

Episode 2 - The Invisible Woman

We want to make sure that you, the listener, have a trigger warning for this episode, as it does talk about sex abuse.

Let's set the scene: In the 1970s, as women's rights movements continued to grow, Southern Baptists organized a number of national gatherings focused on the role of women in the church.¹ Some Southern Baptists welcomed women into ministry with open arms. Others decried their full inclusion and began organizing against. This push and pull is perhaps most clearly seen in the 1983 and 1984 annual SBC conventions. In 1983, the SBC passed a Resolution on Women that encouraged "all Southern Baptists to continue to explore further opportunities of service for Baptist women, to ensure maximum utilization of all God-called servants of our Lord Jesus Christ."² But just one year later, they passed a Resolution on Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry that said, because of Paul's teaching and women being first in the Edenic Fall, "we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination."³

This era progressively shed a light on a difficult reality for the SBC: it was divided. One side was gaining momentum towards a full endorsement of women's inclusion, but the other, a reactionary faction, was doubling down on excluding women.

¹Susan M. Shaw, "How women in the Southern Baptist Convention have fought for decades to be ordained," *The Conversation*, June 1, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/how-women-in-the-southern-baptist-convention-have-fought-for-decades-to-be-ordained-161061>. One of the national gatherings was "Consultation on Women in Church-Related Vocations" that was held September 20-22, 1978, at the Sunday School Board facilities of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was sponsored by several entities of the SBC including Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. One of the presentations given was, "The Psychological Impact of Women in Ministry," by Andrew Lester from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and another was "Government Policy and Its Impact on Employment of Women," by Ruth Harvey Charity, a lawyer from Danville, Virginia. This consultation shows how serious the SBC took improving women's ability to participate in professional ministry as well as the reality of gender discrimination. Consultation on Women in Church-Related Vocations Collection, AR 504. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA), Nashville, TN. The findings report is also available online through the digital resources at SBHLA.

² The resolutions for SBC conventions can be found on the SBC website: [sbc.net. https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-women-3/](https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-women-3/).

³ Again, this resolution can be found on the SBC website: <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/resolution-on-ordination-and-the-role-of-women-in-ministry/>.

It is estimated that in 1984, there were around 250 ordained women in the SBC, a denomination that had over 14 million members and 30,000 churches. Despite being small in number, these ordained women were mighty in disruption... even if they didn't want to be. Even if they were simply doing what their beloved Southern Baptist churches told them to do: follow the call of God on their lives.⁴

[Intro Music Start]

Created in partnership with the Bible for Normal People, this is All the Buried Women: A miniseries uncovering women's stories hidden in the Southern Baptist Convention's archives. Hosted by me, Beth Allison Barr. And me, Savannah Locke.

[Intro Music End]

Episode 2: The Invisible Woman

It was the Fall of 1979 when Kathy Hoppe started her first semester at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California. Golden Gate was one of the six SBC seminaries in the country. It was small- around 550 students- but growing quickly. According to a *Baptist Press* article, Kathy Hoppe was one of 1,660 women enrolled in a Southern Baptist seminary at the time. Women accounted for 18% of total enrollment in SBC seminaries, which was up from 10% in 1972.⁵

Kathy Hoppe: My name is Kathy Hoppe, and currently I'm an Associate Professor of Psychology at Oral Roberts University. I have practiced as a licensed marital and family therapist for the past 30 years. I have two master's degrees, I have a doctor of ministry degree, I have a doctor of education in community care and counseling with trauma focus, and I have a psychology degree from the University of North Texas.

⁴ "Today, there are 250 ordained Southern Baptist women ministers in the United States and Southern Baptists have an articulate group of capable women." William Reed, "Baptist Subjugation of Women Old Hat," *The Tennessean*: Sunday, July 1, 1984, p. 2H. Women in Baptist Life Collection, AR 160. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA), Nashville, TN.

⁵ Norman Jameson, "Seminary Enrollment Begins New Increases," *Baptist Press*, January 3, 1980, Baptist Press Archives: <http://media.sbhla.org.s3.amazonaws.com/4983.03-Jan-1980.pdf>. Digital Resources Collection, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

We asked why Kathy, born and raised in the SBC, chose to go to seminary. Her response? Her pastors taught her to follow God's calling:

Hoppe: I was talking with a friend about our experiences of growing up and hearing leaders, Baptist leaders talk to us and I said you know they always talked about obeying God, following God, following God's calling and are you called to ministry And I said, "I feel like I was misled because I think they should have said, 'This is just for the boys.' But they didn't say that." And so, of course, along the way, I thought, "Yes, I am led. I'm led to be part of this calling. I am led to be a minister of some type." Whatever that means, you know, I'll become a minister. And the natural step, to me, that seemed logical, was to go to seminary. Now, I will tell you, I had a couple of people say, "Don't you want to get a master of religious education? Why do you want a master of divinity?" And that made no sense to me. I said, "I'm not interested in religious education."

The Masters in Religious Education degree was something Southern Baptist Seminaries began to develop as a way to shuffle women away from the Masters of Divinity Degree. It's a real degree— some men even got it. But in the beginning, it seems to have been created as a way to separate MDiv students from women students.⁶

But Kathy, who was considering chaplaincy at the time, had her eyes set on the MDiv program. For the most part, her experience was positive. She met her husband, Jeff, loved her classes, and was surrounded by a great community:

Hoppe: I was surrounded by a group of friends that I think supported me. I don't recall that there was any difficulty with the professors. There was no direct statement made about being a female and being in the MDiv program. The only statement came from a

⁶ As Susan M. Shaw wrote in *God Speaks to Us, Too: Southern Baptist Women on Church, Home, and Society* (University of Kentucky Press, 2008): "Most of the women I talked to grew up in Southern Baptist churches where the concept of being raised right was paramount, along with being saved, being baptized, and maybe even being called to full time Christian service (for girls, that meant missions, music, religious education, or becoming a pastor's wife)." p. 25. And, again, in a section on seminary, Shaw writes about one of the women she interviewed, Linda McKinish Bridges: "During the 1970s and 1980s, more and more Southern Baptist women were enrolling in Southern Baptist seminaries. Buoyed by the women's movement and the progress of women in society, increasing numbers of women claimed their call to ministry and their need for theological education. At first, women were tracked into traditionally feminine areas, such as religious education and music. When Linda McKinnish Bridges arrived at Southern Seminary in 1975, despite her desire to take courses for the master of divinity degree, she was told to do a master's in religious education," p. 156. Beth will be discussing the evolution of the religious education degree more in her next book (the final book in the *Making of Biblical Womanhood* trilogy), *Losing Our Medieval Religion: The Cost of Forgetting History for Evangelical Women*, forthcoming with Brazos press in 2027.

peer, a female peer, when we were going to be ordained and she learned that she said, "You are going to ruin your husband's career." And I actually looked at her and said, "I think that's up to God. That's not up to me." Now it altered greatly his the choices for him in his career and I didn't realize to what extent it would do that but for the most part it wasn't until I was at this seminary from 79 to 82 so the first few years were far better it was really in the last year that the new students, I felt more pressure from them and more questions about why are you here? Why are you getting this degree? But they weren't really my peers at that point. I already had a good set of peers who were supportive. I had no idea the extent or the depth of the problem. I just thought I would be supported because I was going to do God's work. That just seemed logical to me. Why wouldn't anybody want to affirm that, "Oh, you're going to fulfill God's calling on your life? That's wonderful.

