

Bob Jones University Fires GRACE in Sex Abuse Investigation

Bob Jones University has fired an independent firm hired to investigate sex abuse reports just one month before the group planned to release its 13-month review findings.

The university had contracted with Lynchburg, GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) in November 2012.

"Over the last several months, we grew concerned about how GRACE was pursuing our objectives, and on Jan. 27, 2014, BJU terminated its contract with GRACE," the university said in a press release. "It is BJU's intention to resolve its differences with GRACE, and we are disappointed a resolution could not be reached before our differences were made public."

In December, BJU president Stephen Jones announced his resignation due to health concerns, a point made in its termination letter to GRACE.

"This "notice" took GRACE by complete surprise as there had been no prior indications from BJU that termination was even being considered," a press release from GRACE said.

The investigation was led by Boz Tchividjian, Billy Graham's grandson, who said he has no further comment. Tchividjian, who blogs for Religion News Service, wrote Friday on why Christians struggle to report sex abuse claims.

"At the heart of the struggle is a fear that is rooted in the need to self-protect," he wrote. "All such 'fears' are usually masked by a rationale that the reporting of such abuse may 'damage the reputation of Christ.'"

GRACE was similarly fired last year by an independent Baptist missions agency shortly before it could conclude another abuse investigation of missionary children.

Bob Jones is a private Christian university based in Greenville, S.C., with about 2,500 students. The school has not announced whether they plan to rehire or replace GRACE to complete the investigation or conduct another one.