

# < Southern Baptists Apologize For Slavery Stance

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JENNIFER LUDDEN, host:

There's some additional background to this story of two Southern Baptist churches, one black and one white, merging. Slavery had split the Baptist church between North and South in 1845, but a century and a half later, in 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention issued a formal apology for its earlier support of slavery and segregation.

Here's Richard Land, a former head of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, summarizing that historic shift.

Mr. RICHARD LAND (Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission): Well, it says that slavery played a role in the formation of the convention and that too often we had not acted to promote racial equality, and we apologize for that. We lament that. We grieve over that and we repent of it and we ask for the forgiveness of our African-American brothers and sisters.

LUDDEN: The plea also asked forgiveness for Southern Baptists having failed to support the civil rights movement. At the time of the apology, before a meeting of 25,000 Southern Baptist delegates, Reverend Gary Frost of Ohio delivered this response.

Reverend GARY FROST: On behalf of my black brothers and sisters, we accept your apology and we extend to you our forgiveness in the name of our lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Ephesians Chapter 4, Verses 31 and 32, say let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be kind, one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.

Because of Jesus Christ our lord and savior and his great love toward us, we extend

that same love, forgiveness, grace and mercy towards you. We pray that the genuineness of your repentance will be reflected in your attitudes and in your actions. We forgive you, for Christ's sake, amen.

LUDDEN: That was Reverend Gary Frost of Ohio, accepting the Southern Baptist Convention's 1995 apology for racism.

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