Don't miss what Kathy said there: "I had no idea the depth of the problem. I just thought I would be supported." While she noticed a difference in some peers between 1979 and 1982, she didn't know why. Why were some of the incoming students more antagonistic towards her? Why did they question her being in seminary? Was something changing?

Well, what Kathy didn't know- and couldn't have known- is that the exact year she started Seminary at Golden Gate, a calculated and dramatic takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention was forming... and she was going to get caught in the crossfire.

[Brief Music Break]

Barry Hankins: So the conservative resurgence starts in the 1970s. Paul Pressler, the judge in Texas, begins to study the layout of the Southern Baptist convention, the organization of the convention, how the agency's boards name the agency heads and the seminary boards name the seminary presidents and all of this. And he figured out that if conservatives could capture the presidency for 10 years in a row, they could remake every agency and every seminary in the Southern Baptist Convention.

This is Barry Hankins, professor of history at Baylor University and author of *Uneasy in Babylon*.⁷ He's describing the origins of the Conservative Resurgence- also called the Fundamentalist Takeover- in the SBC.

Hankins: Pressler, the political demographer that looks and sees how this can be done. He connects with Paige Patterson, and Paige Patterson becomes the theologian of the

⁷ Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (University of Alabama Press, 2003). There has been a significant amount of scholarship on the conservative takeover of the SBC . Hankins is a great starting point.

movement. And so you have, you have Pressler, the political organizer. You have Paige Patterson, who's going to be the theologian. So Patterson starts going to churches and talking about inerrancy and probably ordination of women and all these things and basically telling churches that our convention is going the way of mainline Protestantism. We have all these liberals in our seminaries and it's going to be bad. And Pressler does too, but Patterson's the one that can theologically articulate what this means, you know, and talk about inerrancy and all these sorts of things. And then those two sort of recruit Adrian Rogers. And the reason they recruited Adrian Rogers is Adrian Rogers was a Baptist statesman. Adrian Rogers was one of those people everybody had respect for. One, he's got this, or had, he's of course passed on now, but this sonorous voice that when he preaches and he has the same voice, I can tell you this person, he has the same voice when you're talking to him in his office. It's like I'm sitting here thinking of all the people I interviewed for any of these in Babylon, he was the one I felt I got to know the least because it's like he had this pastoral persona that never came down. He became the preacher of the, so the three person, you know, you had the politician, the theologian and the preacher, the trinity. And I think the reason he was chosen is because he was such an unoffensive person. I mean, Page Patterson's a bulldog, you know, and if you don't like Page Patterson, you just see him, you know, it's like this and Pressler, nobody knew who he was because he was a judge. He was not involved in the religious mechanisms of the convention yet, as he would become later. And so they had to pick a preacher And so Adrian Rogers was the logical choice, because moderates, they would have said, well, you know, if Adrian Rogers is on that side, you know, that's gotta be okay. He's a wonderful person. He's a loving person. He never has a crossword for anybody, you know?

Let's talk about these three major players in the Takeover: Paul Pressler, Paige Patterson, and Adrian Rogers. First, you have Paul Pressler, an appeals court judge from Houston, Texas. He was concerned that the SBC was becoming too liberal—particularly when it came to the idea of Biblical inerrancy. Inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is without error or fault in all its teaching; and while he had other theological concerns like women's ordination, Pressler fixated on inerrancy as a sort of litmus test for Southern Baptist orthodoxy. His thinking was, if the average SBC member got inerrancy right, they would get all the other issues right, too.⁸

⁸See the article series commemorating the conservative takeover of the SBC, including: <https://mbcpathway.com/2019/04/10/a-day-of-reckoning-in-the-sbc-patterson-discusses-conservative-resurgence-in-exclusive-interview/>. See also Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*. As he writes in the introduction, “The architects of the conservative drive to take control of the denomination were biblical scholar Paige Patterson, aforementioned appeals court judge Paul Pressler, and pastor Adrian Rogers. As one interpretation goes, this was a three-leader movement with Patterson serving as theologian, Pressler as organizing tactician, and Rogers as the visible popular preacher.”

With his sights set on gaining control of America's largest Protestant denomination, Pressler said he noticed a weakness in the SBC's structure which allowed for a takeover to happen. That weakness was how the convention rules allowed for one person — the SBC president — to appoint the critical SBC committees. Pressler knew that he and others could gain control of the SBC by putting the right presidents into place— presidents who were sympathetic to their fundamentalist convictions.⁹

But he couldn't do it alone. That's where our second major player comes in: Paige Patterson.

In a now-legendary meeting at Café du Monde in the late 60s, Paul Pressler had a late-night coffee with seminary student Paige Patterson. They talked until 3AM, sharing their concerns about the direction of the SBC. According to Patterson's recollection, Pressler encouraged him to lead a conservative movement and reclaim the SBC. Patterson laughed it off at first, but then conceded and said, "Well, I'll tell you what, if you'll lead it with me, we'll do it."¹⁰

⁹ See *Texas Baptist Committed* summary of an interview with Pressler: <https://www.txbc.org/1998Journals/September%201998/Sept98AReview.htm>. Here is a description of this interview: "In early 1987, an interview with Paul Pressler was conducted by Gary North on an independent religious radio program called "Firestorm Chats."* Underneath a facade of religious rhetoric Pressler revealed exactly how he and a small group of men had organized a movement to place themselves in control of the Southern Baptist Convention. Or as Pressler's sympathetic interviewer candidly put it, how they carried out a "strategy" for the "capture" and "takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention. *Dominion Tapes, P.O. Box 8204, Fort Worth, Texas 76124. *Editor's Note: The following is a summary of the details of the key elements of the takeover strategy described by Pressler in this interview. For a copy of the tape contact the TBC office.*" See also Pressler's account of the conservative takeover in his memoir, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (B&H Publisher, revised edition 2002).

¹⁰See again the series of articles commemorating the conservative takeover: <https://mbcpathway.com/2019/04/10/a-day-of-reckoning-in-the-sbc-patterson-discusses-conservative-resurgence-in-exclusive-interview/>. See also Pressler's memoir, *A Hill on Which to Die*. Some information about the conservative takeover, including discussion of Pressler's role by Paige Patterson and Pressler's continued association with SBC leaders like Johnny Hunt, can be found scattered in the Nashville archives, including in the Johnny M. Hunt Papers, AR 914, Box 1. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN; and the W.C. Fields Papers, AR 627-5, Folder 61.51. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN. One of the most interesting of these documents, at least to us, was a response paper written by Patterson in May 1980 defending concerns "about doctrinal disintegration" which were used to justify the conservative take-over. Another document of note is a letter from W.C. Fields on February 16, 1982, concerning the upcoming 1982 SBC annual meeting. Fields writes, "A take-over attempt by a dissident group of fundamentalists has been in progress for about three years. The focus of this effort has been on electing a sympathetic convention president. A new president will be chosen at New Orleans. The big question now is whether or

And they did. For the next twelve years, they studied the constitution and bylaws of the SBC until they were experts. Pressler said they made a good team because Patterson was a theologian while Pressler was more of a legal analyst who understood how the system worked. Together, they campaigned for their cause by dividing the United States in half: Pressler took 25 states, and Patterson took 25 states. They worked to identify two men in each state, one pastor and one lay person, who could be leaders for a Conservative Resurgence. Once identified, they would funnel information through those representatives in order to reach a broader audience more effectively. This took almost ten years of persistent, focused effort to pull off... but eventually they recruited 100 dedicated representatives to the cause.

