

AG Pastors Call for Resignations Amid Sex Abuse Scandal

In a scandal rocking the Assemblies of God (AG) denomination, multiple pastors are now calling for the resignation of top denominational leaders. Their demand stems from what they perceive as a deeply flawed response to a sex abuse scandal that has cast a dark shadow over AG's college ministry.

The heart of this troubling issue revolves around Daniel Savala, a long-serving volunteer teacher and mentor closely affiliated with Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, AG's official college ministry. Savala faces grave accusations of rape and sexual assault, with at least 13 men connected to Chi Alpha alleging abuse spanning over two decades.

Adding to the gravity of the situation, Savala and his former protégé, Chris Hundl, were indicted this month for the sexual abuse of two minors. Hundl, an ordained AG minister, had previously held a leadership position within Baylor University's Chi Alpha chapter.

In the wake of these revelations, pastors within the AG denomination have raised their voices against what they view as an inadequate response to the crisis. Pastor J.R. Armstrong of Mauriceville All Gospel Church in Orange, Texas, passionately expressed his concern, stating, "Missionaries have been arrested. A handful of others have been removed from the pulpit. All the while, the leaders of the districts and national office have remained silent."

Albert Cortez of Family Life Assembly of God in Katy, Texas, echoed this sentiment. He likened the unfolding scandal to a dramatic Netflix series, highlighting how Chi Alpha chapters in South Texas had unwittingly allowed a sexual predator to

infiltrate their campuses for a quarter of a century. Cortez emphasized the alarming fact that Chi Alpha leaders had referred students to Savala for one-on-one counseling, oblivious to his predatory behavior.

Mark Forrester, an AG spokesperson, directed media inquiries to a brief statement on the AG website. The statement unequivocally condemned the teachings and practices associated with Daniel Savala. It also clarified that Savala had never held a formal staff position within Chi Alpha, and Chris Hundl's AG minister credentials had been revoked.

The pastors' dissatisfaction extends beyond voicing concerns; they are now actively demanding the resignation of specific regional and national AG leaders due to perceived inadequacies in their responses to the scandal.

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Armstrong specifically named leaders such as Doug Clay, Donna Barrett (General Secretary of the AG), Tim Barker (AG's South Texas District Superintendent), Don Weihe (Secretary of the AG's South Texas District), Gaylan Claunch (AG's North Texas District Superintendent) and E. Scott Martin (Senior National Director of Chi Alpha) in his call for resignations. "I, as an ordained minister in good standing with the Assemblies of God, call on Doug Clay... and others to speak up, take responsibility and, where necessary, to resign. And with some, that will be necessary," Armstrong stated.

Jeff Gravis, a pastor at Central Assembly of God in Haughton, Louisiana, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the need for accountability among AG leaders. He highlighted ongoing investigations by AG's South Texas District and North Texas District, which have faced criticism for perceived lack of independence. Gravis asserted, "If the investigations reveal

that you were warned and did nothing but passed the buck and kicked the can down the road, repentance and resignations are appropriate.

“You failed in your duties, put people at risk and have been grossly negligent in the offices you were placed in to serve” Garvis continued.

The pastors’ pleas for justice and accountability to be maintained within the highest levels of the AG denomination underscore the critical importance of transparency and accountability that leadership must maintain. They point out that AG churches provide financial support to ministers overseeing Chi Alpha chapters, highlighting the moral imperative to prioritize individuals’ well-being over institutional considerations.

“When the institutions become more important than the people, we have a problem. And that seems to be the case today in the Assemblies of God,” Armstrong declared. {eoa}

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