



**Independent Investigation**

**Tates Creek Presbyterian Church**

**Final Report and Recommendations**

**June 21, 2022**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION**

### **A. Scope**

Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (“GRACE”) was engaged to provide an investigation with recommendations for Tates Creek Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Kentucky (“TCPC”). TCPC asked GRACE to conduct “an independent investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse by Chris Rice [henceforth, “Rice”] that are directly or indirectly related to Tates Creek Presbyterian Church (TCPC) and whether TCPC had any knowledge of such allegations, and if so, how TCPC responded to the allegations.” The investigation focused on what information the church received, when it was received, and what steps were taken in response to it. In addition, TCPC requested that GRACE propose recommendations based on the findings and meet with TCPC leadership to review the report.

### **B. Methodology**

TCPC engaged GRACE in October 2020 to conduct an independent investigation of whether the church had any knowledge of and if so, how the church responded to allegations of misconduct by Rice<sup>1</sup> between 1995 and 2003. Rice has been accused of sexual misconduct<sup>2</sup> and abuse by a former member of the youth group of TCPC. GRACE conducted the investigation in three phases. In phase one, GRACE communicated with church representatives for the purposes of gathering the background and context needed for this investigation. GRACE investigators drafted and released an online survey and assessed the survey results. The survey was available online starting on March 4, 2021, and remained open for participants for the duration of the investigation. GRACE received a total of 110 complete and/or partial responses to the survey. In phase two, GRACE interviewed eight individuals who had either come forward to report misconduct, were church leaders, or were other relevant witnesses. These interviews included both participants and non-participants in the online survey. Due to COVID-19 precautions and travel restrictions, all interviews were conducted via video or phone. GRACE also reviewed TCPC documentation that referenced Rice, Session minutes, and applicable policies. In the third and final phase, GRACE processed and evaluated the information collected and drafted this Report and Recommendations. GRACE will meet with TCPC leadership to review the report.

The investigation conducted by GRACE took approximately eighteen months to complete. After the investigation was initiated, GRACE paused this investigation in order to examine specific legal issues. The investigative team transitioned during this time as well. At all times, TCPC was cooperative and wanted to move forward with the investigation. This pause was not the fault of TCPC or any leader, witness or survivor. The delay squarely falls on GRACE. We recognize that the pause and associated delay in completion of the investigation created additional hardship for individuals and TCPC.

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<sup>1</sup> Rice was an independent contractor of TCPC engaged for specific events between 1995 to 2003. Rice was never an employee of TCPC.

<sup>2</sup> Sexual misconduct in this report refers to any verbal, nonverbal and/or physical acts of a sexual nature that are 1) unwelcome or 2) performed without consent or 3) committed by one in a position of authority upon a subordinate. This definition was also used in the survey.

At a time when many were already struggling to deal with the allegations of sexual misconduct and response to those allegations, this delay further complicated matters. GRACE is deeply sorry for the delay and apologizes for the added difficulty that this caused everyone associated with this investigation.

## **II. INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS**

### **A. Allegations of Chris Rice's Sexual Misconduct and Abuse**

#### **1. Background**

TCPC is a Presbyterian church located in Lexington, Kentucky. It is led by elected elders and a team of pastors and serves the community with various ministries, including a youth ministry.

Chris Rice is most known as a contemporary Christian singer and songwriter whose songs have been recorded by numerous Christian artists including Kathy Troccoli, Amy Grant, and Michael W. Smith, and who released his first album with Smith's Rocketown Records, "Deep Enough to Dream," in 1997. In 1998, Rice was nominated for six Dove Awards, including New Artist of the Year, Male Vocalist of the Year, Songwriter of the Year and Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year. His second album released in 1998, and in 1999, he won a Dove Award for Male Vocalist of the Year. Rice's third album, Smell the Color 9, was released in late 2000, and he was nominated for Dove awards again in 2000 and 2002.

During that period, Rice attended, played music, and led worship and/or spiritual teaching at various TCPC events.<sup>3</sup> These events included Sunday worship services held at TCPC's campus in Lexington, Kentucky, a missions conference, and youth and college retreats held at offsite locations such as resorts in Florida, Ohio, and Kentucky. Rice was not an employee of TCPC or a member of its congregation, but was paid as an independent contractor for at least some of these events. Through his involvement in the high school and college ministry at TCPC, Rice developed close relationships with multiple students.

Rice was introduced to TCPC by one of its ministers, Brad Waller,<sup>4</sup> who was friends with Rice. Brad Waller [hereinafter "Waller"] was a minister at TCPC from 1995 to 2006, where his primary responsibilities included directing the youth and college ministries.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> GRACE was provided church records that referenced Rice which included church bulletins, conference and retreat planning records, and event records that spanned from 1997 - 2001.

<sup>4</sup> GRACE has chosen to use Waller's actual name in this report because there was a previous public report and a public confession by Waller. See fn 5.

<sup>5</sup> TCPC website, <https://tcpca.org/addressing-our-past>. In 2018, allegations emerged that Waller committed misconduct related to inappropriately massaging the feet of young men affiliated with his church in Georgia and under his care as a pastor. TCPC announced in mid-2018 that it had engaged GRACE to lead an investigation regarding any misconduct of Waller during his time at TCPC as well as the church's response. GRACE released that report in June 2019 which found that Waller engaged in sexual misconduct and abuse related to massaging the feet of young men under his care and other conduct while he was serving at TCPC. Executive Summary and Recommendations: Independent Investigation Conducted by GRACE for Tates Creek Presbyterian Church, June 7, 2019 ["Waller Report"],

Rice's influence and achievements were prominently noted in materials for the TCPC youth events. For example, in a 1998 church bulletin where Rice played music for "Youth Sunday," it was highlighted on the cover in large print and color that Rice, a six-time Dove award nominee, was featured. Another retreat publication featuring Rice noted that many of the youth knew him personally and that he was the 1999 Male Vocalist of the Year and nominated for the same in 2000.

Rice led worship and performed at other youth camps and college retreats besides TCPC as well.<sup>6</sup>

After 2002, Rice continued releasing albums in contemporary Christian music, and then shifted into adult contemporary music, until 2007. He did not release any music between 2007 and 2019. In 2019, Rice released two more albums.

## **2. Misconduct and Abuse Disclosures**

This investigation was initiated as a result of the following information: GRACE conducted a previous investigation at the request of TCPC in 2018-19 concerning misconduct by Waller. In that investigation, it was found that Waller admitted to rubbing the feet of men and youth under his care and that there was a sexual element to it. During the course of that investigation, numerous former high school and college youth involved with TCPC, now adults, were interviewed and many described a culture where physical contact in the form of massaging, among and between youth and leaders, including the foot massaging by Waller, was normalized.<sup>7</sup> They further described that the Waller investigation opened their eyes to other physical contact that had been normalized, but in retrospect and as adults, they realized was not appropriate. As a result, a survivor came forward with new allegations regarding Rice.

This former student, now an adult and referred to herein as Alan Doe,<sup>8</sup> called TCPC's Senior Pastor in the fall of 2020 to share events that reportedly occurred over multiple years in his relationship with Rice. TCPC's Senior Pastor informed the Kentucky police and called a meeting of TCPC church elders. At that meeting, the elders unanimously voted to once again contract with GRACE to conduct another independent investigation into these new allegations.

On October 15, 2020, TCPC's Senior Pastor addressed TCPC and the public in an open letter entitled, "Investigation into Allegations Against Chris Rice" [hereinafter, the "Public Statement"].<sup>9</sup> The letter described the allegations, addressed whether TCPC

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58e680d09f74568059e619f1/t/5cfbf86768782500014ae1fe/1560017008555/Executive+Summary+and+Recommendations+TCPC+REDACTED.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> ChrisRice.com, <https://chrisrice.com/bio>.

<sup>7</sup> Allegations against Rice, including the accounts described in this report, were not disclosed in interviews during the Waller investigation.

<sup>8</sup> Each witness was assigned a first name as a pseudonym with the generic last name Doe. Any pseudonym that appears to be the name of a real person is unintentional and purely coincidental. GRACE made every effort to avoid such similarities. Except for the reported offender and Brad Waller, all names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of those involved. In some cases, minor identifying details have been changed for the same reason.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix Item 1: <https://tcpca.org/rice-investigation> ("Public Statement").

was aware of any of the allegations, and outlined the steps TCPC would be taking in response to the allegations. It specifically addressed any other potential survivors of similar abuse, the TCPC community, the outside community, and the media.