So we have a politician in Paul Pressler. A theologian in Paige Patterson. The only thing missing? A preacher.

That's where our third player comes in: Adrian Rogers.¹¹

Adrian Rogers graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1958. He was ordained and went on to pastor a small church in Florida until 1972, when he moved to Memphis, Tennessee to pastor Bellevue Baptist Church. At the time, Bellevue Baptist had 9,000 members. It only continued to grow under Rogers. By the time he retired in 2005, it had 29,000 members.

Rogers was tall, attractive, a gifted speaker, and had a booming voice:

Adrian Rogers: If you will yield your life to Jesus Christ, because one day you will be conformed to the image of God's Son, you will be like Jesus.

not the conciliatory spirit of the 1981 convention in Los Angeles will travel as far as the Crescent City." Jimmy Draper was elected SBC president in 1982. Both of these documents are found in the W.C. Fields Papers cited above.

¹¹ Beth used Joyce Rogers' memoir about being a pastor's wife as a significant source in *Becoming the Pastor's Wife*. Joyce Rogers, *Chosen to be a Minister's Wife* (Innovo Publishing, 2013). We also read scattered letters to and from Adrian and Joyce Rogers throughout the Nashville archives. Many were connected to the Ministers' Wives conference of 2000 when Joyce Rogers served as president as well as preaching requests for Adrian Rogers (including one from Jimmy Draper in 1982). Jimmy Draper Papers, AR 607, SBHLA, Nashville, TN. Adrian Rogers Collection, AR 691, SBHLA, Nashville, TN; Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference Collection, AR 369, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

Rogers was sympathetic to fundamentalist beliefs, but where Pressler and Patterson would bulldoze through barriers to get their way, Rogers was more of a diplomat. That's why they needed him to round out the Conservative Resurgence's Holy Trinity. He could influence people, particularly moderates, to join the cause. Pressler and Patterson traveled the nation- speaking up to six times a day- to organize conservative members of the SBC to elect a like-minded president.¹² While they intentionally tried to keep Rogers at arms length to protect him from controversy, many people saw exactly what was happening. C.R. Daley, a newspaper editor and moderate SBC messenger at the time, said this: "Some of us saw the rising star out of Memphis named Adrian Rogers — in my mind the most brilliant of his group, the one who poses the gravest threat to the Southern Baptist Convention. It was obvious that he was to be the king. It was obvious to some of us that he wasn't the kind of king we wanted."¹³

[Music Transition]

Twelve years after their first meeting at Café du Monde, Pressler and Patterson put all their eggs in the Adrian Rogers basket, and it worked. Messengers from all over the country showed up to vote at the SBC's annual convention in Houston. One pastor, Sheldon Hale from Kentucky, drove his wife and three children over 14 hours just to vote for Rogers. Their church's budget was so small they couldn't even afford a hotel, so they slept in a tent. But when interviewed, he said, "It was hard to travel with three little ones and be camped out. But not only did we enjoy the time with them and they got to experience the time at the convention, we felt like we were part of history."¹⁴

And so, in June of 1979, Adrian Rogers was elected President of the SBC. He captured 54% of the 40,000 votes cast that year... a grand crescendo years in the making. The Fundamentalist Takeover was officially beginning.¹⁵

¹² See again *Texas Baptist Committed* summary of an interview with Pressler: <https://www.txbc.org/1998Journals/September%201998/Sept98AReview.htm>

¹³ *The Baptist Press* is a great source for sources about the conservative take-over and conservative SBC leaders such as Patterson and Rogers. For example, this 2014 article by David Roach, "Adrian Rogers, 'rising star of Memphis,' elected 35 years ago": <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/adrian-rogers-rising-star-of-memphis-elected-35-years-ago/> It contains the quote from C.R. Daley mentioned above.

¹⁴Roach, "Adrian Rogers," <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/adrian-rogers-rising-star-of-memphis-elected-35-years-ago/>

¹⁵ Video recordings and resources about SBC annual meetings can be found on the Southern Baptist Historical Library & Archives website. Southern Baptist Convention Video Recordings-1978, Digital Resources, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

Rogers: I am humbled and I am bewildered. I was absolutely confident when I came here that I would not be the president, that I would not be nominated, much less elected. And so you must pray for me. I need your prayers. I want your prayers. I want your help and I just feel in my heart that I will have it. And I am grateful to God for you, all of you. I am nobody's man. I belong to Jesus Christ. I want you to know that. And if I cannot be the president of all of this convention, I don't want to be the president at all. And I want you to know I mean that from my heart. I want you to know that I love you, every one of you. And if you give me half a chance, I believe you learn to love me just a little bit, and I know many of you do love me. I want to thank those of you who voted for me, and when you voted for me, you voted to pray for me. I want to thank those of you who did not vote for me, because you voted your conscience, but I admonish you and plead with you to pray for me.

After the convention, Rogers was interviewed by multiple press outlets, including *The Washington Post*. He told reporters that he didn't believe the SBC was really divided in half like the presidential vote suggested: "I think it's more like 90 to 10," he said. As a result, he told *The Post* that he would appoint leaders to the SBC's committees that reflected that 90/10 ratio. When asked if he would support women clergy, he said, "I do not believe the Bible teaches ordination of women."¹⁶

This was a clear marker for where the SBC was headed, and it wasn't good news for women on the ground.

[Brief Music Break]

¹⁶ Many newspapers at the time carried stories about the election of Adrian Rogers and subsequent accounts of the conservative resurgence. See this WAPO article from June 10, 1986 by Jay Mathews, "Southern Baptists Elect Rogers: Fundamentalists Triumph Over Moderates at Atlanta Convention," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/06/11/southern-baptists-elect-rogers/57b46ae3-6c75-4a4b-bbdf-493b78d1db08/>

In December of 1982, Kathy Hoppe and her new husband, Jeff, graduated from Seminary and were ordained by First Baptist Church in Sonoma, California.¹⁷ Here's Kathy talking about ordination and their consequential decision to plant an SBC church:

Hoppe: I realized, gosh, we are both called into ministry. If we're both called into ministry, then it would be wonderful for the church to recognize that and for us both to be ordained as ministers. And so we sought that ordination together as a couple, but obviously for us individually. And the church responded very well to our request. It was smooth sailing, I will say. And indeed for our ordination, then Dr. Hendricks wrote a poem for us that was read at our ordination service.

Quick note- Dr. Bill Hendricks was one of their seminary professors at Golden Gate.

