

In April, 2017, the Morning Star Board of Directors received a written complaint detailing allegations of sexual misconduct by staff of Morning Star Community Church. The allegations involved incidents that occurred between 1994 and 1997. The Board sought legal counsel who engaged a private investigator to conduct an independent investigation into the allegations. The Board cannot publicly address matters that were dealt with in confidence. However, without violating confidences the Board determined the following:

In 1994/1995 a youth pastor engaged in a sexual relationship that lasted approximately nine months with an adult woman who was a volunteer in the high school ministry. The Board determined that the information regarding the relationship was not fully divulged when the allegations first surfaced in 1996. Based upon the disclosures known in 1996, leadership took disciplinary action at that time. In 2002, more information regarding the relationship became known. Leadership took additional disciplinary action based on the new disclosures in 2002. The Board's 2017 investigation resulted in additional details. When its investigation was complete, the Board asked for this pastor's resignation, which was tendered.

In 1995 an intern was alleged to have engaged in criminal sexual contact with a minor in the high school ministry. This intern was immediately dismissed at the time of disclosure. Following the 2017 investigation, the Board determined that the initial disclosure of information was incomplete. Contrary to church policy, the pastor supervising the intern unilaterally decided not to report the incident to the minor's parents or anyone else.¹

In 1997 a college and career pastor was alleged to have engaged in criminal sexual contact with an adult in the college ministry. This pastor had previously been disciplined for misconduct with another adult in the congregation. However, this pastor promptly left the state and abandoned his position before the facts were fully disclosed to Morning Star staff.

In 2010 an adult parishioner of Morning Star alleged she was the victim of a sexual assault while on an overseas mission trip that was sponsored and controlled by a ministry independent and separate from Morning Star. The Board referred this matter to the ministry controlling that overseas mission.

The Board advised immediate reporting of all suspected criminal behavior to law enforcement.

As a result of the Board's investigation, Morning Star has been and continues to take action to ensure the safety and well being of those in our care, and the healing of each person who has been hurt. We are deeply sorry that anyone has ever experienced hurt, abuse, or felt unheard while under our care. The Board determined that the timeframe of the incidents involved with this inquiry involving pastors or interns of Morning Star church occurred between 1994-1997.

¹ Note that the phrase "or anyone else" was intended to refer to "authorities". The Statesman-Journal was informed of the correction. The statement now reads, "... to the minor's parents or authorities."