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Church's Response to Sting Involving Former Antioch Pastor

Waco, TX (March 1, 2018) -- Ed Espinosa, the former Community Outreach Pastor at Antioch Community Church and local business owner, was arrested today by the McLennan County Sheriff's Office for patronizing an illicit massage parlor.

Espinosa was immediately suspended from his position at Antioch on December 7, 2017, after disclosing to his supervisor, and turned in his resignation on December 19, 2017. Espinosa was on staff with Antioch's Community Outreach Ministry for eight years. Throughout his employment at Antioch, Espinosa passed multiple routine background checks and was never accused of misconduct toward women.

"Our hearts are broken over any and all sexual exploitation of women. As a community we have been committed to not only stand against it, but to assist in the rescue and healing process for anyone victimized by sexual abuse or exploitation," said Jimmy Seibert, Senior Pastor of Antioch Community Church. "Ed's conduct was not only inappropriate but directly against our values and policy as a church and as the people of God. We continue to be committed to helping heal whatever is broken, whether on behalf of the victim or the victimizer, we believe restoration is still possible through Jesus Christ."

UnBound, the anti-human trafficking ministry of Antioch, was involved in the sting of the illicit massage parlors where this crime occurred, providing assistance to the victims involved.

"This is a sad and difficult reminder that people from all walks of life are contributing to the demand for commercial sex and sex trafficking in our community," said Susan Peters, Executive Director of UnBound and a pastor at Antioch. "While we are grieved for the pain of the Espinosa family and all the families impacted by this crime, we also know the pain and abuse that has been suffered by the victims involved. We will not tolerate this type of behavior at Antioch Community Church or in McLennan County."

The women working at the massage parlors were victims of human trafficking. They were made to live and work in unsafe and unsanitary conditions at the massage parlors, were kept under constant surveillance, and were made to provide commercial sex for customers.

"Antioch remains committed to restoring lives in the midst of pain, brokenness and sin. Based on what we read in the Scriptures, justice and mercy must walk together so there can truly be deep change and complete healing through the grace and power of Jesus Christ," said Seibert.

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