Hoppe: So it was wonderful. He could not be present. Now I'm not sure whether he couldn't be present or he chose not to be present. He sent a man by the name of Edgar Tanner who was one of our peers and Edgar read the poem but he mentioned that it was written by Bill Hendricks for our ordination service. We weren't sure what we were going to do when we were going to graduate and then I can't remember but decided perhaps we should go the route of becoming church planners and starting a church. So we went through the application procedures and part of that included interviews. I do remember someone from the home mission board coming out to California and interviewing us. So I can tell you that in that interview, he looked at me and said, "What do you plan to do?" And I said, "Well, I'm part of this. You know, we both want to be appointed as church planters." And he said, "You know, it'd be a lot easier if you would teach children." And I said, "I don't want to teach children. That's not what I want to do." I had a profound deafness to that. So we were approved to be church planters but we didn't have a place to go yet. So somehow the area missionary in North Dakota discovered our profile and he said, "I want to bring you up to North Dakota. I want you to interview with the sponsoring church and that sponsoring pastor." And we said, "Okay, so By that point in time, I was pregnant with our first child, and we were in North Dakota for a week. I was very outgoing and played with the pastor's kids, and we made up

¹⁷ In addition to our interview with Kathy Hoppe, the personnel files for the Home Mission Board as well as the uproar over Kathy's ordination are in the archives. See the 1983 correspondence between Sarah Wood Lee and Irwin Dawson as well as the Department of Missionary Personnel Candidate Fact Sheets for William Sean Lee, Sarah Wood Lee, Merlin Jeffrey Hoppe, and Kathy Jo Bynum Hoppe. Home Mission Board Executive Office Files, AR 631-3, SBHLA, Nashville, TN. More information on the Lee/Hoppe ordination controversy can be found in the Wilmer C. Fields Papers, AR 627-5, SBHLA, Nashville, TN; and James T. Draper Papers, AR 607-2, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

songs, and I just had a great time with them, and my husband preached. I didn't preach. My husband preached. So, when we got to the end of the week, we had a conference meeting with the area missionary and this pastor and his wife of the sponsoring church. And so the air missionary asked the pastor for his feedback on the week. So he first looked at my husband and said, "Well, you're not a great preacher." But he said, "I like you as a person." And then he looked at me and he didn't know that I was ordained, but he looked at me and he said, "And I just want you to know that I think your baby is God's curse on you." And I was shocked. I'm so thankful there was a table in between. But my husband stood up, he leaned across the table and told this pastor, "I'm not going to allow you to talk to my wife that way." And my thinking at the moment was, "Well, this is over. We're not coming up here." So it was interesting that they decided that they wanted us to come and even further interesting that we decided we would go No, but we did we did go up there So that was our entry into ministry into starting a church in a very difficult area to start a Southern Baptist Church But but we did we thought Okay, this is where God is calling us, we will come and do this. So we started that and started working on building this church.

From full-time students to full-time church planters in less than a year, Kathy and Jeff were on their way. Despite several hurtful and bizarre interactions, they felt like God was calling them to North Dakota, so they packed up their things and moved 1,5000 miles across the country to start a church.

Kathy's experience is similar to the other women we interviewed from that time. In some ways, things were fine. Nobody was explicitly saying they couldn't pursue ordination or a certain degree or career path because they were women. Kathy had a great community and a supportive husband. She got ordained by a Southern Baptist Church. She and Jeff were approved as church planters by the SBC.

But in other ways, things weren't fine. Kathy was told she would ruin her husband's ministry. She was asked why she didn't want to get her Masters in Religious Education. She was told it would be easier if she wanted to teach children. Most extremely, well at least up to this point in the story, she was told her baby was God's curse on her life.

Both things are true. She was supported and not supported. Accepted and not accepted. This is a pattern we've noticed with many women's stories in the SBC.

And I don't know if you've noticed, but Kathy is a kind, thoughtful, and brilliant woman who still loves the SBC. At no point in her story was she making decisions in order to stick it to the man. She didn't even have interest in becoming a pastor at that point, she wanted to be a chaplain. She was just doing what the SBC taught her to do since she

was a little girl: listen to God's voice and obey. Even if it led her to North Dakota. Even if people questioned her calling. Even if the sponsoring pastor who she would *continually* have to see said her baby was a curse. Kathy listened and obeyed.

Just one month after planting the church, though, she got a surprising phone call.

Hoppe: We went there in August. By September, we received a phone call, I think from the executive member of the Home Mission Board, but I'm not sure who it was now. And he talked to Jeff first, and then he talked to me and he said you're causing problems. I said what problems am I causing because I'm not aware of those and he said well we have some pastors in Montana who are unhappy because you're ordained. I said I'm in North Dakota. I'm not even in Montana. I said I don't know who you're talking about. He said well they're unhappy that you're ordained and I said listen I'm standing here I'm barefoot and pregnant. I don't know how to make you any happier. I thought, "I'm not doing anything. I'm trying to have a baby here in October." I was thinking, "I'm not doing anything. In fact, the only thing that I might have been doing was playing the piano and singing. Again, how much happier can I make you? I'm doing those things that you want a woman to do." And it was shortly after that that our area missionary came to us and said, "Well, we can't pay you from the home mission board anymore, so we're going to have to do some creative financing." That's what he called it.

Here's what we know: A group of pastors in Montana wrote letters to the Home Mission Board, which was an agency within the SBC that organized US-based missions. The Home Mission Board handled the application process for Kathy and Jeff, got them connected to North Dakota, approved their church plant, and paid their salary.¹⁸

This group of Montana pastors wrote to the Home Mission Board to complain about two women: The first was Sarah Wood Lee, a woman who was seeking ordination alongside her husband after she graduated with an MDiv degree. The second was Kathy Hoppe, who was already ordained and planting a church with her husband in North Dakota. Here's what one letter said:

"While we do not attempt to dictate the autonomy of the local church, we are unanimously opposed to the ordination of women. Furthermore, since these ladies'

¹⁸ The "Report on Ordained Women Serving as Missions Personnel" compiled by the SBC Home Mission Board describes "Mrs. Kathy Hoppe" as "church Planter Apprentice, 2-year term, Bismark, ND. Mrs. Hoppe is appointed to serve with her husband. Her responsibility is for "Home and Church," as is true of most missionary wives. Home Mission Board Executive Office Files, AR 631-3, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

husbands are being paid with Cooperative Program funds, we feel that we have the right to ask that all funds be withdrawn from their support.”¹⁹

That’s the kicker. The Southern Baptist Convention was funded through something called the Cooperative Program, where affiliate churches across the country gave a portion of their yearly budgets to support missions, pay salaries, and fund programs like the Home Mission Board. So these pastors were essentially saying, “Listen. Our churches send you money to function... and that means we should have a say in how things run. If these men have wives who are ordained, their funding should be pulled.” It was a power play. Stop funding these women, or we’ll stop funding you.

This is why, when 8-month pregnant Kathy Hoppe received that phone call, she was told they would have to get creative with financing in order to retain Jeff’s salary. Kathy said she couldn’t remember how much Jeff’s salary was at the time, only that it was low enough to qualify for food stamps.

We have several letters from the SBC’s archives documenting the months-long exchange between the president of the Home Mission Board, William Tanner, and this group of pastors in Montana. Some letters were calm. Others were more passionate to say the least, like this letter from Pastor Tom Edwards: “We have men and women in our convention with sound doctrine, please do not send us the questionable or the rejects...What, Brother Tanner, can be done to remove this cancer from our Convention?”