Seven individuals interviewed by GRACE, including the original reporting survivor, were young men who were involved in the high school and/or college groups at TCPC during the relevant time period (1995 - 2003) as either students or young adult volunteers or both. The original reporting survivor is currently the only individual who has reported instances of explicitly sexual contact, although one other witness reported events that were consistent with unique circumstances that occurred with the original reporting survivor and could also be considered misconduct.

Several of the individuals reported being invited by Rice for visits at his home in the Nashville, Tennessee, area wherein they stayed overnight at his request. Other than Waller possibly being present for one or more visits (memories of interviewees were unclear), no other adults stayed at Rice's home during the youths' visits. During the relevant time period, Rice would have been in his late thirties and the individuals were in their mid-to-late teens to early twenties.

### **3. Culture and TCPC Group Activities**

Multiple interviewees described an environment in the TCPC youth and college groups, where massaging, including between adults and youth, was normalized. Consistent with that environment, Alan Doe describes Waller and Rice also exchanging foot massages while sitting on a couch talking.<sup>10</sup> Alan Doe recounted, "looking back like in youth group, Brad [Waller] would have you turn and face one wall and you would rub the shoulders of the person in front of you. Then you turn like face the other wall, which seems harmless, but it actually turned into this weird thing. People were massaging each other all the time, on the bus, on the way down there and back. It was weird."<sup>11</sup>

Cole Doe also recalls instances where Rice would be walking behind people and massaging their shoulders, along with a "running joke about like, Chris [Rice] gives good massages."<sup>12</sup>

Alan Doe began attending TCPC when he was 13 years old while still in middle school.<sup>13</sup> He got to know Waller who was leading the youth.<sup>14</sup> During the course of Alan Doe's involvement, he initially met Rice, who he understood to be a good friend of Waller, on a TCPC retreat where Rice was invited to lead worship.<sup>15</sup> Alan Doe attended additional retreat events sponsored by TCPC wherein Rice led worship.<sup>16</sup> On at least one retreat, Rice also led the spiritual teaching.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>12</sup> Cole Doe Tr. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. at 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 10-11.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Doe 1 and 2 Trs.

<sup>17</sup> GRACE reviewed TCPC records to this effect.

Brent Doe started attending TCPC youth group events when he was 15 or 16 years old, within a year or two after Alan Doe.<sup>18</sup> He attended some of the same retreats where Rice led worship.<sup>19</sup>

Multiple interviewees, including Alan Doe and Brent Doe, had an interest in music and the music industry, which became a platform for their conversations with and more personal interaction with Rice. At TCPC events, they spoke with Rice about their own music interests and/or about Rice's music, expressing admiration for him and his musical and songwriting abilities.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Isolation and Crossing Boundaries at TCPC Events

Alan Doe recalls that over the course of TCPC retreats he attended during high school and college, he would sometimes be assigned to room with Rice (or it would be otherwise arranged at the retreat) and the exchange of back massages became a pattern while they would talk.<sup>21</sup> He recounted, "Chris [Rice] started having me give him back massages and he would give me back massages," while they talked.<sup>22</sup> Alan Doe likened these back massages with Rice as similar to the pattern of Waller massaging students' feet (the subject of the earlier investigation) while talking with the student.<sup>23</sup>

When Alan Doe shared a room with Rice on these retreats, they would also sleep in the same bed.<sup>24</sup> Alan Doe described that over time, Rice became a "spiritual father, mentor figure."<sup>25</sup>

On one retreat while Brent Doe was approximately seventeen years old, he expressed to Rice how much Rice's music impacted him, whereupon Rice hugged him and asked him if he wanted to go with him through a drive through to get ice cream.<sup>26</sup> Brent Doe rode with Rice to get ice cream, off property of the retreat, and when they returned, they sat in Rice's car talking.<sup>27</sup> Brent Doe remembers sharing personal struggles with Rice and Rice in turn sharing that he also struggled with similar issues.<sup>28</sup> Brent Doe noted,

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<sup>18</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 4-5.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11. Brent Doe recalls, "I was just preparing what I'm going to say to him. I didn't want it to come across as a fan thing.... I really felt very much like I connected with his music in a way that was profound and unique.... I talked to him. I just said, 'Your music really speaks to me very profoundly in particular....' I became emotional.... I was just like, 'Just want to say thanks or whatever.' I remember him being like, 'Wow, thank you,' and giving me a big hug." Brent Doe Tr. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> "Chris would do the same [as Waller], like it was Chris, 'Tell me about your life and tell me about your upbringing. Tell me about whatever.' And he'd rub my back, or I'd rub his back. And we would talk about music." *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 5-6, 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* "Everybody was crossing over to go into the hotel and we just kind of pulled up. I remember everybody seeing me in the car with him and it was just kind of like, 'Wow, that's weird. What is he doing?'" *Id.* at 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

“throughout the rest of the trip there was definitely a lot of kind of kinship, I guess, between us.”<sup>29</sup>

Cole Doe was a student in the college group at TCPC, attending some of the same retreat events as Alan Doe and Brent Doe. He felt as if Rice gave him extra time over and above other students, one-to-one conversations and specific eye contact.<sup>30</sup> He recalled that on one occasion while riding a bus for a TCPC youth retreat, Rice was sitting in the same bus seat along with him.<sup>31</sup> Cole Doe fell asleep and when he awoke, he realized Rice “fell asleep laying over on me.”<sup>32</sup> Cole Doe recalls that another student took a picture<sup>33</sup> of them, and at the time, Cole Doe didn’t feel like it was inappropriate: “it was kind of like ... bro love, I think, that's the way I kind of saw it, like as they call a bromance or whatever.”<sup>34</sup>

Cole Doe notes that in light of the allegations and in hindsight, he now believes that these behaviors could have been part of a grooming process of him.<sup>35</sup>

## **5. Further Isolation and Increased Crossing of Physical Boundaries**

At one of the retreats where Rice was leading worship, Alan Doe recalls an occasion where another student confessed publicly that he had been addicted to porn.<sup>36</sup> Afterwards, while alone with Rice and exchanging back massages, Rice asked Alan Doe if he also struggled with porn.<sup>37</sup> Alan Doe recalls he and Rice each sharing personal struggles on this topic.<sup>38</sup> Alan Doe remembers Rice saying that Alan Doe needed accountability regarding porn and sometime thereafter, Rice mailed Alan Doe a computer program to be installed on Alan Doe’s computer.<sup>39</sup> This program would monitor access to porn, notify Rice, and in some manner, lock down all or portions of the internet access on Alan Doe’s computer.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>30</sup> “Like you look at the number of people that are there, right? Like there’s a ton of kids there, and we’re always together, all of us are always together. So if you give someone in that group extra time, they’re going to feel it. You’re going to feel that extra time. Chris [Rice] gave me extra time. He would have one-on-one conversations, as opposed to just being like... Or making eye contact.” Cole Doe Tr. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Cole Doe Tr. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> “There’s a picture out there somewhere, I used to have it. I was actually looking to see if I could find it, and I don’t think I have it anymore.” Cole Doe Tr. 7.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> “In hindsight 2020 with Chris [Rice], like I feel like with me there probably was grooming.... If any of the allegations are true, then definitely there was grooming toward me.” Cole Doe Tr. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

<sup>40</sup> “So he bought me, I think it was called net nanny at the time, it was some cyber protecting thing. He mailed it to my house and I call him on the phone, and he puts his password in, or my pa... Whatever it was over the phone. So he got reports of my activity on the internet.” Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11-12. At that time, programs like Net Nanny could be set up to block sites, filter via keywords, and notify the administrator, usually a parent as they are referred to as “Parental controls,” of the child’s online activity such as when the child was attempting to view an inappropriate website.



Alan Doe states that his parents did not know about this arrangement.<sup>41</sup> On multiple occasions, Alan Doe had to call Rice for Rice to enter or give him a password related to this program and to unlock Alan Doe's internet access.<sup>42</sup>

After Alan Doe began to drive at age 16,<sup>43</sup> Rice suggested that Alan Doe drive to Nashville to visit him.<sup>44</sup> During multiple visits, Alan Doe stayed in Rice's personal bedroom and slept in the same bed, similar to the arrangement that existed on TCPC retreats.<sup>45</sup> Alan Doe's recollection (as well as that of others interviewed) was that the house had at least one and maybe two other bedrooms. Interviewees other than Alan Doe, to the extent they could recall, reported sleeping in these other bedrooms on their visits.

