

Alliance of Baptists declines to press charges for theft

by [Mark Wingfield](#) in the [March 10, 2021](#) issue

Last year, the Alliance of Baptists was the victim of a \$20,000 theft. It chose to turn the other cheek.

The Baptist network's executive committee released a statement on social media on February 9 explaining that an employee at a mail-handling firm had stolen the funds. After learning more about the situation, Alliance leaders determined to seek restitution and redemption rather than vengeance.

"It was a grace to see Alliance leadership step back from the brink of forcing a young adult with a clean record into the criminal justice system," the statement said. "We concluded instead that we had two goals: For the Alliance and/or our donors to get the money back and for him to experience consequences that were real but not life-altering in the way a criminal record would have been."

The employee who stole the money "came forward to apologize with obvious sincerity" and offered to repay the funds, the statement continued. "He also agreed to pay the compensation we were seeking from his employer for their negligence in handling our mail."

The mail-processing company and the thief's own bank both failed their duties by allowing the theft to happen and go undetected, Alliance officials added. "His bank reimbursed several of our larger donors directly since its mobile banking anti-fraud security failed miserably in this situation."

"The most grace-filled moment, however, occurred in early December when Paula [Dempsey], Carole [Collins], and members of the executive committee met with the young man and his attorney via Zoom so he could apologize 'face to face,'" the Alliance statement said. "In this meeting, we told him who the Alliance is and how we are trying to stand for love and justice in our world. We heard more about what he had written in his confession and apology that we had received earlier.

"This is a young person grievously aware that he made a terrible and uncharacteristic mistake because of financial pressures in his household. We heard

his dreams of marrying his fiancé and joining the military along with his deep remorse for embroiling his closest loved ones in this situation. We heard his anguish that he stole from a nonprofit that does what we do. We also heard deep gratitude from him and his lawyer for our willingness to allow him to make us whole without involving law enforcement.

“As you can imagine, there were few dry eyes as we ended our time together,” the statement concluded. “We thanked him for his courage in admitting his mistake and his faithfulness in repaying us.” —Baptist News Global