William Tanner tried to shirk responsibility in the name of local church autonomy. He wrote back to Edwards and said that they weren’t aware Sarah Wood Lee was seeking ordination. He also said that while Kathy disclosed she was ordained, the regional SBC association still approved her and her husband to plant a church. If the regional association had rejected the Hoppes because of Kathy’s ordination status, Tanner said the Home Mission Board would have honored that. But the Home Mission Board itself did not have requirements for ordination because they left that up to local churches.

As you might imagine, this response was not well received.

“The criteria,” Pastor Edwards wrote back, “is not ours—it is the Bible’s.” That is why on December 14th, 1983, Edwards’ church voted to withhold all funding to the Cooperative Program until “the Woods, the Hoppes, and any other couples or female individuals who

¹⁹ Home Mission Board Executive Office Files, AR 631-3, SBHLA, Nashville, TN, and James T. Draper Papers, AR 607-2, SBHLA, Nashville, TN. Also discussed in Beth Allison Barr, *Becoming the Pastor’s Wife* (Brazos Press, 2025), chapters 1 and 8.

are ordained or have indicated their intent to be ordained are removed from the Home Mission Board payroll.”²⁰

So many churches continued to hound the Home Mission Board that an internal memo circulated, asking that “no further conversations or correspondence with persons in the Northern Plains convention” take place until “we have had opportunity to determine our responses and direction” as “the situation is becoming confused.”²¹

With one church pulling its funding from the Cooperative Program, and several others expressing concern about Kathy Hoppe and Sarah Wood Lee, the Home Mission Board pulled their funding from the Hoppes. They had *just* moved across the country to plant a church. They had no friends or family nearby. Kathy was about to have a baby. And now they were told the only way they could keep their meager pastor’s salary would be through “creative financing.” All of this because Kathy Hoppe was ordained.

Here’s a quick spoiler: The Home Mission Board *did* pull their funding, but the Hoppes actually stayed in North Dakota for another five years, with Jeff serving as the pastor. This happened because another pastor in the SBC stepped up to the plate and volunteered to pay Jeff’s salary using his own church’s budget.

It might be a surprise, but you briefly met this generous donor last episode. His name was Reverend Eddie Rickenbaker from First Baptist Church in Belton, South Carolina, the same person who ordained Shirley Carter a decade earlier in 1971. First Baptist Belton paid for the Hoppes to continue doing the work they signed up for in North Dakota which allowed the Home Mission Board to appease the Montana pastors by saying the Board was no longer funding an ordained woman. Because technically, they weren’t.

The Hoppes planted a church that still exists to this day, but after five years they were honestly discouraged and looking for something different:

Hoppe: We got near the end of the five years, about four four and a half years in. During that time, we had our first son, we had our second son. He was born with meningitis and then we discovered he had hypoplastic left heart. So he lived for four days. And so that really took a toll on us. The home mission board was nice. They sent us \$400. you know, that's how they supported us at that time. We lost this child, then we, we actually had our third child in North Dakota. So that was 1987. By that point in time, Jeff became pretty depressed and decided he needed to look at other options. We were pretty

²⁰ James T. Draper Papers, AR 607-2, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

²¹ Home Mission Board Executive Office Files, AR 631-3, SBHLA, Nashville, TN.

discouraged by that in a time. And he did a unit of clinical pastoral education. And I had told him, I said, "I think you need to do this." So when we left in '88, he was offered a position as a chaplain in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The hospital then was called Tulsa Regional Medical Center. It's now known as OSU Medical Center. But the volunteer coordinator said there's no money to pay you but the volunteer guild has offered to pay the first two years of your salary if you will come to Tulsa and so that got us to Tulsa and his starting salary is \$28,000 so we thought we were rich. Really, we did.

We asked Kathy if she and Jeff stayed in the SBC after their move to Oklahoma, even though their experience was messy:

Hoppe: When we moved to Tulsa, I called the area missionary. His name is Garnett Cole. I did not know him. I said, "Hey, we're new to Tulsa. My husband's a chaplain and we're looking for a church. We just want to be a church that we can belong to. We're not here to cause any problems or anything, but I think that you should know that I'm ordained." And Garnett said, "You're not welcome in any of our churches." And I was floored. And then he quoted the scripture at me. I think I was, you would think I would be used to this by now, but I'm still not grasping how how someone can be so black and white about things. You're not welcome in any of our churches. I thought he might say, "Well, there's probably only one here that you might be able to survive in." I was not expecting you are not welcome in any of our churches. So we actually attended an American Baptist Church for several years. And then because it had so few children, we thought we've got to get our kids someplace where there are other children in. So yes, we moved to a Southern Baptist Church. And that's an interesting question someone asked me recently. They said, "You're still in a Southern Baptist Church?" I said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Here's the thing, I'm just stubborn enough to say it's my denomination. I'm not leaving."

[Transition Music]

While the Hoppes' lives were turned upside down in the 1980s, the Conservative Resurgence was in full swing for the SBC at large. Adrian Rogers served his first term as president from 1979-1980. He appointed conservative leaders to various committees, successfully executing Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson's plan to take over the SBC. The 1984 Resolution "On Ordination and the Role of Women in Ministry" was passed after 8 minutes at the annual convention in Kansas City, and for the next few decades, one conservative president after the next was elected to sustain the fundamentalist movement... including Paige Patterson himself.

By the 1990s, every Southern Baptist Seminary had a president who affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture.²² Leaders like Al Mohler began to emerge, who once supported women in ministry but changed his mind during the resurgence.²³ Baptist Women in Ministry continued to meet and organize by pushing back in various forms, but power was slowly consolidated into the hands of a few men, and the SBC was becoming more and more monolithic.²⁴

Paul Pressler was over the moon. In fact, he did a radio interview to talk about it with Gary North. In it, Pressler, who consistently called himself and his friends “conservatives” and everyone else “liberals” said this about his progress: “...by the dominance of conservatives on the board, some of the ‘liberal’ institutional heads have kept their mouths shut this year... *Baptist Press* has started behaving better... the head of one of our seminaries has just resigned...there will be others...who will be replaced...the head of the Christian Life Commission has to retire within a couple of years, so we will see these vacancies created... [and] I think within the next few years we will see “liberal” leadership gone from most of our institutions.”²⁵

The Fundamentalist Takeover, as envisioned by Pressler and Patterson, worked. Finally, the SBC would be shaped by conservative men who loved God and the Bible. Finally, a “Biblical sexual ethic” would be the standard. Finally, women would know their God-ordained place. Finally, family values would come first and integrity would matter once again.

Well... not exactly. Reality told a much different story.

²² See the brief outline of the SBC Conservative Resurgence by David Brumbelon in 2009: <http://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/sbc.conser.resurg.html>. See also the 2004 article by Michael Foust in the Baptist Press, “25 years ago, conservative resurgence got its start”: <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/25-years-ago-conservative-resurgence-got-its-start/>.

²³ Al Mohler has discussed his change on women in ministry several times, including as reported by Bob Allen for the Associated Baptist Press as published by Baptist News Global in September 2010: “Mohler says he’s embarrassed by past support of women in ministry,” <https://baptistnews.com/article/mohler-says-hes-embarrassed-by-past-support-of-women-in-ministry/>.