Alan Doe recalls on these visits that at Rice's suggestion, they watched animated movies,<sup>46</sup> and that they exchanged back massages on the bed regularly on these visits, also similar to what occurred on TCPC retreats.<sup>47</sup> Alan Doe described that over time, the massages from Rice progressively got "more aggressive" from "backs to lower backs to legs, to thighs, to more than that."<sup>48</sup>

When Alan Doe turned 17 or 18 (his memory is reportedly unclear), Rice invited him to come down to Nashville to celebrate his birthday.<sup>49</sup> Alan Doe recalled that Rice had arranged for them to go camping and once they were in their sleeping bags in the tent, Rice suggested that it would be warmer if they slept naked and then further that they should sleep naked in the same sleeping bag.<sup>50</sup>

Alan Doe declined to do so and then describes that the next day, Rice was quiet when they would normally have deep conversations.<sup>51</sup> Specifically, Alan Doe noted that Rice "shut down the next day and didn't want to talk,"<sup>52</sup> "was weird, he was really strange...He just was quiet all day, all the way back home to his house."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "He was my accountability partner from Franklin, Tennessee, without my parents knowing at all." Alan Doe 1 Tr. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Doe's recent reflections on the inappropriateness of Rice's actions related to the software include, "But if ... you never tell their parents and you email, and you mailed them software that you put on the computer of a minor without their parents' knowledge. That should never happen." Alan Doe 1 Tr. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Alan Doe notes, "the relationship got weird when I turned 16 and started driving down there," and "once I got my driver's license, I just started driving down to Nashville and hanging out with Chris [Rice]. And that was part of the relationship, was the whole weird massages, sleeping in the same bed thing." Alan Doe 2 Tr. 12, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 11, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11, 13; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 35.

<sup>47</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 11, Alan Doe 2 Tr. 12, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 12-13.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12. "We go camping and he said, 'I think it's warmer if you're like in your sleeping bag and you're naked, it's actually warmer. Like if you're naked.' I was like, 'I don't think it probably is. I don't think it probably is warmer. That's strange.' And he kept pushing that, right? Like, 'You should be naked.' He's like, 'Well, we could get in the same sleeping bag together naked it would be really warm.'" *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 13.

On another visit, Alan Doe recalls that two other students were staying at Rice's home as well, but sleeping in other bedroom(s).<sup>54</sup> This made Alan Doe question why he was sleeping in Rice's room and bed if other visiting students were not.<sup>55</sup> Other interviewees said they did not recall specific sleeping arrangements on their visits other than they did not sleep in the same bedroom with Rice and they don't recall anyone else sleeping in the same bedroom with Rice.

On a visit sometime after the camping trip, Alan Doe recalls Rice giving him a massage, which moved to Alan Doe's thighs, then Rice moved his hands to Alan Doe's crotch.<sup>56</sup> Alan Doe recalls stating that he was not comfortable with that.<sup>57</sup> Alan Doe describes Rice as "persistent" and that Alan Doe said "no" multiple times in order to get Rice to stop, as well as grabbing Rice's wrist to remove his hand.<sup>58</sup> Alan Doe recalls approximately three occasions, over multiple visits, in which Rice attempted to and/or did put his hand inside Alan Doe's boxer shorts, including Rice's hand touching Alan Doe's penis.<sup>59</sup> Alan Doe also describes Rice attempting to direct Alan Doe's hand toward Rice's own crotch during some of the massages and Alan Doe not complying.<sup>60</sup> Alan Doe believes massages occurred every evening that he stayed at Rice's home.<sup>61</sup>

In summary of the allegations, Alan Doe first met Rice when he was 13 or 14 years old and Rice initiated exchanging massages with him on TCPC retreats beginning at 14-15 years old. Alan Doe began driving to Rice's home at 16 years old, where Rice and he slept in the same bed and exchanged massages each evening. Rice escalated and progressed the physical contact until Alan Doe's early years of college, although it is unclear from Alan Doe's memory which events occurred prior to or after Alan Doe turned eighteen years old. At all of these times, Rice was in his late thirties.

After the instances where Rice reached into his boxer shorts, Alan Doe realized that this was a "strange relationship" and that he didn't understand what to make of it other than it was "weird" and he stopped visiting thereafter.<sup>62</sup> Alan Doe said that he "put it in a box"

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<sup>54</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 13; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 31.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 13.

<sup>58</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 31.

<sup>59</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 16; Alan Doe 2 Tr. 31. "He's reaching into my boxers to grab my penis. Right? And I'm having to grab his... I'm grabbing his wrist and pulling his hand away and saying no.... I mean, he's pretty forthright, right? So it's me saying, 'Hey man, no'. And grabbing his wrist and him trying again and me saying, 'No.'" Alan Doe 2 Tr. 31.

<sup>60</sup> "It wasn't uncommon for Chris to grab my hand and say, 'Hey, like rub here.' Right? Like, 'On my leg or on my back or on my shoulder or on my arm.' But yeah, he did try to push my hand towards his crotch and I didn't go for that." Alan Doe 2 Tr. 32.

<sup>61</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 36.

<sup>62</sup> Alan Doe describes his confusion regarding the basis for his relationship with Rice after he started visiting him in Nashville: "'Well, I thought you were going to help me think about music. I thought we're going to talk about songwriting or, something like that.' And that just never happened ever. Literally ever. I would bring it up he was like, 'Eh.'" Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12. As the physical boundaries continued to be crossed, Alan recalls thinking, "I was like, 'This is weird. I don't know what else to make of this anymore. We don't talk about music. You still want to watch [animated movies]. You still don't even really introduce me to even your friends, when we go out, this is a strange relationship. I don't know what to make of it, but I just can't do this anymore. This is weird.'" Alan Doe 1 Tr. 13. Alan Doe further discusses the

and just moved on and did not reconsider the events until after the allegations surrounding Waller emerged in 2018.<sup>63</sup>

Brent Doe encountered Rice at a youth rally/concert after Brent Doe had graduated from high school.<sup>64</sup> This was in the same time period as Alan Doe's periodic visits to Rice's home in Nashville. After the event, Brent Doe recalls that their conversation included him telling Rice that he had just graduated from high school and that he didn't get into the college of his choice.<sup>65</sup> During their conversations, Rice shared that he would be returning to the same city a week later and asked Brent Doe to return with Rice to his home outside Nashville for the week and Brent Doe agreed.<sup>66</sup> Brent Doe recalled that his parents recognized Rice as an award-winning musician and that fact seemed to play a part in their trust in him to take their eighteen-year-old son to his home for a week.<sup>67</sup> Another interviewee who was friends with Brent Doe at the time and present for Rice's invitation to Brent Doe, confirmed that he knew about the visit at the time but not about any events that occurred.<sup>68</sup>

In Nashville, Rice drove Brent Doe around to see famous people's houses, went to the recording studio, and ate dinner at the home of a specific Christian recording artist with Brent Doe accompanying him.<sup>69</sup> Brent Doe also remember's Rice's grand piano being delivered while he was there.<sup>70</sup>

Brent Doe also recalls once leaving a church service with Rice, after the pastor had likened marital relations to prayer, he and Rice "snickering about it like a couple of stupid kids. He [Rice] said something... he was actually like, 'I'm going to say this , and I apologize,' and I'm like, 'Okay.' But he was like, 'So is it like, you know, a spiritual orgasm?'"<sup>71</sup>

In Rice's home, Brent Doe described a bedroom that had a tent in it that Rice claimed he was airing out after a trip.<sup>72</sup> Brent Doe slept in this tent during his stay.<sup>73</sup> On several nights, Rice also slept in the tent with Brent Doe, although Brent Doe notes that being in the tent, each in a sleeping bag, was quite warm.<sup>74</sup>

Brent Doe describes that on one of these nights, while he and Rice were each lying in sleeping bags in the tent, Rice started talking about the muscles in the back, and then

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confusion, "At first it's like, 'Oh, this is so cool. I have this relationship with this guy who's this great songwriter,' because he is, he's a great songwriter, right? Like this well known guy. But after a while it's like, 'This is weird. This is a weird relationship.'" Alan Doe. 2 Tr. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 39.

<sup>64</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>68</sup> Ethan Doe Tr. 7. *Also see* Brent Doe Tr. 8.

