

Radio personality 'Mancow' Muller describes Harvest Bible Chapel turmoil as 'spiritual sucker-punch'

Erich "Mancow" Muller at his home in April 2005. (Erik Unger/Chicago Tribune)

By **Patrick M. O'Connell**

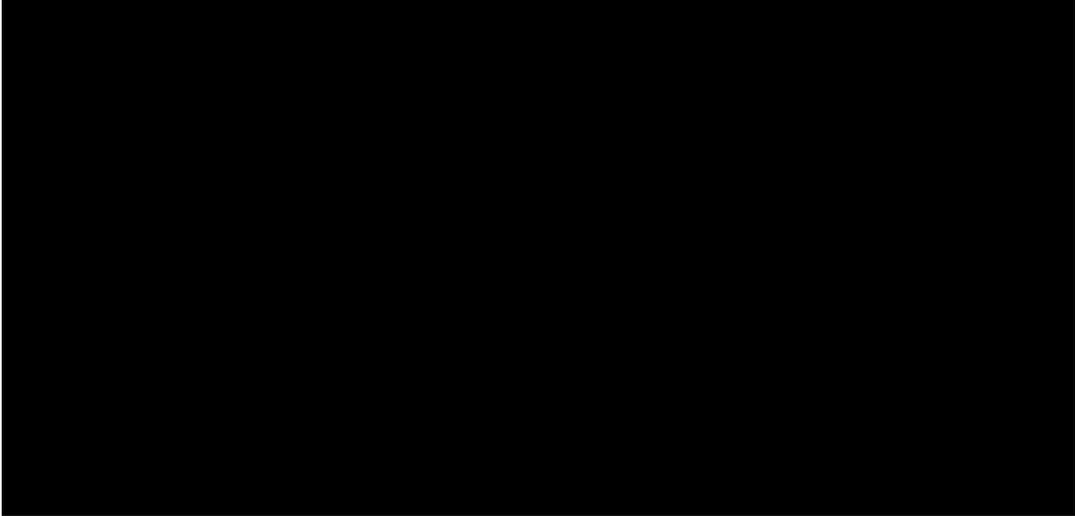
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Radio personality Erich “Mancow” Muller joined Harvest Bible Chapel several years ago because he was seeking Jesus Christ and a spiritual home for himself and his family. The network of Chicago-area evangelical Christian churches and senior pastor James MacDonald, he said, seemed like a good fit.

Now Muller, the current host of the morning drive-time radio show on WLS-AM 890, has played a role in [MacDonald’s ouster from the church](#).

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“This is a guy who is a good salesman and a good peddler for Jesus Christ, and for those of us who were looking for more of Christ in our lives, we became gullible victims in his scheme,” said Muller, who on his show Wednesday morning spoke of his sadness about how the situation deteriorated. “What happens is, he manipulates people to make money.

“This has been a real spiritual sucker-punch,” Muller told the Tribune on Wednesday.

In a message to church members posted on its website early Wednesday morning, Harvest church elders announced that MacDonald had been fired from the church he founded. While MacDonald’s role with the church has been in question for weeks since the mid-January announcement that he was taking an “indefinite sabbatical,” the elders’ announcement cited “conduct that the Elders believe is contrary and harmful to the best interests of the church” that “accelerated” on Tuesday when “highly inappropriate recorded comments made by Pastor MacDonald were given to the media and reported.”

Audio recordings aired on Muller’s show Tuesday morning, in which MacDonald appears to disparage his critics, may have been the last straw for church leadership. Muller declined to specify how he obtained the recordings.

Muller, who once was close friends with MacDonald, has spoken openly on his talk show during recent weeks, voicing criticism of MacDonald’s management style and questioning the church’s financial viability.

Harvest’s spokeswoman did not respond to requests for comment and MacDonald could not be reached.

Muller said MacDonald is a talented communicator and teacher of the Bible, but he realized late last year the senior pastor works to “crush, kill, destroy and silence” critics and is not open about the church’s finances or Harvest’s management practices. .

“It’s been devastating for our spiritual life, it’s been awful,” Muller said. He said he’s currently looking for a

new church.

“I’m still a believer, but I want to go to another church where they have open (financial) books and where they are transparent,” Muller said. “People were worshipping James MacDonald when they should have been worshipping Jesus Christ. I hope people don’t lose sight of that.”

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