²⁴ See the “History” page on the Baptist Women in Ministry website, <https://bwim.info/history/>, and the BWIM documentary “Midwives of a Movement: A Story of Challenging Baptist Patriarchy,” <https://youtu.be/65ulvdoRNcl?si=Yc2SDtNrGCMsnMjJ>.

²⁵ See again the *Texas Baptists Committed* “A Review of the Firestorm Chat with Judge Paul Pressler,” <https://www.txbc.org/1998Journals/September%201998/Sept98AReview.htm>

While calling themselves the Moral Majority, the SBC's leadership was ridden with sexual scandals, abuse allegations, cover-ups, financial crimes, political alliances, lies, and misogyny. Not the least of which belonged to Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler themselves, the architects of the Conservative Resurgence.

[Music Transition]

Robert Downen: My name is Robert Downen. I am a reporter based in Texas who covers extremist movements in Christian nationalism for the Texas Tribune. Before that, I was part of the team at the Houston Chronicle that broke the sex abuse crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention.

We asked Robert to give us a fuller picture of the dynamics happening in Pressler and Patterson's story.²⁶ Who were these men that engineered the Conservative Resurgence? What drove them to create this system? Was it sincerity or just power?

I (Savannah) was really surprised to learn that Pressler was actually Presbyterian when he and Patterson met at Cafe du Monde. He was extremely involved in leading 130 high school students at Bethel Independent Presbyterian Church in Houston.²⁷ He did this for sixteen years, from 1963 until his resignation in 1979... which happened to be the first year Adrian Rogers was elected president of the SBC. Slow down and think about this: Paul Pressler was a Presbyterian judge who spent over a decade planning, lobbying, and executing a takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention. Why would he do this?

Well, Robert has a couple of ideas:

²⁶ See the 6-parts, database, and videos of the Houston Chronicle, "Abuse of Faith": <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/abuse-of-faith/>

²⁷ "In his book "A Hill on Which to Die," Pressler wrote that he and his wife Nancy founded the youth group at Bethel Independent Presbyterian Church in the 1960s and would lead it for 16 years. During this time the Presslers were also members of Second Baptist Church in Houston, where he was a deacon." Scott Barkley, "Appeals court rules sexual abuse lawsuit against Pressler will proceed," March 2021, Baptist Press, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/appeals-court-rules-sexual-abuse-all-egations-against-pressler-will-proceed/>. See the article by Mary Jackson and Lynde Langdon in *World*, November 12, 2021: "What is a young man worth? Accusations against a longtime Texas Baptist leader highlight the difficulties of addressing the abuse of men in the church," <https://wng.org/roundups/what-is-a-young-man-worth-1636752514>. See also the conversation by Brian Morris on X about discrepancies between Pressler's account and court filings: <https://x.com/brmorris/status/1751034961593815208>.

Downen: One thing that I think really gets lost and wasn't really known until our reporting in 2018 is that Pressler in his autobiography talks about the beginning of the conservative resurgence and his move back into Southern Baptist life from this Presbyterian church. I believe Adrian Rogers comes up to him at some convention and says, are you gonna minister to 250 school students or are you going to minister to 14 million Southern Baptist and really kind of just wraps his prodigal return to the SBC in very like predetermined and adds a lot of destiny flair to it. What really happened was about a month and a half before the Presbyterian church that he was working at kicked him out as a youth group leader because someone came forward with molestation allegations. And so I think it's very important for people to remember that even if The plan that Patterson and Pressler had first formulated with when it comes to the conservative resurgence, even if it was, you cannot separate it to a certain degree from the abuse of children and someone letting Paul Pressler off the hook because of the power he already sustained in society. So those things are inextricably tied to the beginning of the conservative resurgence in a way that I don't think most people fully understand, and that Southern Baptists have definitely failed to reconcile in any meaningful way.

According to a *Houston Chronicle* report written by Robert, a man accused Pressler of molestation when he was just a teenager in 1977. He said that Pressler, a youth pastor at Bethel Church in Houston, sexually molested him in a sauna at Houston's River Oaks Country Club. One year later, Pressler was removed from Bethel and, one year after that, he serendipitously rejoined the Southern Baptist Convention as his buddy Adrian Rogers was elected President.

Pressler denied all the allegations, and because the case was later settled, there was no adjudication on the merits of the allegations.

His move to the SBC allowed him to sweep the abuse allegations under the rug, but it also boomed his political career:

Downen: Within two years of the SBC's conservative resurgence starting in 1979, Pressler is a crucial part of the foundation of what becomes the Council for National Policy, which is a kind of gigantic network of some of the most elite business, religious, telecommunications, government, really just a incredibly powerful network of elites from across the spectrum that has really two goals in mind. One, the Christianizing of America. It includes some of the earliest dominionist theology and leaders of the religious right as its first members. And then using the kind of religious right side of that equation to also support policies that will basically lead to unfettered capitalism and the death of the regulatory state. And he is a foundational member of this group that goes

on to quietly influence American political life and push the GOP further and further right over the next 40 years and really lay the groundwork for the kind of Christian nationalism that we see today. And for Pressler, CNP, It wasn't just that he helped found it. The playbook that he formed in the SBC, this divide and conquer strategy, this idea of just like perpetual purity tests as a way of rooting out any kind of moderates and stacking your institutions with yes men and loyalists. Like that became, you know, according to Ann Nelson who wrote *A Great Broke on the Council for National Policy*, like she credits Pressler and to her lesser degree Patterson with forming that playbook that became the kind of foundational strategy for this far -right movements is really kind of still as powerful today as it was in 1985. Pressler goes on to be kind of a kingmaker in Texas politics in particular, but really nationally. He leads CNP in 1988 to 1990. During that time, CNP, he helps CNP rally evangelicals around George H .W. Bush and gets him elected. He is rewarded for that with a nomination to be George H .W. Bush's Office of Government Ethics Leader. That nomination is pulled back for some reason that still has not been fully explained. He almost had a law school named after him that had as its dean a young Louisiana lawyer named J. Michael Johnson who would go on to be the U .S. House Speaker and also included on its board everyone from David Barton to Family Research Council leader Tony Perkins and First Liberty Institute leader Kelly Shackelford whose group has been probably the most important in challenging church -state separations of the last 15 years and so really he's allowed to just enjoy this really Not quite behind the scenes, but lesser known political status as a kingmaker and as he's doing all of that it's important to remember that that political rise is you cannot divorce it from his early role in CNP and Religious rights and you cannot divorce that from the fact that he was able to within a few years have Profound influence over 14 -ish million Baptist votes and really marry them to the GOP in a way that had not existed with the Southern Baptist Convention before.

