

SBC Whistleblower Report: Southern Baptist leaders on sexual abuse in their own words
June 10, 2021

To: Mike Stone, Ronnie Floyd
CC: Rolland Slade, JD Greear

Mike and Ronnie,

I am writing to you in regard to your public responses to the recently publicized letters from Russell Moore. Ronnie, you said you “do not have the same recollection” of the events. Mike, your video called Moore’s claims “absolutely slanderous,” “ungodly,” and an “outrageous lie.”

I cannot remain quiet in light of your responses, so I am compelled to do something no one would want to do--become a Southern Baptist whistleblower.

Wouldn’t the best way to get to the truth be to hear the two of you in your own words? Your own words actually corroborate the claims in Russell Moore’s letters--the same claims you now suggest are false. I believe that when Southern Baptists hear you in your own words, they will be wise enough to recognize the truth.

Below you will find links to audio clips from two meetings Russell Moore mentions in his letter; our October 8, 2019 meeting in Nashville (in which Ronnie was present along with others), which followed the Caring Well Conference and our May 9, 2019 meeting in Atlanta (in which both of you were present along with others). The brief summaries for each audio clip will help Southern Baptists understand the context of what happened in our conversations.

Nashville Caring Well Conference Debrief | October 8, 2019

In this Caring Well Conference debrief meeting, which included both Ronnie Floyd and Russell Moore, Floyd’s own words corroborate Moore’s recounting of the meeting. As the audio captures Floyd’s pressure tactics, sometimes masked in the form of “I’m just asking questions,” it also reveals troubling statements not previously disclosed to Southern Baptists.

[Clip #1](#) - Ronnie Floyd questions the lack of restrictions on Caring Well Conference speakers

Ronnie Floyd’s question seems to imply that Caring Well conference speakers should have had restrictions on what they said since the Executive Committee financially supported the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group. Russell Moore explains that the reason the ERLC didn’t restrict what speakers say is because “we are not in a criminal conspiracy to cover up what happened.” Note: no Executive Committee funds were used for the Caring Well Conference.

[Clip #2](#) - Ronnie Floyd voices Executive Committee complaints about Rachael Denhollander

Ronnie Floyd's question raises Executive Committee trustee complaints about how Rachael Denhollander "has come after them" in her Caring Well Conference interview. Russell Moore points out that the ERLC "didn't script anybody." And, in reference to the Executive Committee's mishandling of a survivor's public abuse disclosure, Moore asserts that the Executive Committee should "not do stupid stuff again."

[Clip #3](#) - Ronnie Floyd suggests his primary concern is not survivors but to "preserve the base"

Ronnie Floyd says he is "not worried" about what survivors would say because his primary focus is to "preserve the base," seeming to suggest that his priority on abuse is protecting the SBC. Floyd had already stated that he is hearing threats that some churches may stop their Cooperative Program giving because of the Caring Well Conference. So, it certainly seemed to us in the room that what it meant to "preserve the base" was to protect the money.

Atlanta Meeting on Sexual Abuse | May 9, 2019

This meeting that included Mike Stone and Ronnie Floyd intended to finalize action points on sexual abuse for the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting in Birmingham. Their resistance to the immediate formation of a standing credentials committee became a primary point of disagreement. Stone's own words corroborate Russell Moore's recounting of our contentious discussion on this subject.

[Clip #1](#) - Mike Stone discloses that the Bylaws Workgroup abandoned pursuit of a Credentials Committee and perceived themselves as victims

In a response to Ronnie Floyd's question, Mike Stone states the Executive Committee's Bylaws Workgroup had abandoned plans to create a standing credentials committee in advance of the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting, right as many Southern Baptists were publicly calling for the formation of one. Why? At least part of the reason, Stone suggests, was the "human factor," which he seems to portray as the fact that the Bylaws Workgroup believed they were true victims in the process, who were "thrown under the bus."

[Clip #2](#) - Mike Stone suggests approaches like mine to the Credentials Committee are "unseemly"

Near the end of the meeting, we were at a standstill regarding the prospects of a standing Credentials Committee proposal coming forward at the 2019 SBC Annual meeting. Mike Stone had already disclosed that the Bylaws Workgroup had abandoned its pursuit of one. Stone also had insisted during this meeting that a Credentials Committee be delayed at least a year, just as Russell Moore disclosed in his letter. Seeing no other pathway ahead at that point, I noted in the meeting that, if the Executive Committee wouldn't bring a proposal, I would personally bring a motion from the floor of the convention to pursue a standing Credentials Committee. In [Clip #2](#), Mike Stone uses the exact language Russell Moore referenced in his letter, when Stone calls

approaches like this “unseemly.” He also suggested that the Bylaws Workgroup felt “like it has been bullied,” again implying that they were true victims in the process.

Southern Baptists Deserve to Hear You in Your Own Words

It is a difficult decision to become a Southern Baptist whistleblower. But Southern Baptists deserve to hear you in your own words so they can know the truth. That’s why I believe it is necessary to not only give the courtesy of first sharing this information with you directly but also make it available publicly soon.

Some may have questions about the nature of these audio clips. This audio was lawfully captured by me in the one-party consent states of Tennessee and Georgia. It was appropriately captured in a manner consistent with the practice of the Sexual Abuse Advisory Group during major meetings and strategy sessions; real time documentation was often captured to ensure both the accuracy of notes and the clarity of follow up actions. I did not anticipate this audio might ever become necessary in a moment like this.

This audio captures relevant clips, attempting to ensure that nothing is taken out of context. The full audio is not available because it would publicly mention the names or stories of abuse survivors without their consent. However, when a credible third party investigation is launched, I would be willing to cooperate to provide the full audio along with other relevant information.

Southern Baptists are at a crossroads as we head to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville. I don’t know which direction Southern Baptists will choose. But I do believe these ancient words: the truth will set you free. The future of the SBC will only stand if it is built on a foundation of truth.

In Christ,

Phillip Bethancourt
Galatians 4:16