

Baptist leader critiques anti-gay comments

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

May 25, 2012

c. 2012 Religion News Service (RNS) A Southern Baptist leader who works on gay outreach has criticized recent anti-gay comments by two Baptist pastors in North Carolina, saying they "show a complete lack of understanding of how to minister to those struggling with this particular temptation."

Though the Southern Baptist Convention has long condemned homosexuality, Bob Stith, the SBC's national strategist for gender issues, said the remarks -- made by pastors who are not affiliated with his denomination -- lacked compassion.

"From the video clips it would appear that both men pastor fairly large churches," he said in a statement released Thursday (May 24) by the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. "I wonder how many people in those congregations were gripped with the fear that their personal struggle might be discovered."

In a YouTube video that has gone viral, Pastor Charles Worley of Providence Road Baptist Church in Maiden, N.C., suggests placing gays and lesbians within a large electrified fence and dropping in food to feed them.

"In a few years, they'll die out," Worley said in a sermon in which he announced his opposition to President Obama's endorsement of same-sex marriage.

Another pastor, Sean Harris of Berean Baptist Church in Fayetteville, N.C., apologized for recently preaching that parents should strike their children if they sense they are gay.

Stith warned that all clergy should be careful of what they say in an Internet age.

"I would especially caution all pastors to be aware that in this cyber-savvy world, anything you say can be worldwide within moments," he said.

On May 8, North Carolina voters adopted an amendment to their state constitution that bans same-sex marriage.