<sup>69</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 9-10.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.* at 10-11.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Id.* at 10, 11.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.* at 11, 18.

suggested he show Brent Doe these muscles.<sup>75</sup> Specifically, Brent Doe recalls “one of the times when we were in the tent that he told me that...one of his family members or something was a physical therapist or into therapeutic massage or something like that, and that if he hadn’t gone into music he might have gone into something like that. He told me that he was very fascinated with the human musculature and architecture and started talking about muscles in the back that are connected to different parts of the spine and like was, ‘Let me show you.’”<sup>76</sup> Then Rice touched different muscles on Brent Doe’s shoulders and mid-back.<sup>77</sup> Brent Doe recalls that Rice said something to the effect, “And it’s reverse on me,” then directed him to touch the muscles in Rice’s back and physically put Brent Doe’s hand on Rice’s shoulder.<sup>78</sup>

Brent Doe also describes that during the week he stayed with Rice, Rice would commonly grab his knee, and above the knee in the “thigh area” as they were seated talking.<sup>79</sup> Brent Doe describes it kind of like a “gotcha” but then also, he recalls Rice then going into identifying parts of the knee joint and musculature, and specifically “There’s a nerve or something there I think he said that if you pinch it or whatever makes you jump.”<sup>80</sup> Brent Doe does not remember Rice doing this to anyone else while he was there and notes that it made him uncomfortable, recalling that it “kind of felt like a little bit like, ‘All right, come on. That’s enough.’ Like ‘You’ve done it 20 times now, you really got to do it again?’”<sup>81</sup> Brent Doe also notes that Rice hugged him “a lot. Quantitatively, a lot.”<sup>82</sup>

Brent Doe notes that he felt “on guard” and “on the lookout for something weird,” but then notes: “And then, it never happened. I don’t know if he could see that maybe I was on guard, or if he just felt like I wasn’t going to be submissive.”<sup>83</sup> Brent Doe notes he felt apprehensive and uncomfortable at various points during the visit: “So for me to be in that kind of environment, almost upside down and away from my family with no communication and all of this, I was just kind of in a whirlwind and very confused. I was prepared for anything good, anything bad, and when he would get close to me, my natural tendency was to sort of tense myself and be like, ‘Eh, okay. All right.’ So maybe, yeah, maybe it was sort of inappropriate. Like, ‘I’m going to hug you whether you want it or not, ‘ at times. Kind of like with the knee.”<sup>84</sup>

Brent Doe also recalls Rice inquiring about who Brent Doe was interested in romantically and who he was attracted to in the youth group. Brent Doe notes, “He was definitely interested in who I was interested in.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *Id.* at 11.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>80</sup> *Id.* “One time we were just sitting there, he was like, ‘Well, let me explain all the parts of it,’ and talked about the patella and the whatever else was in the knee.” *Id.*

<sup>81</sup> *Id.* at 13-14.

<sup>82</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.* at 18.

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* at 19.

Since Rice drove him home from this visit over twenty years ago, Brent Doe has had no further interaction with Rice.<sup>86</sup> He describes his realization that he “sort of put a lid on this because I knew, some part of me knew something might not be right.... I know that he at times seemed to sort of tiptoe, sort of border of what might be considered improper.”<sup>87</sup> He notes that he did not tell anyone at the time about these events because he was already embarrassed and his friends thought it was strange that he went to stay with Rice at his home.<sup>88</sup>

Brent Doe further notes, “So I assumed that this was just something he did. Maybe if he went on a youth trip and somebody was sad or damaged enough or whatever, that they could be his personal friend and then he would nurture them. I don’t know where I would’ve gotten that idea. I just think that I kind of assumed I must not be special.”<sup>89</sup>

## 6. Additional Interviews and Survey Responses

In addition to Alan Doe, Brent Doe, and Cole Doe, we interviewed multiple other individuals who were part of the high school and/or college youth at TCPC during the relevant period and who knew Rice and one or more of Alan Doe, Brent Doe, and/or Cole Doe through that involvement. Some of these individuals also visited Rice at his home or otherwise engaged with him outside of TCPC events. On their visits, these interviewees recall sleeping in areas other than in Rice’s bedroom or bed and could not confirm or deny anyone else sleeping in Rice’s bedroom.

Multiple interviewees did confirm Rice’s friendly relationship with each of Alan Doe, Brent Doe, and/or Cole Doe. One or more interviewees also confirmed that they personally witnessed or knew about visits by Alan Doe, Brent Doe, and/or Cole Doe to Rice’s home outside Nashville, Tennessee. Multiple interviewees also confirmed that Waller and Rice were good friends with Rice staying at Waller’s home when he visited TCPC and Waller staying at Rice’s home as well.

These individuals did not recall any personal experiences with Rice that they would consider overtly sexual or grooming behavior. One interviewee notes that the allegations regarding Rice “really shocked me, because it’s hard for me to believe there’s anything there. But you never know people. I didn’t know him that closely.... But with Chris [Rice], there was no hint of anything. He seemed very platonic with everybody.”<sup>90</sup>

One interviewee who worked closely with Rice noted, “But I do know that I never saw anything that made me think that there was something wrong with what Chris [Rice] was doing or the people he was hanging out with. So I don’t know. I don’t want to cheerlead

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<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.* at 21. “When I got back I wouldn’t have told anybody, and I didn’t tell anybody, about sleeping in a tent. I didn’t tell anybody about the massage and touching a back or whatever because I would have already been on edge with everybody else thinking the situation was strange. If I had started volunteering information like that it might have turned into more speculation and more speculation.” *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> *Id.* Brent Doe, in reflection, now “feels like it could have been a close call.... Learning his actual age at that time very much, I think, changes my sort of perception of it.” *Id.* at 22.

<sup>90</sup> Fred Doe Tr. 7.

anything that I'm unaware of, clearly. So I don't want that to happen. I want truth, that's why I wanted to talk with you guys."<sup>91</sup>

There were five survey responses that indicated they had “personal knowledge regarding Chris Rice and sexual abuse/misconduct of minors or anyone under his authority during his association with activities at Tates Creek,” but each declined to give their name or contact information.

## **7. Attempted Contact with Chris Rice**

GRACE reached out to Rice through his attorney who had contacted TCPC after the Public Statement. Rice was invited to meet with GRACE investigators regarding the allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse. Through his attorney, Rice declined to speak with GRACE investigators.

### **B. TCPC's Knowledge of and Response to the Allegations**

#### **1. Knowledge**

GRACE found no evidence that TCPC knew or should have known of the specific allegations against Rice. Alan Doe and Brent Doe each told investigators that they never reported anything to TCPC leadership at the time.

GRACE was unable to interview the individual who was TCPC's senior pastor during the relevant time period, as he has now passed away. Therefore we are unable to determine what, if any, knowledge he otherwise may have had regarding Rice's alleged conduct. Waller, who served as youth pastor and assistant pastor and by all accounts was TCPC's main contact for Rice during this period, relayed in an email that he “was not aware of nor was I informed of any of the alleged behavior during or since my time at TCPC.”<sup>92</sup> GRACE also interviewed Waller's (now former) spouse who was also involved as a leader with the youth during the relevant time period and she was also unaware of any of the allegations.

GRACE investigators reviewed the Session minutes for the years in which Rice was involved with youth and college retreats at TCPC. No information provided to GRACE during the investigation indicated that reports of abuse or improper conduct by Rice were ever brought forward to the Session prior to the fall of 2020.

Alan Doe reports that Waller and other members of the high school/college youth at TCPC did know that he went to visit Rice at his home and stayed there.<sup>93</sup> According to Alan Doe, TCPC leaders were aware that Alan Doe stayed in a room with Rice on TCPC sponsored retreats, but that this was common for youth to share rooms with same-sex adult youth leaders and/or retreat speakers.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Don Doe Tr. 10.

<sup>92</sup> GRACE contacted Waller for an interview to learn about any information he had about student relationships with Rice at TCPC events or otherwise. Waller provided a short email response and declined to interview with GRACE.

<sup>93</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 9-10, 12, 19, 26.

<sup>94</sup> *Id.* at 7-8.

Consistent among those interviewed was the common practice of back and foot massages among the youth and leadership including Waller and Rice, such that it felt normal and part of the culture. The positions of trust held by Waller and Rice and the open nature of massaging amongst the group may have contributed to Alan Doe's and Brent Doe's difficulty in recognizing misconduct involving massage, including massages either in private and/or involving slowly increasing levels of physical contact.

Alan Doe's recollection was also that he told Waller that Rice "got him set up with this account" that monitored porn use,<sup>95</sup> although it is unclear whether Waller understood that Rice was serving as an accountability person, unbeknownst to Alan Doe's parents, with some level of control over Alan Doe's computer.

The five survey respondents who purported to have personal knowledge of sexual misconduct by Rice, but who were not willing to provide their name or contact information, did not report awareness of any reports to TCPC representatives.

## **2. Response to the Allegations**

TCPC's Senior Pastor became aware on October 7, 2020 of the allegations regarding Rice's conduct. He notified the other pastors at TCPC that same day and the Session was informed the following day. Kentucky law enforcement was also notified by the Senior Pastor on October 7, 2020, and the congregation was informed through email on October 15, 2020 via an open letter that the Senior Pastor posted publicly the same day.<sup>96</sup>

## **III. Analysis of Investigative Findings**

Investigators evaluated all of the witness testimony and documentation obtained and considered the totality of the facts and circumstances involved, including the nature of the alleged conduct and the context in which it reportedly occurred. GRACE analyzed the allegations and subsequent responses by TCPC in light of Scriptural teaching and principles of trauma-informed practice. GRACE provides the following analysis of the investigative findings.

