



MARCH 23, 2019 ELDER UPDATE

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To our Harvest family,

This week one of our elders, Dan George, resigned from the elder board, writing a blog post and sharing it on social media. Because this was done publicly, we feel the need to respond to our congregation in order to avoid confusion or give the impression to our church body that his statements accurately reflect the way we've been operating. Today's world of Internet posts and social media require the application of the wisdom written in Proverbs 18:17 which says "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." We know Dan loves the Lord, has a heart for advancing the gospel and he's for the mission of our church. He has different views on how to govern, which is ok. The manner of how he expressed them though was not. It was only 39 days ago that James MacDonald was terminated and 32 days since the elder board was reduced to 9 men. Since that time, many non-elders have been included in elder meetings, and none other than Dan have expressed what Dan has accused. This is not the biblical model of bringing evidence against an elder on the presence of two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19), and doing so sows mistrust and division in the body (Rom 16:17). We thank Dan for his service on the elder board and hope to be able to reconcile with him soon.

So what have the elders been doing in the last 32 days? All of our efforts are toward setting the church on a good path forward under a new church leadership structure and new elder board, with some specifics and focuses here:

Addressing the Past

- **Reconciliation** – the elders are part of the reconciliation process and have ourselves begun meeting with former elders to open doors into this process
- **Repentance** – not only have there been public apologies, but we have begun the process (with much work to continue) of individual repentance to those harmed in our past
- **Finances** – With Walk in the Word no longer on air, through a long process, the elders successfully obtained \$4.1M of cash for the airtime we no longer require. This cash is now with our bank and mortgage lender, ECCU, who will control the usage of this cash. This is a significant blessing from the Lord and his favor on our church.

Changing our Culture in the Present

- **Participation in Elder Meetings** – In the past, elder meetings typically only consisted of elders and the former Executive Leadership Team ("XLT"). Now, numerous staff members have attended, including campus pastors who have been included in key decisions and have brought the voice of the congregation directly to the elders.
- **Agendas of Elder Meetings** – In the past, elders showed up and discussed an agenda pre-determined by the Executive Committee of the Elder Board ("EC") and the former XLT. Now, all elders are asked to contribute to each meeting's agenda and meetings end with an open forum to discuss any new issues.
- **Outside Advisors** – In the past, any outside advisors worked primarily with the EC and the former XLT. Now, in the last three recent meetings, we have brought in outside professionals directly into the elder meetings.

Setting up for Hopeful Future

- **New Elders** – We initiated a completely new process for selecting the next elder board by increasing the number and diversity of those involved in the process. 34 men were nominated through the campus pastors. In selecting the new board, a combination of campus pastors, small group leaders or coaches, and former elders not currently serving on the elder board, all from each campus, will review the applications, conduct the interviews, and make the final selections. The current elder board will have minimal involvement in the selection of the new elders. The names of the recommended men will be placed before the congregation for two weeks prior to being finalized. The plan and priority are to have all of the new elders in place by the end of May.
- **Financial Stability** – We have commissioned both staff and outside advisors to lead independent reviews of our financials, take appropriate measures to manage our current finances, and gather data to set up our financial future.
- **Defer Future Strategy to the Next Elders** – Important strategic decisions need to be made about the future of our church, i.e. a Senior Pastor, future ministries, the degree of centralization vs. decentralization and others. We believe the congregation will trust and support these decisions only if they are made by the new elder board rather than being made now by this interim board composed of elders who have already resigned their positions subject to an orderly transition. It is ironic that the interim elders would be criticized for not making bold, strategic decisions about our church's future before we all transition off the board.

As our time as elders is rapidly coming to an end, we remain steadfastly focused on two things: serving the Lord and this church with integrity in a manner that is above reproach, and to restore the church's trust going forward in the biblically ordained office of eldership. 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 seems fitting to describe our thoughts on leading in this time, and any of the interim elders are willing to answer more specific questions if we can help minister to the body. "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth, we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

The Interim Elders of Harvest Bible Chapel

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