

Dear Friends,

On September 22, Maryland's highest appellate court denied the plaintiffs' request for the court to review the lower appellate court's dismissal of the civil lawsuit that was brought against Sovereign Grace in October 2012. The dismissal of this case is a significant moment for everyone involved, and may be the subject of much conversation in and beyond our churches. On behalf of Sovereign Grace's leadership, there are some thoughts I want to contribute to that discussion.

But before I do, I want to thank you for the patience and support you have shown to your local churches and to Sovereign Grace during the last two years. In the midst of an aggressive lawsuit you have faithfully served and prayed to keep your local churches strong and by extension you have strengthened many others. So thank you for your "labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Thessalonians 1:3](#)).

What Matters Now

I realize that the court's dismissal of the suit does not answer the question, "What now?" Let me share with you how I'm responding to that question. First, there is my response as a Christian. Sexual abuse is a heinous sin which causes harm to all victims of abuse and their families. Therefore it is right that we grieve with them, do all we can to care for them, and pray that God would grant them the comfort and hope found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Second, there is my response as Executive Director for Sovereign Grace. The specific allegations made against Sovereign Grace in this suit were those of conspiracy claiming that we covered up abuse. Let me be clear that we deny—in the strongest terms possible—that any Sovereign Grace leaders conspired to cover up abuse as alleged in this lawsuit. There were allegations made in the civil suit against current pastors of Sovereign Grace churches, namely John Loftness, Gary Ricucci, and C.J. Mahaney. I want to be clear regarding these men: We believe these allegations are not true. I along with the entire Leadership Team continue to fully commend the character of these men and their ministry to the body of Christ. In addition, the elders in their local churches continue to commend their character and ongoing service as pastors.

While a response to allegations is necessary, our priorities would be out of sorts if we were only concerned with vindicating ourselves in the public arena.

Yes, we have been the target of misinformed critique in both the secular and Christian media, and more will likely come. I pray that God gives us all grace to respond wisely and biblically. But regardless of the public discourse, we are strongly committed to ensuring a safe environment for the children in our churches.

Moving Forward

I'm personally grateful that Sovereign Grace churches have taken the protection of children and care for victims seriously for many years. All church leaders today should have a heightened awareness of the steps they can take to create safe environments including the reporting of abuse and cooperating with civil authorities to prosecute any abuser. We continue to evaluate how we can grow in these areas.

While it is the responsibility of each local Sovereign Grace church to provide child protection policies and effective care, we want to do whatever we can centrally to serve our churches, particularly in the area of training. To that end, Sovereign Grace has arranged to provide child sexual abuse awareness training for our pastors and leaders at our Pastors Conference later this month. This training will be led by an attorney from MinistrySafe, an organization dedicated to the prevention of child sexual abuse in ministry contexts. We have also retained the services of Love & Norris, a law firm associated with MinistrySafe. They are evaluating child protection policies in some of our local churches, and providing recommendations for improvement. Lastly, we are providing MinistrySafe membership for all of our churches, with their 5-part safety system. This gives our local churches access to the best training and safety measures available.

Sovereign Grace Churches exist because of Jesus Christ and our passion is to make Him known. Our collective efforts to provide safety for our children is not a redefinition of our gospel mission, but a part of demonstrating Christ's love to our children and keeping our witness before a watching world.

Our Shared Effort

Over the past 14 months I have traveled to 31 of our churches and spoken

with many members and leaders. There isn't a group of people in the world with whom I would rather labor in advancing the gospel than you. Please join me in continuing to make our churches places where children are loved, protected, and given every opportunity to hear and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your partnership in proclaiming and advancing the gospel in your communities and around the world. May our collective labors for the gospel bring great glory to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

With appreciation for our gospel partnership,
Mark Prater
Executive Director

Mark Prater is the Executive Director for Sovereign Grace and serves as an elder at [Covenant Fellowship Church](#). He and his wife, Jill, have three married daughters and a growing number of grandchildren.