### **A. Corroboration of Reporting Victim**

In this investigation, there is one reporting victim ("Alan Doe") of alleged sexual misconduct and abuse committed by Rice over the course of a multi-year connection beginning when Alan Doe was between 14 and 16 years old and then continuing until Alan Doe was approximately 19 or 20 years old. The series of events also begins in retreats sponsored by TCPC and crosses into events and visits outside of TCPC.

As part of GRACE's investigation, we sought to identify and interview other individuals who might have information relevant to aspects of Alan Doe's account. We also sought to identify whether any other individuals had similar experiences or experienced a pattern of physical contact and/or involvement similar to Alan Doe's account.

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<sup>95</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 22.

<sup>96</sup> Appendix Item 1: Public Statement.

There are multiple factors that support the credibility of Alan Doe's allegations. First, although Alan Doe is a single reporting survivor, certain identifying characteristics about Rice's home, vehicle, and other facts were corroborated through multiple other interviews. Other interviews also corroborated or suggested a close relationship between Rice and Alan Doe and visits by Alan Doe to Rice's home. Brent Doe's account also featured certain similarities that lent support to the events described by Alan Doe.

Also, Alan Doe's responses and story have remained consistent over the course of his initial reporting to the Senior Pastor of TCPC and over multiple interviews. GRACE was unable to identify any motive to deceive or to fabricate these allegations and, instead, Alan Doe's expressed desire was primarily to protect others: "I just don't want this to happen to anybody else" and that he just wanted "people to be on guard."<sup>97</sup>

The common practice and normalization of massage in the open that existed in TCPC's youth and college groups at the time created a culture ripe for pushing the boundaries of physical contact in more private settings, among any relationship, not just between adults and youth. Especially in the context of relationships between an adult in a position of authority and trust and a youth under that authority, this could be used to groom the youth for sexual contact by slowly increasing the already accepted and normalized physical contact, withdrawing special status when that physical contact is resisted, and the leveraging the youth's desire to fit in with accepted group activities. Brent Doe's interview was enlightening in several ways in this regard,<sup>98</sup> and the similarities to Alan Doe's account strengthen credibility.

First, similar to Alan Doe's account of the camping trip, the use of a tent as a setting for seeking and/or initiating physical contact between an adult in a position of spiritual authority and trust and a youth (albeit just under or over eighteen), is concordant.<sup>99</sup>

Second, note Brent Doe's description that Rice pre-offers an "explanation" for the physical contact (an interest in massage and "musculature" in one instance, and knee musculature and a specific nerve at the knee allegedly making someone jump in the other instance), which Brent Doe accepts given Rice's position of authority and trust. It then becomes the basis for Rice to touch Brent Doe's back, request that Brent Doe touch Rice's back and move his hand to do so, and then for Rice to repeatedly grab Brent Doe's knee and thigh. This progression is consistent with a pattern of offering a basis for, then initiating, testing the response, and pushing physical boundaries over time, i.e., aspects of grooming. Brent Doe's description that Rice "seemed to sort of tiptoe, sort of border of what might be considered improper without actually going over

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<sup>97</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 20.

<sup>98</sup> GRACE investigators have no information that suggests Alan Doe and Brent Doe were anything other than passing acquaintances, members of the same, somewhat large, youth group during the time period in question, and nothing suggests that they know each other in any capacity currently or have shared the events from their interviews with one another. Brent Doe in fact stated, "I didn't tell anybody about it because I was a little embarrassed." Brent Doe Tr. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Brent Doe recalled that Rice said the reason the tent was set up inside was that he was airing it out after a recent camping trip. Brent Doe Tr. 10. While that might be possible, it does not explain its use for sleeping inside, much less co-sleeping of the adult and youth together. It seems incongruous that a tent in such a state that it requires airing out would be a preferred place to sleep when multiple other more typical sleeping arrangements could have been used.



what was improper,” coupled with his awareness that at times he felt uncomfortable and would tense up at Rice’s physical touch appears consistent with such a pattern as well as with the events that Alan Doe alleges played out over time.

There are events in Alan Doe’s account where he recalls the presence of other youths, but those individuals did not recall the events in our interviews.

GRACE’s investigation did not identify any other factors that discount the credibility of Alan Doe’s specific allegations or account or the accounts of other witnesses. Without interviewing Rice, we are unable to offer any context for the alleged actions other than their consistency with an abuse of power, grooming, and sexual misconduct and abuse.

## **B. Delayed Disclosures**

In Alan Doe’s account, there is a time lapse between the incidents and his disclosure. Delayed disclosures are common in cases of child sexual abuse. A high percentage of survivors never report their assault until adulthood, if they report at all.<sup>100</sup> In addition, many factors contribute to male survivors of child sexual abuse from disclosing, such as being an older age at the time of the abuse, feeling responsible, expected negative consequences from disclosure, shame and stigma due to fear of being viewed as homosexual, an abuser’s position of power and influence, the survivor’s admiration for the abuser, an inability to recognize events as abusive whether from feelings of complicity, coping strategies to suppress, or other abusive environments, confusion about what the abuse might mean about their sexuality, and negative emotions like self-blame, humiliation, guilt, anger, confusion, pain.<sup>101</sup>

Alan Doe did not report his experience until after the Waller investigation, which included public statements by TCPC’s Senior Pastor and in the GRACE report that elucidated nuances about sexual abuse, specifically in the context of a person of authority. Until that point, Alan Doe was still listening to Rice’s music, but upon revisiting the events described herein, he could no longer listen to Rice’s music.<sup>102</sup> Alan Doe reported to TCPC’s Senior Pastor approximately a year after the final Waller report.

Brent Doe also notes, “When I got back [from the trip with Rice] I wouldn’t have told anybody, and I didn’t tell anybody, about sleeping in a tent. I didn’t tell anybody about the massaging and touching a back or whatever because I would have already been on

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<sup>100</sup> Rosaleen McElvaney, *Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse: Delays, Non-disclosure and Partial Disclosure. What the Research Tells Us and Implications for Practice*, Child Abuse Review (2013) Wiley Online Library, DOI: 10.1002/car.2280, <https://www.nationalcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Disclosure-of-child-sexual-abuse-Delays-non-disclosures-and-partial-disclosures.-What-the-research-tells-us-and-implications-for-practice.pdf>; Catherine Townsend, Child sexual abuse disclosure: What practitioners need to know. *Darkness to Light* (2016) [https://www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ChildSexualAbuseDisclosurePaper\\_20160217\\_v.1.pdf](https://www.d2l.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ChildSexualAbuseDisclosurePaper_20160217_v.1.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Scott D. Easton, Leia Y. Saltzman, and Danny G. Willis, “Would You Tell Under Circumstances Like That?": Barriers to Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse for Men, *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 2014, Vol. 15, No. 4, 460-69. DOI: 10.1037/a0034223.

<sup>102</sup> Alan Doe. 1 Tr. 17, 18. “I can’t listen to his stuff anymore, but it used to mean a lot to me. And it used to kind of be my heart language when I would worship God. And now, ... no. There’s no way I’m listening to that.” Alan Doe 1 Tr. 18.

edge with everybody else thinking the situation was strange.”<sup>103</sup> Brent Doe, in fact, did not initiate contact with GRACE investigators, but was identified through the course of interviews in the investigation and says he did not know about either the Waller or Rice allegations until this investigation.

Alan Doe specifically described the role that the Waller investigation played in causing him to reflect and re-evaluate the relationship with Rice. How churches like TCPC handle allegations of sexual misconduct and other types of abuse have the potential to promote a better understanding of abuse in the general community and even with other potential survivors who, like Alan Doe, may have put their experiences “in a box” and moved on. How allegations are handled may also signal that there is a level of emotional and spiritual safety present which can reduce a barrier to reporting abuse.

