

SBC Condemns Church's Refusal to Marry Black Couple

The Mississippi Baptist Convention is condemning one of its churches for refusing to marry a black couple.

Stan Weatherford, pastor of First Baptist Church of Crystal Springs, informed Charles and Te'Andrea Wilson that some members opposed holding the wedding at First Baptist Church of Crystal Springs.

The couple, who are regular attenders, say they got the bad news just days before their wedding.

"The congregation had said because we were black that there would be no black wedding at the church," Charles Wilson said.

He said it was tough to explain the situation to his daughter.

"My 9-year-old was going to the church with us and how would you sit around here and say to your 9-year-old daughter, 'We cannot get married because, guess what, sweetie, we're black!'" he said.

Pastor Weatherford performed the July 21 ceremony at another church in the area.

"I didn't want to have a controversy within the church," he explained. "And I didn't want a controversy to affect the wedding of Charles and Te'Andrea. I wanted to make sure that their wedding day was a special day."

Meanwhile, Mississippi Baptist Convention executive director Jim Futral called the church's decision a "sad thing."

"It's not reflective of the **Spirit of the Lord** and Mississippi Baptists," Futral said. "It's just a step backward ... it's a sad thing."

Some church members say they oppose the decision. Church member Casey Kitchens said she and others are outraged. She said most of the congregation knew nothing about the decision to cancel the Wilson wedding.

"This is a small, small group of people who made a terrible decision," she told The Clarion-Ledger. "I'm just ashamed right now that my church would do that. I can't fathom why. How unfair. How unjust. It's just wrong."

WLBT-TV is reporting that church officials now say they welcome any race and will hold internal meetings on how to move forward.

The Wilsons said they are speaking with attorneys.