Statement on Sexualized Violence

The church must be proactive and not keep silent on the reality of sexualized violence. All that we believe and preach is in the name of the One who values each person as a beloved child of God. To that end, the Alliance of Baptists offers this statement:

God created humankind in God's own image and called creation "good" (Gen.1:31); there is not a place in the church for behavior that demeans or disrespects any person. We hold fast to the commandments that Jesus called the two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your hearts... soul...and mind" and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37, 39)

Sexual harassment and sexual assault do not honor the image of God in each person. If we do not honor the image of God in another we cannot live into that image in our own lives. Sexual violence creates deep wounds, trauma, confusion, fear, and chaos in the life of the survivor and also in the life of the perpetrator. Because we are called to stand alongside one another in suffering - "when one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor. 12:26) - the Alliance of Baptists recognizes its call to not only help those who have been victimized but also to proactively oppose patterns of behavior which enable the perpetuation of sexual violence.

As a part of the church, the Body of Christ, we are to give ourselves in service and love to each other and to all those God loves by:

- teaching the Biblical truth that sexuality is a gift from God - it is holy and good. "Set me as a seal upon your heart. ...for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave." (Song of Solomon 8:6)
- honoring and celebrating the dignity of all people in our actions and language.
- taking a stand against situations that encourage or allow the abuse of power in the church.
- creating an atmosphere where clergy and members are not demeaned or disrespected by any form of harassment, based on any aspect of a person’s gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ability (as examples).
• creating healing space for survivors.
• creating healing space for perpetrators.

Sexual violence prevents our becoming the people God created us to be, and it is detrimental to the ministry and mission of the church in the world.

**End the Silence about Sexualized Violence**

If you have been the victim of sexual violence, there is respect, support and solidarity to be found. There is a place to tell your story. It is important to speak your truth. The online platform at [http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/about/](http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/about/) offers a place where survivors of sexualized violence are welcomed to speak.

There are also counselors who have been specifically trained to help you. It is important to seek professional support with a counselor who understands the issues related to this kind of victimization.

In addition to a place to honestly discuss experiences of sexualized violence, it is important for our faith communities to learn about sexualized violence and its repercussions, and for congregations to put in place mechanisms to resist the perpetuation of this violence and the trauma it creates in the name of religion.

**Establish congregational policies, procedures, and accountability practices**

There are policies and best practices faith communities can put in place to cultivate healthy and safe spaces. Visit [Into Account](http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/about/) to learn about the strategies and policies congregations can implement to create healthy and safe places where everyone’s dignity is honored and protected.

The Alliance of Baptists takes seriously the problem of sexualized violence and realizes that many victims hold their experiences as guarded secrets. We seek to stand with survivors of sexualized violence as they seek freedom from the stories that bind and keep them from flourishing. We urge our congregations to put in place church policies and practices addressing sexual abuse prevention and response.