### C. Grooming Behaviors

There are many definitions of grooming. Researchers Georgia Winters, Leah Kaylor and Elizabeth Jeglic have recently reviewed thirteen different definitions of grooming and noted that none of them have ultimately been widely accepted.<sup>104</sup> Their recent paper distills the most common themes in past definitions and proposes a definition that incorporates the best of those common themes:

Sexual grooming is the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection. Prior to the commission of the sexual abuse, the would-be sexual abuser may select a victim, gain access to and isolate the minor, develop trust with the minor and often their guardians, community, and youth-serving institutions, and desensitize the minor to sexual content and physical contact. Post abuse, the offender may use maintenance strategies on the victim to facilitate future sexual abuse and/or to prevent disclosure.<sup>105</sup>

Additionally, “an offender may groom the community by becoming a respected and established member of the community before sexually abusing children. Offenders may also engage in institutional grooming whereby they seek careers or volunteer positions that provide access to children thus circumventing the need to gain access to or groom the child’s family, or exploiting organizational weaknesses to facilitate child sexual abuse.”<sup>106</sup>

Researchers have identified and discussed stages of grooming for sexual abuse<sup>107</sup> which may overlap one another. The initial stage, *selection of a victim*, commonly involves identifying potential victims in the target range based on physical or emotional

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<sup>103</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Georgia M. Winters, Leah E. Kaylor & Elizabeth L. Jeglic, *Toward a Universal Definition of Child Sexual Grooming*, Deviant Behavior (2021), DOI: 10.1080/01639625.2021.1941427

<sup>105</sup> *Id.* at page 8.

<sup>106</sup> *Id.*

<sup>107</sup> Georgia M. Winters & Elizabeth L. Jeglic, *Stages of Sexual Grooming: Recognizing Potentially Predatory Behaviors of Child Molesters*, Deviant Behavior, 38:6, 724-733 (2017), DOI: [10.1080/01639625.2016.1197656](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2016.1197656), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639625.2016.1197656>

characteristics, ease of access because of family dynamics or living situation, and/or perceived psychological vulnerabilities such as innocence, trust, and/or low self-esteem. Alan Doe and Brent Doe shared a common interest in music and Rice's music specifically was part of the basis for their interest in conversations with him and the relationship. They each also had the means and family acceptance of them visiting Rice alone for extended periods of time.

The stage of *gaining access* to a potential victim could be seen in the computer software allegedly sent to Alan Doe, which provided a means and basis for further conversations about sexual matters, as well as private conversations and visits with Alan Doe, Brent Doe, and other youth, all built upon relationships established through TCPC with Rice as a person of spiritual authority and trust. Rice's reported monitoring of Alan Doe's computer for porn also isolated him from his parents and put Rice in the parent role, giving Rice access to Alan Doe's vulnerabilities for potential exploitation.

*Trust development* is the stage which involves not only the targeted victim but also those around them. Rice was seen as a mentor by both Alan Doe and Brent Doe and as someone to admire by their friends. He was given trust by their families with respect to private extended visits at his home without others present, in Alan Doe's case beginning when he was 16 years old.

In the trust development stage, "[t]he offender accomplishes this by befriend[ing] the child, by learning about his/her interests, being helpful, showering the child with gifts and attention, or sharing secrets. These behaviors are used to give the child the impression there is a loving and exclusive relationship between them and the would-be offender. The perpetrator portrays himself as a non-threatening individual with whom the child can talk and spend time with. During this step, the offender adjusts his strategies based on the age of the child he is targeting, the needs of the child, and the child's perceived vulnerabilities. Depending on the child's age this may include engaging in peer-like involvement with the child, such as playing games with younger children or talking about sexual matters with teenagers. The child molester may also use inducements (e.g., money, treats, gifts, fun trips) in order to develop a 'special relationship.'"<sup>108</sup>

Rice's status as a Christian celebrity and worship leader provided a level of authority and respect that increased other's trust in Rice. On one occasion, Brent Doe expressed admiration to Rice regarding his music. Rice responded by embracing Brent and arranging an outing for the two of them to attend alone. Further, Brent Doe recalled that his parents recognized Rice as an award-winning musician and that fact seemed to play a part in their trust in him to take their eighteen-year-old son to his home for a week.<sup>109</sup> Alan Doe told GRACE that Rice's music used to be his "heart language when worshipping God."<sup>110</sup> Alan's trust in Rice grew to the extent that Alan described Rice as a

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<sup>108</sup> *Id.* at 726 (citations omitted).

<sup>109</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 9.

<sup>110</sup> Alan Doe. 1 Tr. 17, 18. "I can't listen to his stuff anymore, but it used to mean a lot to me. And it used to kind of be my heart language when I would worship God. And now, ... no. There's no way I'm listening to that." Alan Doe 1 Tr. 18.

“spiritual father, mentor figure.”<sup>111</sup> These and other examples provided to GRACE convey the level of access, trust, and authority that was gained through Rice’s status as a Christian celebrity and spiritual leader. The unambiguous spiritual leadership dimension of Rice’s role and responsibility toward the reported victims reduced the ability of the reported victims to provide consent, to decline Rice’s advances, and to disclose Rice’s misconduct to others.

Rice’s role as a worship leader and a spiritual teaching leader at one or more retreats created a mentor, non-threatening role that reduces the defenses of those under that person’s authority. Both Alan Doe and Brent Doe describe conversations initiated by Rice about vulnerable emotional and spiritual issues that took place early in each of their relationships with Rice. They each describe Rice confessing to sharing the same struggle that Alan Doe and Brent Doe had each just confessed. This exchange features Rice as a non-threatening, understanding individual that they can talk with and even share secrets with. Even further, the porn “accountability” relationship that Rice initiated with Alan Doe provided a platform to discuss sexual issues. Alan Doe mentioned several times that he believed his relationship with Rice was “special” and that he knew of no other students in TCPC ministry that engaged at the level he did.

As trust is developing or has developed, a sexual abuser *desensitizes the target to sexual and physical contact* by gradually increasing physical contact in anticipation of eventual sexual contact. The pattern often involves an escalation of touch that can begin with seemingly accidental, joking, or other innocent contact that could include hugs or pats, and then escalates to more intentional and extended contact such as back massages and then eventually to sexual contact.<sup>112</sup>

We see this pattern both in Alan Doe and Brent Doe, with opportunities growing out of the ripe environment of normalized back and foot massage in the TCPC youth group culture at the time. In Brent Doe’s account, escalation from a large quantity of hugs, notable to him even over the relatively short period of a week, grabbing of his knee and thigh, then also the initiation and direction of exchanged touching on the back. An explicitly sexual comment such as Rice’s reference to a “spiritual orgasm” could also be used to gauge Brent Doe’s response to overtly sexual suggestions. Brent Doe’s perspective that it was as if they were “a couple of stupid kids,” but Rice’s actual age being in his late thirties to Brent Doe’s eighteen, reveals a peer-like engagement that could be consistent with grooming.

In Alan Doe’s account, a much slower escalation of massage over a period of years that began with the back and slowly moved to legs, up the legs, and then eventually to genital and more explicitly sexual contact. This escalation was allegedly accompanied by suggestive statements such as those in the tent which could be used to gauge Alan Doe’s submission to further escalation but which, because of Alan Doe’s youth and status as someone under the spiritual and leadership care and authority of Rice, could

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<sup>111</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 12.

<sup>112</sup> Winters & Jeglic, *Stages of Sexual Grooming: Recognizing Potentially Predatory Behaviors of Child Molesters*, 726.

be dismissed and compartmentalized in one's mind in order to maintain respect for Rice and normalization of the interactions.

When Alan Doe declined Rice's suggestion to sleep together naked in the same sleeping bag, Alan Doe reports that the next day, Rice didn't speak to him and seemed angry, causing Alan Doe to question the nature of his interactions with Rice and Rice's motivations. "It was like, 'Okay, are you... You seem pissed. You seem mad and disgruntled.' Right? So that whole ride back I'm going, 'This is weird, this is weird relationship.'"<sup>113</sup>

Alan Doe notes, "I look back now, I think I was sitting in my counselor's office last year [and]... had kind of like [a]... moment, right? And was like, 'Wow, that guy was a predator.' And I just didn't really... I mean, that guy was gaining my trust for years and it was weird, I mean, and just masterful. Right?"<sup>114</sup>

#### **IV. Analysis of Church Response**

##### **A. Organizational Culture**

The culture that existed in the youth and college groups at TCPC during that time allowed and normalized practices that blurred many boundaries. The frequent foot and back massages, lengthy periods of touch between minors and adults, and acceptance of activities such as unaccompanied overnights by youth with adult leaders all contributed to an environment where grooming behaviors could be seen as the norm and acquiescence to those behaviors as the cost of inclusion, mentoring, spiritual care and guidance, and even access to celebrities. The degree to which these practices flourished in the youth and college programs exceeded what many would call a reasonableness standard. As Alan Doe noted, "would this pass the public education muster test? Would a teacher ever be allowed to do this? And no way, like that would never be permitted."

