

**Statement Presented At Trinity Baptist Church Sunday Evening May 21, 2006
by Attorney David Gibbs III, Gibbs Law Firm, PA**

I want to begin by making it clear that the hearts and prayers of all those here at Trinity Baptist Church go out to those who are hurting right now. Trinity's mission is to serve Christ. Any abuse of a minor hinders the church from accomplishing that mission, is immoral, is sinful, and without question, is a violation of all that Trinity Baptist Church stands for as a ministry.

With the criminal allegations that have been made against Dr. Gray, the Pastor and Deacons want to assure you that they take these allegations very seriously. Trinity Baptist Church also recognizes its spiritual responsibility to safeguard all children entrusted to its care. Pastor Messer and the Deacons want to assure you that they, like you, want the truth to be fully known.

With an ongoing criminal investigation, I, as General Counsel for Trinity Baptist Church, along with the Pastor and the Deacons have taken steps to determine as best we can the truth in this case. Because there is an ongoing investigation, the extent of which we do not yet know, Pastor Messer and the Deacons are not in a position to address you themselves on this issue. That is at my request. Rest assured, that once certain questions are answered, you will hear directly from your church leaders on this issue, but at this time I am asking them to say nothing as it relates to the pending criminal allegations or any other investigation that may or may not be taking place by the proper legal authorities.

To help us discover the truth and to conduct an independent investigation, we have hired the law firm of Akerman Senterfitt. The lawyers Pastor Messer introduced, Richard Smith and Ed Trent, have expertise in addressing the various legal issues that surround this situation and they will be assisting the church and providing advice and recommendations during this process. Richard spent 5 years with the State Attorneys' Office here in Jacksonville, 2 of those in the sex crimes division and another 13 years as a federal prosecutor with extensive experience in internal investigations. Ed is a former state prosecutor and has 10 years of labor and employment law experience. Until their investigation is complete, and we learn what people actually know, not what they may have heard from other sources, it is not possible to fully comment about this situation. Accordingly, I ask that you be patient as they complete their work. Any public statements by the church will be posted on the church's website.

Pastor Messer, the Deacons, and the entire Trinity Baptist Church community remain committed to providing help to those in need, and sharing the Gospel of Christ. That is why you gather each week in this place. You should also know that the Deacons are fully supportive of Pastor Messer. The leaders of Trinity Baptist Church are united and committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for your children. The church cannot and will not allow anything to stand in the way of anyone in this community from coming to know and love Jesus Christ, especially children.

As we proceed during the days ahead, please keep your church leaders and their counsel in your prayers. Please keep all those connected with this situation in your prayers.