

Randy Williams' Statement to HBC

It truly grieves me and my entire family that our church family and its leaders, both of whom we respect and dearly love, have had to be troubled by those intentionally seeking to damage our church. Worse is the knowledge that my words carelessly communicated from a place of hurt and in the toughest of times have now been used to impugn the healthy Elder governance of Harvest Bible Chapel. For those harmful words, I take responsibility before you and the Lord. I apologize without equivocation and want to be clear that nothing anyone else did in any way excuses those words. I write further here, not to excuse my words, but to give understanding so that you will have confidence that the attack fashioned from my words is misplaced and will not succeed. Recent allegations relate to two out of context text exchanges, from the summer of 2017 and November 2017. After seeking the Lord in prayer and asking for the counsel of several Elders about how to respond, I want you, the flock of Harvest Bible Chapel to understand my heart.

First, and so there is no misunderstanding to the contrary, my family and I love our church, love Pastor James and his family, and have been blessed beyond measure by the teaching and mutual ministry that we have forged together since 2010. My knowledge of our leaders is not cursory. I have served as an Elder and officer of the church, working closely with Pastor James, the leadership of the church, and our Elder board for nearly seven years, at times spending more hours on church work than my full-time job. In that time, I have come to know James as a man of God, who lives what he preaches, and seeks to follow Christ authentically including in his struggles. In short, the man you hear in weekend worship is the man I know well in friendship, and ministry partnership. His words of assurance to me this week as well as his devotion to our ongoing friendship are meaningful to me.

Second, I believe in and ask you to continue to place your confidence in the biblical directives and teaching (1 Timothy 3:1-6, Titus 1:5-9, Acts 14, and Acts 20) given to Elders of the local church. These same mandates (codified in our Bylaws) require Elders to oversee and protect the flock. Not only have we seen that protection in action at Harvest, but to this very day my family and I seek to model submission to Elder authority as a protection provided to us all from the Lord.

Due to this confidence in biblically established local church authority, we are stunned and spirit-grieved that others, not part of our flock, circumvent God's provision for overseeing our church, by promoting half-truths, rumors, and even falsehoods, in what I refer to as "vigilante eldership." Instead of bringing concerns to our Elders, as I and others have done, so those concerns can be properly evaluated and addressed, these individuals have chosen to elevate their own perceptions of "reality" above our local church's clearly defined and biblically directed church governance.

Thirdly, two text messages from me related to my role as an officer of the church and the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Elder Board, (EC) are quoted without my permission. Those texts were related to confidential matters under the purview of our Executive

Committee. The use of one text captured as a screen shot, looks to infer that I am trying to cover up purported mismanagement of finances or other governance issue at Harvest. To the contrary, that text exchange directly involved EC authorized efforts as a duly appointed officer of the church to resolve conflict amongst brothers. Indeed, later (not represented in the text) the parties agreed to address stated concerns the biblical way — through our local church Elder Board. While acknowledging the hurt and concerns of others, it also served to lead toward a God-honoring resolution of a difficult and complex set of organizational matters.

In a second confidential text, I responded to a pastor I know personally, who was the former Interim Executive Director of HBF. This pastor had reached out to me about the late October 2017 Elder Update. The timing of this text exchange and the state of my heart are important for you to know. As you have learned from the Executive Committee in their recent “In the News” post, there was internal dissonance among HBC staff leaders as I represented the Executive Committee in hopes of a resolution with HBF pastors in late summer 2017. At that same time, I was also leading our EC in measures to assist our pastor and leaders in resolving organizational shortcomings and challenges revealed during the HBF wind down. At the camp, we had a meeting where senior staff expressed the belief I was unduly influenced by the HBF pastors and did not work in concert with XLT and the remainder of the EC. Having worked so long on such a complex and nearly impossible assignment, this meeting resulted in significant hurt in multiple ways. Needing time to process all that had happened, I took some time away from the EC in the fall of 2017, and I entrusted to my fellow EC members the resolution of those matters.

In mid-November, after reading an Elder update that had not been written or reviewed by me, and that I would not have approved had I then been fully participating, I let my frustration come out to this pastor in a way that was momentary and does not reflect my heart today. To be clear, shortly after that text exchange, our Executive Committee sat down with Pastor James and me to begin the biblical process of reconciliation between brothers. While that process is underway, as has been referenced in the “In the News” post, agreed upon steps of reconciliation from that initial meeting have not yet been fully completed. The events of this week and the sharing of confidential texts between a wounded, grieving Elder and a pastor whom I thought worthy of my trust complicate efforts to regain full alignment and spread confusion about the entire governance we have worked so hard to strengthen. Again, I apologize for those words, texted out of hurt, and not true to my long-standing and well-known love for our church and all its leaders.

And so, my family and I ask for your prayers. Please pray also, for our pastors and Elders who are working diligently and steadfastly to address any concerns and continuously improve our model of Elder governance. Please also pray for the work of advancing toward reconciliation between myself and all of our church staff as well as between us and our former fellowship church leaders. As my role as Former Executive Committee chairman now concludes, it is my desire to complete these needed reconciliations by year end.

To those bringing vigilante eldership tactics, or worse, inflicting damage to our flock and church as you now have done to me, I implore you to get under the authority of the Elders in your own

local church as fast as you can. Submit your concerns to them, as others rightly have done before you, and let your Elders prayerfully discern how best to proceed. Take your posts down — they are clearly meant to harm and not to build up or assist God’s kingdom agenda. Please stop hiding behind claims of law suit “discovery” and publishing privileged material at the expense of doing wrong or harming bystanders. For those currently or formerly in our flock with legitimate concerns about our Elders, pastors or leaders, we have a whistleblower line that you should use to bring those concerns to the attention of our Elder authorities. Instead of going around Elder governance, chose instead to place your frustrations, your fears, your worries or even your hurt where they belong; solely resting and trusting in local church Eldership as God’s provision and protection for His Church! My family and I have found THAT place to be one of great peace and unconditional love.

– Randy Williams
December 21, 2018