An unhealthy culture that existed in the TCPC youth/college groups at the time opened the door for a primary party to abuse, even in the open, thereby inuring potential victims to further abuse by others who could exploit that vulnerability.

"I can't think of another person in my life that could have said, 'Hey, let me, let me rub your back or... And you just tell me about your day.' If that was a guy and I would not have at least said no, if not wanted to punch them. Right? It's like, 'Hey, this is weird. Why you want to do that?' That's strange. A teacher couldn't have done that, a coach couldn't have done that. It was weird. But with Chris [Rice], because Brad [Waller] had sort of made that the ethos of the... That was part of the culture of the youth ministry. And then Chris was part of that. It kind of just made it normal."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Alan Doe 2 Tr. 14.

<sup>114</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>115</sup> *Id.* at 11.

## **B. Policies and Procedures**

The previous report by GRACE regarding Waller discussed a new child protection policy implemented at TCPC in May 2018 as well as the fact that it is unclear what, if any, policies existed during 1995-2003, the relevant time period for this investigation.

As the previous report noted, the lack of such a policy and/or its lack of clarity or enforcement likely contributed to the ability of Waller to abuse, apparently even in plain sight. By doing so, it also then created a level of acceptance of that type of physical contact through massage, potentially blinding victims to the abusive potential, especially via the escalation of physical contact through massage.

## **C. Care for Abuse Survivors**

The current leadership at TCPC responded quickly and compassionately once they became aware of Alan Doe's report and of the potential for other survivors. They met quickly and decided upon a process similar to that followed with the Waller investigation, providing consistency and assurance that the allegations were being taken seriously. Confession and contrition were displayed through the public statements and communications made by TCPC, which offered support and a safe avenue for reporting for any additional survivors. TCPC's Senior Pastor also offered compassion and continued assurance to the reporting victim throughout the process. These actions reflect the Biblical call to care for those who have been hurt. Additionally, they strengthen a sense of safety and trustworthiness, very important elements of trauma-informed practice.<sup>116</sup>

Alan Doe expressed thankfulness for the support of TCPC's Senior Pastor during his report and throughout this investigation process.

Brent Doe noted that recalling his experience and considering it in light of the Waller investigation and the current Rice allegations, "It's been good for me, because I did... I'm not kind of realizing until now when I'm talking about it, but I kind of put a lid on it because I was... I'm not realizing this until I'm saying this right now, but it feels like it could have been a close call."<sup>117</sup>

Finally, one interviewee captured a sentiment expressed in surveys and interviews: "I want truth, that's why I wanted to talk with you guys."<sup>118</sup> TCPC's desire for truth and transparency shows a sensitivity towards survivors and is commendable.

## **D. Reporting to Appropriate Law Enforcement**

The allegations against Rice were not initially reported to law enforcement or to anyone by Alan Doe. Once Alan Doe reported to TCPC's Senior Pastor, the matter was reported promptly to the Kentucky State Police, as the jurisdiction of TCPC. No

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<sup>116</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. HHS publication number (SMA). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>117</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 21.

<sup>118</sup> Don Doe Tr. 10.

investigation has been undertaken by law enforcement due to the current preference of the reporting survivor referred to as Alan Doe and the expectation that the appropriate jurisdiction for further reporting and prosecution would be in Tennessee.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Sexual abuse and grooming in a religious context involves an additional spiritual layer to the damage. This stands in stark contrast to Christ's calls to protect and honor children and others who are vulnerable. When that grooming occurs over an extended period of time preceding the sexual abuse, it can also add confusion, shame, guilt and loss of religious faith. Mental health impacts can be broad and long-lasting. Survivors are often unable to reconcile their religious beliefs with being sexually abused by someone they saw as a leader in their faith or a representative of God.

Alan Doe relates that his experiences with Rice undermined whether he could trust people, specifically in the church, noting leaders "that you think they're great and they've got this crazy secret life." He now realizes that he was a really young during the course of these encounters<sup>119</sup> and "there was an enormous power differential in that relationship ... because [Rice] was kind of like a pastor. He had this giant spiritual influence."<sup>120</sup>

Brent Doe notes: "Looking at it now a this perspective...now that...already it's a little strange. Learning his actual age at that time very much, I think, changes my sort of perception of it. It makes me realize that I've sort of put a lid on this because I knew, some part of me knew something might not be right."<sup>121</sup>

Similar to the Waller investigation, Alan Doe and Brent Doe each expressed regret and shame that they did not recognize the behavior as abuse and/or grooming for abuse at the time. However, both Alan Doe and Brent Doe, along with several other interviewees, expressed the key role that the Waller investigation, including the interviews and report, played in helping them better understand the nature of sexual abuse. Alan Doe specifically, however, bore unnecessary guilt and shame prolonged through two sequential investigations of alleged sexual abuse by a leader in a faith context.

TCPC has chosen the difficult path of shining the light on its own choices and culture, not once, but twice. The intertwining of conduct, relationships, and culture over both the Waller investigation and this one highlights the potentially far reaching implications of policies, procedures, and permitted behaviors within a faith context. They have not attempted to cover sins and given the notable role of Rice within contemporary Christian music, TCPC also bore the risk and public exposure needed to reach potential additional survivors and further the investigation toward truth. This independent investigation and the patience exhibited throughout its time to conclusion, bears out TCPC's diligence and desire for transparency.

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<sup>119</sup> "Man, I was 14, 15, 16, 17 years old, I had no idea." Alan Doe 1 Tr. 14.

<sup>120</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 20.

<sup>121</sup> Brent Doe Tr. 22.

Alan Doe's desire to protect future victims is a common one among child sexual abuse survivors and is emblematic of the compassion and care GRACE investigators observed throughout their interviews with him: "I just don't want this to happen to anybody else.... I just want people to be on guard.... I just don't want anybody else to be taken advantage of like this, God forbid. It's just not right, it's not right. So, that's what I really want."<sup>122</sup>

TCPC's Senior Pastor noted in the Public Statement, "Above all, remember that our God is faithful to bring beauty from ashes, redeeming what sin has laid waste. I could share countless stories of His faithfulness from our last investigation, and I fully trust Him to do the same with this one." One part of God's faithfulness is to love us into flourishing as his children and part of that flourishing can be to open our eyes to previous harms that allow for our own healing, the protection of others, and the justice of our God. That is our prayer for those affected by this report.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

As with the Waller investigation, TCPC and its pastor are to be commended for their attempt to move swiftly, transparently, and with a high degree of humility throughout this process. We recognize that TCPC has adopted new policies and practices since the time period that is the focus of this investigation and that the culture has changed to reflect that. We also recognize that TCPC has taken steps toward implementing many of the recommendations made in the previous GRACE report. However, GRACE recommends that TCPC implement the following measures to create an even safer environment for children and for victims of abuse. Specifically, GRACE recommends that:

1. TCPC conduct a policy audit, with outside experts to advise, in order to address the items in this report including:
  - grooming behaviors,
  - accountability measures between adults and children,
  - the way same-sex attraction, same-sex sexual activity, and same-sex abuse are addressed, which can impact abuse disclosure dynamics.
2. TCPC assure its policies and procedures related to safeguarding and behavioral expectations with staff and volunteers are paralleled in policies and procedures for contractors. GRACE further recommends that TCPC require contractors to acknowledge and agree to follow those policies and procedures.
3. TCPC continue to respond transparently in dealing with issues of abuse and its impact in the church.
4. TCPC leadership and children/youth staff and volunteers attend additional safeguarding training. Training should address topics such as the spiritual

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<sup>122</sup> Alan Doe 1 Tr. 20.



impact of abuse, the effects of abuse in the faith environment, spiritual care following abuse, delayed disclosures, and other safeguarding-related topics. Options may include GRACE or the Zero Abuse Project's Keeping Faith virtual conference.<sup>123</sup>

5. TCPC use this time as an opportunity to review the recommendations in the Waller Report issued by GRACE and assess their progress toward meeting those recommendations.
6. TCPC seek to include on its safeguarding team at least one survivor of sexual abuse.<sup>124</sup>
7. TCPC provide resources, education, and/or training:
  - to parents that help them assess the safety of camps and other children's/youth programs.<sup>125</sup>
  - to parents about how to discuss pornography with their children, monitoring online safety, accountability, and other safeguarding-related topics.
  - youth safety training and clear avenues for youth to report safety concerns.<sup>126</sup>
8. TCPC assure that any teaching or training provided to youth regarding youth sexual behavior includes information on consent and the impact of age and power differentials.