As Pressler became a kingmaker with immense power in American politics and the SBC, he continued to leave a trail of victims in his wake... and while many people allegedly knew, nobody really stopped him:

Downen: From 1978 through 2017, There had been people working as his caretaker or personal assistant or for his law firm who had been solicited for sex, pressured into some sort of sexual contact, groped by him, really just runs the gamut of things. We found out that leaders of First Baptist Church of Houston in 2004, which is also an extremely large church and very influential in Texas in particular, A small group of leaders investigated in 2004 allegations that Pressler had pressured a young man into praying together naked and then groped him. This was kind of Pressler's MO. He would often try to get people to become more comfortable with being naked around him by claiming that in Europe it's totally normal and all this kind of stuff. And in 2004, first

Baptist leaders basically said that you know what they found was inconclusive and kind of painted as a he said I guess he said situation and then basically said clearly what you did was inappropriate but given your stature within the Southern Baptist Convention and our church it would be damaging if we were to disclose this publicly and so they claimed that they demoted him as a deacon which I didn't know was something you could do, but he stayed at the church for another few years before moving back to Second Baptist, during which time he was accused of committing even more abuses. So there's a long line of people that we know of already who could have said something about him at some point, beginning in 1978 and going through 2017 that didn't. And I think that that kind of speaks to the culture that him and Patterson built in the SBC that that was ripe for the abuses that we saw within the broader crisis.

At least seven men have come forward with abuse allegations against Paul Pressler. One victim alleged that Pressler abused him for decades, starting when he was a fourteen year old student in Pressler's Bible study. According to the affidavit, Pressler raped him "over the course of the next 24 years or so."²⁸ This same victim worked as Pressler's assistant for a couple of years in the early 2000s. In 2003, Pressler and this victim had an altercation in a Dallas hotel room which led to the victim suing Pressler for assault. The case settled when Pressler agreed to pay the victim \$1,500 per month for 25 years - \$450,000 total- if the victim agreed to keep the suit and altercation confidential. This victim also named Paige Patterson in his suit, claiming he helped Pressler cover up the abuse. He also alleged that the SBC was liable. The SBC settled with the victim for an undisclosed sum and the case was later dismissed with prejudice. In April of 2023, Paige Patterson was "non-suited" in the case, meaning the victim voluntarily removed him from the suit. In a comment to *The Tennessean*, Patterson's lawyer, J. Shelby Sharpe, said, "Dr. Patterson is grateful that he has been removed from a suit that he should have never been included...No money was paid on Dr. Patterson's behalf or by him to have him non-suited."²⁹

²⁸ See again Scott Barkley's 2021 article in *Baptist Press*:
<https://www.brnow.org/news/appeals-court-rules-sexual-abuse-lawsuit-against-pressler-will-proceed/>

²⁹ Liam Adams, "SBC seminary and prominent former leader settle in high-profile abuse lawsuit, SBC still defending," *The Tennessean*, April 20, 2023,
<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2023/04/20/sbc-abuse-lawsuit-pressler-southwestern-patterson-settlement/70047627007/>.

Another victim worked for Pressler's law firm but resigned when Pressler invited him to get into a hot tub with him naked.³⁰ This victim also alleged that Pressler's sexual indiscretions were well known, but ignored, at his law firm.

The list goes on, but in some ways without closure. Pressler confidentially settled one suit about six months before his death in 2024, but he was never criminally charged for any allegations.

This is a man who shaped the SBC into what it is today. While he allegedly abused young men and boys for decades behind the scenes, he strategically gained control of 14 million people in the SBC. He helped put SBC Presidents *and* American presidents into power. He became, in the words of Robert Downen, a kingmaker who shaped an entire denomination to protect people like himself and ostracize people like Kathy Hoppe.

While we are not aware of any sexual abuse allegations against Paige Patterson, he's got a sordid history of his own when it comes to cover-ups:

Downen: All of a sudden there's a lot of smoke in the Paul Pressler world And then at the same time, you are having the early parts of the church too movement starting to kind of ramp up. And one of the first big religious leaders ensnared in that movement is Paige Patterson, who a young woman from his seminary comes for her and says that she was raped on the campus and that when she went to Patterson, he basically tried to intimidate her out of reporting it to police. At one point, she would later, a legend, a lawsuit, he, you know, lunged at her during a meeting and basically accused her of trying to undermine him. But the big thing that really grabbed headlines across the country with Patterson thing was that there was an email that emerged in which Patterson said that he wanted to quote or meet with her, the woman alone, so that he could quote break her down. And that, I think, pushed at least one other young woman to come forward about similarly having her rape ignored or concealed by Patterson when she was a student at Southeastern where he was president, I believe, in 2004. And so, you know, in a pretty stunning move in the spring of 2017, the trustees of Southwestern Baptist met and ousted Patterson, which I think, if you don't understand the way that the conservative resurgence happened, it doesn't, you don't fully appreciate how wild it is that they kicked him out before. Patterson to be removed by a board that was stacked with people who saw him as almost untouchable. For him to be removed, I think it was really a stunning moment in SBC history, and I think also kind of

³⁰Robert Downen, "More men accuse former Texas judge, Baptist leader of sexual misconduct," *Houston Chronicle*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/More-men-accuse-former-Texas-judge-Baptist-12831892.php>

laid some of the groundwork for some of the early conversations about abuse that would explode a few months later when we would put out our first story.

As we noted earlier, he was named by one of Pressler’s victims for covering up Pressler’s abuse. He also allegedly covered up³¹ for his mentee, Darryl Gilyard, an SBC pastor from Florida who was accused by 44 women of sexual misconduct and was convicted of molesting 2 girls in 2009.³² Side note: Gilyard went to jail for 3 years and returned to the pulpit soon after, but the church where he preached made the service “adults only” and literally refused women with children at the door. As of four months ago, Gilyard is still working as the lead pastor of a church in Jacksonville.³³ When Patterson was asked by *The Houston Chronicle* to comment on the alleged cover-up for Gilyard, he declined to be interviewed. However, his longtime personal attorney, J. Shelby Sharp, said this: “I do know from my representation of him for many years that he did handle the matters concerning Gilyard that came to his attention timely and effectively... Those who claim otherwise, simply do not know the facts or are willing to believe unsubstantiated accusations.”

When Patterson was President of the SBC, a pastor sought his advice about preventing sexual abuse. Patterson responded with a letter and recommended holding a “lunch and one-hour awareness seminar” should the church be pulled into litigation related to sexual abuse.³⁴

³¹ Robert Downen, “Unearthed tapes, letters show Southern Baptist support for pastor who faced sex scandal,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 28, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Unearthed-tapes-letters-show-Southern-Baptist-14300738.php>

³² Nick Gibson, “Pastor accused of ‘sexually inappropriate conduct’ by 44 women at Southern Baptist Convention,” *Action News Jax*, May 25, 2022, <https://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/duval-county/pastor-accused-sexually-inappropriate-conduct-by-44-women-southern-baptist-convention/EXIIUFG3RBREYRE6477FF6U4CYU/>. See also the documentary “For Our Daughters” by Kristin Du Mez and Carl Byker: <https://www.forourdaughtersfilm.com/about>.

