

Return Date: No return date scheduled
Hearing Date: 3/5/2019 10:30 AM - 10:30 AM
Courtroom Number:
Location:

FILED
2/19/2019 1:45 PM
DOROTHY BROWN
CIRCUIT CLERK
COOK COUNTY, IL
2018L011219

HARVEST BIBLE CHAPEL

FEB 16-17, 2019 STATEMENT

to be streamed to all 7 campuses from RM Sat @ 5pm

Note: Please stick as closely to the content as you can without reading the text verbatim from the stage.

RON DUITSMAN

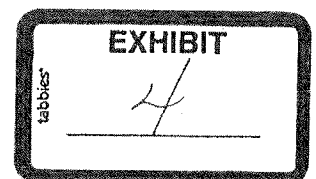
As you can imagine, this has been a difficult week, without question one of the most difficult weeks in the history of our church. Late Tuesday night we announced that Pastor James has been terminated from his position as Senior Pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel. It's hard to know the best way to communicate everything that's on our hearts concerning this, but the leaders of the church wanted to take time in our service to be transparent with you regarding what's been going on, to share in your grief over finding ourselves in this place, and to own our failures as leaders.¹

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 create a very high standard for a leader of the church, who must be "above reproach." Over the years, various former elders and staff have made accusations, some private, some public, about Pastor James and his behavior behind the scenes, and its effect on Harvest's culture. Part of the complexity was that, Pastor James was often willing to submit to increased accountability to the Elders and members of his small group, and we were encouraged by instances of repentance and reconciliation with some of those who had previously spoken against him. Over the last several weeks, the Elders have been carefully considering examples of old and new behavior, and after much time spent in earnest prayer, determined that Pastor James conduct could not be called "above reproach." The elders concluded that there is a sinful pattern of inappropriate language, anger and domineering behavior.

We desire strongly to affirm the powerful teaching, visionary leadership, the generous spirit and faithful shepherding that Pastor James brought to founding and growing Harvest to the church it is today. We want to thank Pastor James and Kathy for their 30 years of sacrificial ministry and pray that over time they are remembered primarily for these great contributions.

Harvest elders are responsible for oversight of strong doctrine, direction and discipline. We must hold ourselves to this standard. We acknowledge failures in direction, discipline and response time. We, as the larger elder board, have made mistakes and we own these. In particular, we believe that it was inappropriate to pursue a lawsuit against some of those outside the church who raised these matters to us, whether or not we agreed with their methodology. We also believe that in delaying to respond to points raised from voices inside and outside the

¹ If Pastor James has made his own statement--and it's acceptable--some mention of that could be made at this point.



church, we failed to identify opportunities to prevent new grievances. And in addressing these matters privately, we failed to communicate with the church in a way that gave clarity and prevented confusion among the congregation. For all of these things, we have humbled ourselves before the Lord in repentance. We have sought His Grace and forgiveness, and we now seek yours. In the best interest of the church, we, as a collective, have agreed to resign our positions as elders by no later than the end of the year. We recognize now that the large size of our elder board played a part in these failures and, as such, we will reduce the composition of our new board to the bylaw minimum, which is 17.

We have also formed a team that we call "Harvest 2020," a small group of congregants, staff, outside professionals, and elders. The Harvest 2020 Team has been set up to take the next several months to complete a deep review of our church to improve our oversight, accountability and transparency. Please pray for these servants as they seek the Lord's help to lead us to a fruitful future. The group will be led by Rick Korte, who will join me on the stage. Rick has a congregant and member of Harvest and has been attending the Elgin campus for 4 years. He is a CEO and has experience with management and leadership topics.