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<sup>123</sup> Keeping Faith is a two-day conference on the intersection of child abuse and faith communities. It covers areas such as policies and procedures, responding to known offenders, collaboration with child protection and mental health resources, the spiritual impact of abuse, and more. It is next offered October 17-18. From the Zero Abuse Project website: "This course empowers faith communities to recognize and respond to cases of sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Included are discussions detailing the impact of child abuse on a victim's sense of spirituality and offering concrete suggestions for working with medical and mental health professionals to assist a child in coping with maltreatment. The course also discusses ideal child protection policies for a faith-based institution, including handling a situation in which a convicted sex offender seeks to join a congregation. A review of various child abuse case scenarios and a discussion on appropriate and inappropriate responses allows for real-life problem-solving and feedback." Additional information can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/keeping-faith-basic-course-tickets-329070106547>.

<sup>124</sup> Some of the best experts in the area of sexual abuse are survivors because of the fact they have endured these painful dynamics. Listening to them is one of the most important components in abuse prevention. As many survivors explain, "if you haven't experienced it, it's hard to understand." This sentiment underscores the importance of asking survivors to lead and allowing their voices to be heard. So many of these "overcomers" understand all too well the dynamics of secrecy, shame, blame, loss, grief, reasons for delayed disclosures, grooming tactics, the misuse of power, deception, and so very much more. Survivors can be incredibly intuitive and are often the first to recognize the danger signs of abuse, and the church is therefore wise to listen to them.

<sup>125</sup> Examples include "Questions to Ask before Sending Your Child on a Church Trip" (<https://www.netgrace.org/resources/church-trip-informed-questions>) and GRACE Live Conversations: Safeguarding Essentials (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzan96Gq1NU>)

<sup>126</sup> Providing youth with these training and reporting options does not replace the responsibility of adults in their lives to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

9. TCPC specifically address expectations for staff, volunteers, and contractors for when and how to provide spiritual and behavioral accountability to children and youth, including when and how parents are included in that accountability.
10. TCPC participate in organized efforts to raise awareness of child abuse, including options such as Blue Sunday<sup>127</sup> or Children's Sabbath.<sup>128</sup>
11. TCPC provide funding for therapy or other support, if requested, to assist Alan Doe and any others who may subsequently report being a victim of Rice through his association with TCPC.
12. With consideration to the wishes of Alan Doe, TCPC determine the best plan for additional communication and distribution of this report, especially considering any ministry partners and others who may provide Rice with access to children, youth, and others who are vulnerable.
13. TCPC develop a plan to pass historical knowledge of this incident to future leaders at TCPC.
14. TCPC continue developing relationships with community partners who work with people and issues related to adult and child maltreatment. Options include local therapists who specialize in trauma and trauma-informed practice, the local Children's Advocacy Center,<sup>129</sup> local child and adult protections departments, and survivor advocacy groups.
15. TCPC assure that the greater TCPC community receive ongoing education and training on issues related to personal safety, abuse prevention, identification, reporting, and response, including TCPC's policies related to child protection and safeguarding and ways the community can respond well to survivors.

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<sup>127</sup> See <https://www.bluesunday.org/>.

<sup>128</sup> See <https://www.childrensdefense.org/childrens-sabbath-celebration/>.

<sup>129</sup> See <https://kykids.org/>.

## **APPENDIX**

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### **A Public Statement from Pastor Robert Cunningham**

**Thursday, October 15, 2020**

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In 2019, our church submitted to an independent investigation into allegations of sexual abuse by a former pastor of our church, Brad Waller. The findings of that investigation tragically revealed that, indeed, multiple students in our youth ministry were abused during Waller's tenure at TCPC.

In response to these findings, I preached a sermon on June 23, 2019, where I said the following to our congregation:

I fear a growing weariness within our congregation with this. "This happened over a decade ago. The pastor is long gone. We've been dealing with this for a year. Can't we just move on?" My gentle yet firm answer to that is no, we will not just move on from it, because the survivors are not afforded that luxury. We will, of course, get back to the normal rhythms of church life, but we will never "move on" from this. It will remain a historical failure of this institution, and if decades from now another survivor or new allegations come forward, then our church will be ready and eager to go right back into it with them.

We are deeply heartbroken to inform the public that new allegations of abuse have indeed come to us, but we are committed to our promise to address them with the severity they deserve.

On multiple occasions between 1995 and 2003, a musician named Chris Rice was hired to lead worship at our youth and college retreats. Mr. Rice was not an employee or member of our congregation, but was close friends with the previously-investigated Brad Waller. Through his involvement in our ministry, Mr. Rice developed close relationships with multiple students.

Last week, one of those male students called to inform me of allegations that Mr. Rice had sexually assaulted him on multiple occasions. While these remain allegations at this point, we are treating them as credible because of the source of the allegations and corroborating evidence we have discovered.

Immediately, I informed the police and called a meeting of our church elders. At that meeting, the elders unanimously voted to once again contract with GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) to conduct another independent investigation into these new discoveries. We are determined to uncover the extent of

the alleged abuse, along with any way our church and the leadership at that time may have been complicit.

Moving forward, allow us to answer some anticipated questions:

### **Is this necessary if Chris Rice was not an official employee or member of our church?**

Yes. First, Mr. Rice was paid to lead music at our retreats, and therefore technically was a hired independent contractor providing services for TCPC. But regardless, if this individual had not been involved in our youth ministry, he would not have been exposed to Mr. Rice. Therefore, it is our responsibility to do an investigation, and to institutionally repent of what is uncovered.

### **Was anyone in leadership aware this was taking place?**

We currently have no knowledge that any staff members or church officers of our congregation knew of this alleged abuse. If any leaders knew or were complicit, we trust that will be discovered in the investigation.

### **Is there more than one victim of this alleged abuse?**

At this point, only one survivor has come to us with allegations. That said, if there are others, we urge you to come to us with that information (please email me at [pastor@tcpca.org](mailto:pastor@tcpca.org)). I assure you that you will find a safe, loving, and confidential place to share your story. If you are uncomfortable with coming forward, but want to help in the investigation, GRACE will once again be creating an anonymous way for you to share your story that only they will see.

Being that Chris Rice is a well-known Christian artist, with wide-ranging exposure to many churches and ministries, will this investigation cover any and all allegations that may potentially surface?

The focus of our investigation will be limited exclusively to our church. However, we do want other churches and ministries where Mr. Rice has been involved to know that we view this allegation as credible, and urge you to look into your own unique situation for any potential harm.

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Those questions aside, I would like to offer a closing word to four groups of people:

### **To the survivor, or any potential survivors of this alleged abuse:**

My deepest apology is reserved for you. I have wept at the thought of a high school student being exposed to this alleged abuse because of their involvement at the church I love and pastor. I am so sorry. I want you to know that all of this transparency, urgency, and energy is for you, and I pray that it will bring some measure of healing to your story. We also understand that this process might be painful for survivors of sexual abuse

unrelated to these allegations. So I want to say, to any and all victims of any and all sexual abuse, we grieve with you, and pray that you will not hold the sins of those who claim to follow Jesus against Jesus.

### **To the outside community:**

I'm sorry that once again a local church in your community finds itself investigating what should never happen at a church. While this allegedly took place over a decade ago, this is still our past and our institutional sin to own. And so we own it. Our vision statement is "We exist for the glory of Christ and the good of the Bluegrass," and sexual abuse is the very antithesis of that vision. It dishonors Christ, and is horrible for the Bluegrass, and so we ask your forgiveness. You deserve local churches that are safe places for the vulnerable and intolerant places for predators, and we pledge to continue to make every effort to be that for our community.

### **To the TCPC community:**

I know you will receive this news the same way I did, heartbroken and devastated. And it's understandable that you will worry what it will mean for the reputation of our church. But I want to encourage you, as I did before, to resist that fear. The theme of our last investigation was "Righteousness Over Reputation," and that needs to be our priority once again. Above all, remember that our God is faithful to bring beauty from ashes, redeeming what sin has laid waste. I could share countless stories of His faithfulness from our last investigation, and I fully trust Him to do the same with this one.

### **To the Media:**

We understand that because Chris Rice is a well-known Christian figure, this investigation could receive a lot of attention. Our leadership has decided to name me as the exclusive point person for all media correspondence, so I am the only one free to comment. Please know that we are trying to be as honest and forthright as possible from the beginning, and there's nothing more that I'm free to say than what is already in this statement. That being said, we are committed to public transparency, so please feel free to reach out, and I'll do my best to accommodate. You can do so by sending an email to [pastor@tcpca.org](mailto:pastor@tcpca.org).

That is all we know to share at this time. Once the investigation is complete, we will follow up with the findings and further public communications.

Once again, I am very sorry. This is but another reminder that no church can commend its own faithfulness, but only the faithfulness of our Savior.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Cunningham

Senior Pastor