

***Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,***

As elders, we recognize that many in our church family are continuing to process their pain over the recent sentencing in the legal case against Brandon Milburn. We as leaders, our own families, many who are currently involved in our church, and many who were part of our church in the past, are hurting. This terrible sin was a betrayal of trust that has brought a deep wound.

We first became aware of this abuse in 2014 when one victim's family shared their broken hearts, as parents who had just found out and reported matters to the police. As spiritual leaders, we had never gone through anything like this before, so we reached out to get advice about what we should do. We followed that counsel, cooperating fully with legal authorities and immediately meeting with our church small groups and students. We also made public announcements in our services and publications encouraging any other victims to contact the police. We made special counseling available and provided additional training for our many youth volunteers to be alert to anyone who was hurting or may have been a victim of abuse of any kind.

Our first commitment was to honor the privacy of the victim family that came to us. Our understanding was, that the then unnamed family of the second victim was receiving counsel from others and did not want us to approach them at that difficult time. In recent months, we have heard criticism that the church did not do enough and we have taken that criticism to heart. We apologize for any inadequacies in our best intentioned but imperfect response. We hope that the church never has to go through something like this again, but we will work to improve our response.

We are working to secure additional counseling resources for those directly impacted by this horrible situation, both through our church and through an outside source. We want our church to be a resource where people can find the complete healing that only God can bring.

As a church family, we do have a mission to serve Jesus Christ, as simply stated in our vision to "reach, win, and grow". We will continue to reach those who are outside of Christ with the invitation to get to know Him. We will define our "win" as making the path clear for others to make the eternity changing decision to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. And we will "grow", training believers to live out the teaching of God's Word.

We have an amazing multi-generational (ages ranging from very young to very old) and multi-ethnic (celebrating a unique diversity of backgrounds) church. While we know everyone will not appreciate our leadership, our worship style, or many other things about us, we are confident that God has uniquely shaped us to reach many in our community.

There has been a false accusation made, that is being addressed. As there is much misinformation being shared in the unfiltered platform of social media, we are seeking to provide significant disclosure of information in the following Q & A. We believe these questions and answers may be helpful to many inside and outside of our church. Thank you for praying for us in our leadership roles, praying for healing for our entire church family, and praying for those who no longer call our church "home" but who have been affected by all that has transpired.

***Praising the One who can heal anyone of anything,***

**Senior pastor, Steve Wingfield and the Elders, First Christian 4-25-2015**