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# Harvest Bible Chapel founder's sons resign as pastors



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The Harvest Bible Chapel in Elgin.

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(Rick West / Staff Photographer)

Brothers Luke and Landon MacDonald quit their jobs as pastors of Harvest Bible Chapel on Tuesday, a week after their father, founding pastor James S. MacDonald, was fired.

Luke MacDonald wrote (<https://www.harvestbiblechapel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Luke-MacDonald-Resignation-Letter.pdf>) in a resignation letter posted on the church website that he had always dreamed of becoming senior pastor of the church.

"Even after my parents' ministry at Harvest ended, I was hopeful that with enough humility and time that could still happen," he said. But, he said, it became clear after talks with elders and staff in the last week "that we should move forward to whatever God has next for us."

Luke MacDonald had worked for the church for 14 years.

"This isn't a spontaneous or emotional decision -- it has become clear to us that we (he and his wife) are not the best people to lead in this church moving forward," Landon MacDonald wrote (<https://www.harvestbiblechapel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Landon-MacDonald-Resignation-Letter.pdf>).

Landon wrote that he had started on the maintenance and security staff, worked on plays for the children's ministry, participated in the worship team, worked at Camp Harvest and helped lead student

ministry. He expected to work for Harvest his whole life, he wrote.

Last week, Harvest announced it had dismissed the senior MacDonald, who had founded the church in 1988 in Rolling Meadows. It grew from a couple dozen people to a megachurch with multiple campuses, with about 12,000 people a week attending services. Along with Rolling Meadows, suburban campuses are in Aurora, Chicago, Crystal Lake, Elgin, Highland Park and Niles.

In recent years, critics contended James MacDonald had become power-hungry; had demeaned, mistreated and intimidated elders and employees; and had encouraged the church to take on debt of at least \$42 million.

MacDonald and the church announced in January he was beginning indefinite leave to contemplate his actions. The church announced it was examining its practices and hoping to reconcile with people who had been hurt by MacDonald.

He and the church's elders were negotiating his departure when recordings came to light that the church attributed to MacDonald. In them, he talked of a plan to put child pornography

on the computer of the publisher of Christianity Today magazine, said that the magazine's editor was having an affair with a writer who was investigating the church, implied the woman was mentally ill, and boasted about how quickly he could raise \$100,000 if he tried. WLS 890-AM radio show host Mancow Muller, who had been friends with MacDonald and is a member of Harvest, played snippets of the recordings on his show Feb. 11. The elders cited the recordings as a reason for firing MacDonald.

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