³³ Jenese Harris, “Pastor convicted of sex crimes is preaching at Jacksonville church, again: Rev. Darrell Gilyard admitted to molesting 2 girls, was sentenced to 3 years in prison in 2009,” *News 4 Jax*, March 10, 2020, <https://www.news4jax.com/news/local/2020/03/10/pastor-convicted-of-sex-crimes-is-preaching-at-jacksonville-church-again/>. See also Darrell Gilyard’s sermon at his church on YouTube from June 30, 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lt74wkcuP38>

³⁴ Beth discussed this letter in her February 3, 2024 substack, “Until He Comes’: Paige Patterson’s valediction in historical context,” <https://bethallisonbarr.substack.com/p/until-he-comes-paige-pattersons-valediction>. The letter can be seen in full in “The Guidepost Solutions Report of the Independent Investigation: The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee’s Response to Sexual Abuse Allegations and an Audit of the Procedures and Actions of the Credentials” Committee” as submitted on

Unlike Pressler, who was largely held unaccountable for his actions, Patterson had quite a reckoning during the Me Too movement. After Patterson was fired from Southwestern, he faced another round of trouble. But this time, it was for theft:

Downen: There was a lawsuit that was filed by Baylor and Southwestern, basically saying that either right before or right after he was fired his loyalists, basically took over this scholarship fund that funded scholarships at Baylor and Southwestern, I think to the tune of \$5 million and put it under their control and were using it for improper reasons. They ended up having to return control of the scholarship and also it led to the state of Texas banning Augie Boto from ever having any rule on a nonprofit in the state of Texas ever again. Now that doesn't sound that insane. Augie Boto is one of the longest serving general councils for that Southern Baptist Convention who was outed as one of the persons who was key to covering up the abuse scandal for decades. So put that in perspective, the lawyer for the Southern Baptist Convention could not lead legally a Southern Baptist Church in Texas because of the things he did in the wake of Patterson's firing.

According to reports, both Southwestern and Baylor sued the Harold E. Riley Foundation and its board of trustees for rewriting its bylaws after Patterson's firing.³⁵ The people who changed the bylaws were said to be Paige Patterson loyalists and intentionally diverted funds away from the two schools after he was fired.

Additionally, Southwestern accused Paige Patterson and his wife, Dorothy, of removing boxes of documents that belonged to the seminary. Southwestern requested for those records to be returned, but the Pattersons did not comply. Southwestern later alleged that "the Pattersons have continued to use the Seminary's confidential donor list in order to contact Seminary donors to divert donations and gifts away from the Seminary." They also accused the Pattersons of stealing a painting from the Seminary and alleged

May 15, 2022, pp. 41-42; See also this timeline of the SBC sex abuse scandal by Addelle M. Banks, "40 years in the making: A timeline of the Southern Baptists' sexual abuse crisis," *Religion News Service (RNS)*, May 23, 2022, <https://religionnews.com/2022/05/23/a-timeline-of-the-southern-baptist-conventions-sexual-abuse-crisis/>

³⁵ Several news stories ran about the lawsuit against the Harold E. Riley Foundation: <https://wordandway.org/2021/05/28/southwestern-accuses-pattersons-of-theft-improper-donor-solicitation/>, <https://religionnews.com/2021/02/08/baylor-southwestern-baptist-lawsuit-coup-riley-foundation-citizens-trustees/>, <https://swbts.edu/news/settlement-returns-harold-e-riley-foundation-control-to-southwestern-seminary-baylor-university/>.

the painting could be seen in social media pictures “hanging in the Pattersons’ new home.”³⁶ These allegations are outlined in detail in the Book of Reports of the 2021 Southern Baptist Convention.³⁷

In response, Patterson spoke to *Baptist Press* and denied that items belonging to Southwestern were stolen, saying: “not to my knowledge.” Then he said the following: “I do not think the courtroom or the press is the place where Christians need to discuss their differences.. That’s the reason why you’re the only one I have talked to. We’re responsible for working out our differences with other Christians. I’m very disappointed that we seem to be having trouble doing that.”³⁸

Not long after, Patterson preached at First Baptist Church in Dallas. While he did not directly address the accusations, he did reference, “the lynch mob that I saw out there trying to get a hold of me.”

In 2021, the lawsuit was settled which gave control of the Harold E. Riley Foundation back to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Baylor University. Southwestern Seminary President Adam W. Greenway said he was grateful to “report that, in the Lord’s kindness, truth and justice has indeed prevailed.”

[Music Transition]

While we do not want to discount the fact that some pastors and messengers genuinely cared about the Conservative Resurgence’s message, for Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, this was never about integrity or inerrancy or the Bible- it was about power. While they shaped the SBC by condemning a godless culture and asserting themselves as the only true and Biblical Christians, they walked off stage and acted in direct contradiction to their public personas.

The SBC is what it is today because of these men. The current direction of the convention was determined and executed by them. Men who allegedly abused and

³⁶ Mark Wingfield, “The saga of Southwestern Seminary and the Pattersons just got stranger, and it’s all in the SBC book of Reports,” *Baptist News Global*, June 1, 2021, <https://baptistnews.com/article/the-saga-of-southwestern-seminary-and-the-pattersons-just-got-stranger-and-its-all-in-the-sbc-book-of-reports/>

³⁷ <https://sbcannualmeeting.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2021-Book-of-Reports-with-links.pdf>

³⁸ Wingfield, “The saga of Southwestern Seminary and the Pattersons just got stranger,” <https://baptistnews.com/article/the-saga-of-southwestern-seminary-and-the-pattersons-just-got-stranger-and-its-all-in-the-sbc-book-of-reports/>.

covered up abuse. Men who aligned with power and domination over humility and self-sacrifice. Men who polished their talking points to get votes, but did not live in a way that aligned with their own words. Men who dismissed women and their callings.

But for many women in the SBC, including Kathy Hoppe, their denomination is still worth fighting for:

Hoppe: I told my pastor, "Listen, I want to tell you, it would be easier to be a prostitute in this church than it is to be an ordained woman." And no, my church does not support ordination of women. But when, if I choose to leave, that means that I'm just choosing what's best for me and not what's best for the community. And I think what's best for the community, if nothing else, if I stay is, I will be the fallen in the flesh. I will be the person that you don't want there. And I'm okay with that. You know, I think it was Eugene Peterson, he wrote Five Smooth Stones, he said, "Sometimes a leader has to be subversive." So I'm like, okay, I can be a subversive presence.

When we interviewed Kathy in Waco, Texas, we started by giving her a brief rundown of what we knew about her life. We talked about the documents we found in the archives: The letters from those pastors in Montana, the correspondence between different Home Mission Board employees about her and Jeff, and news about her ordination. In response, she said one quick phrase that arrested the room:

Hoppe: "And I thought I was invisible."

"And I thought I was invisible."

For the past year, we've looked at thousands of documents in the SBC's archives holding hundreds of thousands of years worth of life. For every name - Kathy Hoppe, Sarah Wood Lee, Shirley Carter, Addie Davis, Druceillar Fordham - there are decades of experience below the surface, all shaped and influenced by the Southern Baptist Convention. Kathy is one of many who felt invisible in a system that rejected them and their calling. She is one of many women buried in the archives...but, as we learned in our interview, buried women still sing.

We reached out to the SBC, Paige Patterson, Darryl Gilyard, Tommy Gilmore, and the Council for National Policy for comment, and did not hear back.

All the Buried Women is hosted and written by Beth Allison Barr and Savannah Locke. It was edited by Savannah Locke, and the music was done by Todd Locke. The song you hear in the intro and outro is called *Jaded* by, you guessed it, Savannah Locke, and for

more detailed credits, be sure to check out the show notes. We're so thankful to everyone who worked behind the scenes to make this possible.