) a desire to make restitution. Words of apology, though good and necessary, are not sufficient evidence of a true turning away from prior wrongdoing. Authentic repentance will be demonstrated by an equally authentic transformation over a period of time where individuals and institutions work to ensure future behaviors no longer harm others. This definition is adapted from an article written by Diane Langberg. See "An Inward Look (Part One and Part Two)," *Christian Counseling Today* Vol. 9 No. 2 (2001).

<sup>94</sup> It is important that all groups are notified because all mothers do not meet together in one MOPS group and some parents have since moved into the MOMS More program. In addition, some attend the evening program called MOMS in the Marketplace.

<sup>95</sup> SBC needs a comprehensive physical property inspection. When GRACE Investigators were on the Shea campus conducting interviews and walking through the Discovery building, investigators observed that a number of doors to unoccupied rooms were unlocked throughout the building. These dynamics present a number of safety concerns for children and other vulnerable people.

<sup>96</sup> All cameras should be recorded on a secure digital recorder inaccessible to all but one or two staff members who are trained to use the equipment for retrieval, review, and copying of videos. If feasible, video should be stored for a minimum of 30 days, though 60 to 90 days is preferred. Children or vulnerable adults do not always immediately disclose abuse. The greater length of digital video storage will hopefully provide a record when a disclosure is made and aid in verifying some portion or the entire allegation. Cameras can deter offenses while reassuring others about the church's commitment to taking child safeguarding and security seriously.

<sup>97</sup> During the investigation, the issue was raised that some video cameras were not working or were not pointing in the proper direction at the time of these allegations (e.g., a camera pointed did not point correctly to one of the playgrounds). Since that time, SBC has installed new video cameras in a number of places on its campus. A physical property inspection with a child protection expert would aid SBC in looking for any vulnerable areas because, depending upon the layout of each room or area, more than one camera may be necessary. It is important that videos be installed in any places where children and vulnerable adults tend to congregate. It should also be noted cameras are not a preventative tool. Though necessary, a layered approach to child safeguarding and security is key: policy development, proper screening of volunteers and employees working with the vulnerable, continuous training, vigilance, responsiveness to complaints, and technology.

<sup>98</sup> Screening checks include a criminal background check, a references check, an interview, and checking publicly available sources such as Google and social media outlets (for example, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Snapchat, etc.).

<sup>99</sup> In advance of conducting criminal background checks, SBC needs to be prepared to deal with the revelation that some employees and volunteers may have a criminal history. A safeguarding committee should determine and set objective standards establishing what degree of prior misconduct would disqualify a person from serving in a formal role at SBC. For example, if a current or prospective employee or volunteer background check revealed they had a prior arrest for abuse, how would SBC deal with this matter? Also, consider, arrest does not necessarily equate to conviction. If the criminal history record does not provide the case disposition, then further inquiry with the prosecuting agency or clerk of court will need to be made to determine if there was a conviction, and if so, on what charge as some cases are pled to lesser offenses than originally charged for various reasons which occasionally deal with factors unassociated with the defendant's guilt or innocence. An objective, cautious approach must be taken when evaluating this information and taking action based upon it. Make certain SBC has all available information from the record.

<sup>100</sup> SBC paid for some of Jane Doe's counseling but the Doe family notified GRACE they received a letter from SBC ending payment of Jane Doe's counseling.

10. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership engage child protection experts to conduct an audit of SBC policies<sup>101</sup> and procedures relevant to sexual misconduct and make appropriate revisions. Policy audits must be conducted with a commitment to best practices<sup>102</sup> and an appreciation for trauma, including how abuse dynamics interface with theological concepts such as forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation.
11. GRACE recommends SBC Leadership create a Safeguarding Committee that will:
  - Work with leadership in implementing these recommendations and addressing any other needs as they arise. The Safeguarding Committee must include at least one survivor<sup>103</sup> of sexual abuse at all times as well as a community partner, such as a law enforcement officer, prosecutor, or a Child Protective Services caseworker.
  - Be a support ministry for survivors of sexual abuse.
  - Receive trauma-informed training. This training must include a commitment to best practices and an appreciation for all forms of trauma, including the spiritual impact of abuse.
  - Facilitate ongoing sexual abuse and offender dynamics training for all new and existing employees and for every demographic of the church body (all leaders, volunteers, congregants, parents, and for children in age-appropriate ways).
  - Track attendance and completion of training modules.
  - Report all sexual misconduct violations to law enforcement and then to Human Resources.
  - Review sexual misconduct policies<sup>104</sup> annually and revise as needed.
  - Engage community partners who work in the field of abuse.
  - Evaluate facilities for potential blind spots or other safety concerns.
  - Review campus resources (for example, in a cafe/store, library, and online) to be sure that materials exist for individuals impacted by abuse. This should include books<sup>105</sup> and links to *appropriate* counseling in which a licensed clinician is able to provide evidence-based therapy and, within that setting, to also address the spiritual impact of maltreatment.

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<sup>101</sup> “When writing a church policy on child maltreatment, for example, the preamble must remind readers that these policies are not being done to avoid litigation or reduce our insurance rate—but because children are Christ’s representatives (Mark 9:36-37) and we intend to treat them with the respect due messengers of God.” Victor I. Vieth, *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse on the Life and Words of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018).

<sup>102</sup> Though GRACE was not asked and did not do a comprehensive audit, during a review of the allegations in this particular case, GRACE noted, for example, that some of SBC’s Children’s Ministry attendance sheets for volunteers on a few occasions appeared to staff relatives together in the same room. This is not consistent with best practices.

<sup>103</sup> Some of the best experts in the area of sexual abuse are survivors because of the fact they have endured these painful dynamics. Listening to them is one of the most important components in abuse prevention. As many survivors explain, “if you haven’t experienced it, it’s hard to understand.” This sentiment underscores the importance of asking survivors to lead and allowing their voices to be heard. So many of these “overcomers” understand all too well the dynamics of secrecy, shame, blame, loss, grief, reasons for delayed disclosures, grooming tactics, the misuse of power, deception, and so very much more. Survivors can be incredibly intuitive and are often the first to recognize the danger signs of abuse, and the church is therefore wise to listen to them.

<sup>104</sup> Policies should include a specific action plan with concrete steps regarding how SBC will handle allegations of sexual misconduct when it arises.

<sup>105</sup> E.g., Diane Langberg, *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores* (Greensboro: New Growth Press 2015).