RICK KORTE

Thank you Ron. On behalf of the Harvest 2020 Team, we are seeking to humble ourselves before the Lord, believing that He still has the power to raise this church up for years of faithful and fruitful ministry. The core of the team is pulled together (announce a few names) and we will announce the remaining positions in the days to come. I want to describe to you the steps that will undertake on your behalf. These consist of six major areas:

- *Outside Counsel.* First, we will draw together a team of godly people skilled in matters of organizational leadership, as well as those with experience in walking hand in hand with a congregation through a difficult transition like this one. We have already contracted Lawrence Swicegood of the firm xxx to assist us in these matters. We believe that 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
- *Leadership.* The church is in the process of securing an interim teaching pastor and our hope is to announce that person in the very near term. Harvest has been built on a foundation of proclaiming the authority of God's Word without apology, and we will be pleased to announce a godly pastor who shares that commitment and will fill our pulpit for a stabilizing period of several months. I have also been invited to use my experience in oversight over matters of finances, human resources and operations until long-term decisions can be made regarding the staffing needs in these areas.
- *Operational Structure.* We will take the next several months to review the church's existing organization, governance and culture and make

recommendations to increase oversight, accountability and transparency consistent with the high standards ordained by the Lord in Scripture.

- *Reconciliation.* Reconciliation is still a large part of what is going to happen and Pastor Greg Bradshaw has agreed to have direct oversight of this process, together with [xxx company] specializing in these matters and we
- *Financial Review.* In the past the church has leaned heavily on reports from its outside auditors, Capin Crouse, and the approval of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. However, in an effort to verify that our church's finances are and have been "above reproach," we will hire an independent forensic accounting firm to conduct a thorough financial review beginning in the coming weeks. The church stands ready to see through this financial review, wherever it goes: if errors have been made, to address them, and if confirmation of good accounting practices is received, to build on them.
- *Communication.* We are committed to transparency and open communication with the congregation on our progress. We will update the church on our progress frequently.

In an effort of transparency, we look forward to and would welcome hearing your thoughts, suggestions, comments and questions. You may email this team at Harvest2020@harvestbiblechapel.org. [put email on screen]

CAMPUS PASTOR

Finally, I want to say that the Harvest 2020 Team and the church's leadership share your feelings in these circumstances. We know there are many of you feeling shock and frustration--those feelings are real and understandable. We know there are many who have been grieved by these things over the past weeks, months and even years--and we share your grief. Many of the steps we're discussing have been formulated with tears, together with prayers that God would in His grace get more glory from our failings than from what we might have called our successes.

Harvest Bible Chapel was not founded on a great pastor, or a great leadership staff, but on a great God, and a great Gospel of Grace. We've received the benefit of many years of teaching from this pulpit that the message is more than the messenger, and that God stands ready to respond to those who would humble themselves and repent before him--these are truths from the Word of God, not from any pastor, and we can still rely on them.

We are praying for a restoration to years of fruitful ministry, if that is the Lord's will. As part of the grace we are asking from you, we would ask for two things:

- *Your Patience.* If we want to conduct a deep review of the church's organization, governance and culture, it will take time. We're all wired up to want immediate answers. Please understand that the church is committed to providing you with

answers, but some will not be in hand for weeks or even months. Please give us the grace of your patience with the process as we are committed to follow wherever it leads.

- *Your Presence.* At times like these, I think we're all subject to temptation to give up on each other, or to give up on church altogether--certainly some of the members of the Harvest 2020 Team and the church's leadership have experienced these feelings.

Certainly there are those who may leave Harvest because of this season, and we would pray that they would find a life-giving community of Christian fellowship somewhere else, even as we would hope that they would return to Harvest one day. But against that temptation we would ask that you would partner together with us in humbling ourselves under God's mighty hand, that He would lift us up in due time. Bring us your questions and desire for clarity. Come and join us in prayer and in our efforts to set the church on a God-honoring path. Come and worship and experience the Lord's presence and grace. Let's pray.

Return Date: No return date scheduled
Hearing Date: 3/5/2019 10:30 AM - 10:30 AM
Courtroom Number:
Location:

FILED
2/19/2019 1:45 PM
DOROTHY BROWN
CIRCUIT CLERK
COOK COUNTY, IL
2018L011219

**HARVEST BIBLE
CHAPEL**

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

December 31, 2008 and 2007

FILED DATE: 2/19/2019 1:45 PM 2018L011219

