

On Monday, March 19, 2018, Christianity Today contacted Sovereign Grace Churches to inform us that they were planning to post an online editorial asking us to do an independent investigation regarding past allegations of sexual abuse made in a 2012 civil lawsuit that involved two former churches. On February 13 we posted a statement providing details of these allegations including a denial that any Sovereign Grace leader covered up abuse.

We are grateful that Christianity Today asked us for a statement before they published their editorial; however, we were disappointed when they didn't include our entire statement in their article, especially given the critique made of our denomination.

Here is the full statement we sent to Christianity Today on March 21, 2018.

Recent public statements have called for Sovereign Grace Churches (SGC) to undergo an "independent third-party investigation" of our history and current practices to determine if sexual abuse is being covered up and abusers protected in our churches.

We believe it is the Church's obligation to lead in any realm related to justice for or protection of any child who has been harmed. Our difficulty is this: the most specific accusations involve allegations made in a civil lawsuit filed in 2012 involving two churches that are no longer part of Sovereign Grace. As to those two churches, we have no authority, no right to their pastoral records, and no access to their internal reports. We, therefore, have neither the right nor the ability to agree to, require, or conduct an investigation of these churches. One of those churches has already performed its own third-party investigation, but SGC has no access to that report or details from that investigation.

Secondly, SGC is a denomination consisting of 72 churches, each of which is individually constituted and governed by its own board of elders. While there is a specific process by which a charge may be submitted against an elder by any current or former SGC church member, SGC leadership has no authority to mandate an investigation by an outside authority upon all of our churches. We are therefore unable to authorize an independent third-party investigation of SGC and its churches.

Clearly any specific allegations of child sexual abuse should be reported to criminal and child protection authorities, regardless of the passage of time. We recognize the critical importance of treating child sexual abuse

seriously and its victims with compassion. To this end, SGC has taken specific steps in recent years to better understand and address the risk of child sexual abuse. Since 2014, we have provided the MinistrySafe child safety system to SGC churches free of cost, including training, screening forms, policies, and proactive reporting practices.

To ensure that any survivor of child sexual abuse in our churches feels protected and cared for, we have sought ways to further strengthen our practices. We are exploring the involvement of an organization with expertise and objectivity in dealing with issues of abuse to assist our pastors and elders in this regard. This is intended to help ensure that allegations are reported, cases are handled legally and wisely, and abuse survivors are provided proper care. It is our desire and goal to maintain consistency in all SGC churches where child sexual abuse issues are encountered, and, specifically, to provide compassionate care and support to those who have experienced past sexual abuse.

In sum, we desire to walk transparently, to grow in our ability to better address this risk, and to honor Christ in the way we care for those who have experienced abuse.