

September 26, 2020

Good Evening Steve,

If you had read my previous email, I would not have received a Form Letter in return from you saying you were sorry that I was not going to attend the Peace Makers program. I was never invited to participate with Peace Maker Ministries, as I was not part of the cross-section of Members that you chose to invite. Which is fine, I would have responded "no."

Our church cannot begin a reconciliation process until we have an open Congregational Meeting, questions are answered and changes are made. My church has always had a solid reputation and been a beacon of light in the community -- now -- we are repudiated because of less-than-honorable actions taken by the Leadership against a long-time member. Leadership's untruthfulness, inappropriate and un-Biblical actions have brought sadness within the community of believers and caused "head-shaking" of disbelief among secular locals. Leadership must assume full responsibility for disparaging First Baptist Church's testimony.

Christian's who have observed the actions of Leadership and are privy to the situation, believe that apostasy has crept in. When Money, Abuse of Power and Deceitful Practices reign supreme -- rather than serving the Lord and showing a loving spirit toward fellow believers -- the Church will experience perilous times, which First Baptist Church is in the midst. As I reminded you in my previous letter, much of Paul's writing was to admonish New Testament churches because they had strayed. Straying becomes easier with every misstep especially if Leaders pretend that everything is okay and do not take an immediate and forceful stand against wrongdoing and demand Biblical redirection.

You have only been on board a few weeks but you need to closely examine the Financial Records over the past 17 months. Large sums of money (God's tithe) was wasted and ineptly approved -- in many cases after-the-fact -- a total violation of the Bylaws -- by the offending party(s). Several warnings were given by the CFO but they went unheeded. A few examples of deceptiveness and unwarranted spending include: \$77,000 Hospitality (over the approved budget), \$56,000 Photography and Videography, \$300,000+ on the stage and the Austrian curtain removal. Someone authorized a \$250,000 Transition Fund but no one will assume responsibility. ***If this were a for profit entity, heads would be rolling and a Forensic Audit would have been done.***

None of the above referenced spending was a necessity. It showed a lack of business acumen, and integrity on the part of Leadership. Once the Congregation realized that the Bylaws were not being adhered to, Tithes and Offerings began to wane.

- The Congregation began to hear about and see the wastefulness, it became apparent that there was a lack of accountability and no transparency, James's outlandish salary and lack of tithing was exposed, as was the Transition Fund. The Congregation observed first-hand the haughty attitude of Leadership among the Trustees and the head of the BAT. Some Members were "dressed-down" by committee members if they asked any financial questions.
- The Congregation did not adapt to the preaching style or the lengthy invitations. During the invitation each Sunday, those in attendance exited the service in droves.
- Music on the platform went from an A to a C- and the Choir was ripped apart. The Roaring Twenties ***spectacle*** was a dishonor to the Lord and a costly production. Returning Snowbirds came in January and determined that our ministry was in a state of decline under the direction of the new leader and decided to attend elsewhere.

An astute business person (especially a pastor) does not go into a spending frenzy and make changes before they assess programs, the facilities and get to know the people/congregation. ***A Jesus-first pastor should desire renewal of the heart, not the auditorium.*** Unfortunately, those in Leadership (both paid and volunteer) are not in touch with the mainstream ideology of the Congregation and they have limited knowledge of Congregational needs and desires. But more unfortunate -- they not only

are not in touch -- they don't care. We've been told if we don't like their methods and blindly follow their leadership, we may be disciplined or -- we can leave the church.

Not only did Sunday Service attendance begin to decline by July 2019, so did a number of our Spiritual Formation/Discipleship Groups, including:

- Sunday School attendance -- down -- well over 30%,
- Wednesday evening Men's Ministry went down nearly 50%
- Currently, our Youth Groups are almost non-existent. After Pastor Arbogast left, no one was hired to replace him. Prior to his departure, critical long-term programs were discarded for no apparent reason. In past years, these programs reached into our community; kids were saved and there was renewal among our students.
- Tuesday AM Men's Bible Study led by Dr. Bob Barnes has moved to Coral Ridge attendance is 80+. What a miss on FBC's part!!!

Note:

- December numbers for Sunday morning attendance are in error because midweek Christmas Eve services were added in, flawing the total.

The first hire should have been a Pastor to oversee ministries ranging from the cradle through youth and young adults. If parents know their children are being well cared for and Biblically taught, they too will be drawn in. Many families have abandoned FBC due to the non-existent Youth Ministry, poorly administered programs and most noticeably the lack of empathy. There is an absence of compassion, loving care and concern for members of the Body.

This letter gives you a cursory review of the Congregation's concerns. The Bylaws were totally ignored (in fact discarded) for the past 17 months and now you have determined to invoke them by hiring Peace Makers Ministries – unbelievable and very hurtful to each one of us that Leadership wants to discard in hopes that we leave the church. In my case, it's 30 years of serving because past Leaders were inspiring and in the trenches leading with words of encouragement.

We were to have a Congregational Meeting July 19; that was changed; it became a Governance Meeting with the Deacons, BAT and Trustees. It continued for six hours and nothing was accomplished. Concerned Members have asked to meet on several occasions to begin a Biblical process for reconciliation, only to be ignored. The latest proposal was a 3 on 3 to begin discussion for a Biblical resolution to the current situation. Again Leadership basically ignored the request. Peace Maker Ministries does not engage in a process that will bring about the necessary type of conflict resolution that needs to take place. Our church is in serious spiritual, relational and financial situations, due to the improprieties and lack of concern by our Leadership.

Steve, I hope that you will read this and take it to heart. A kind and loving fellowship has been purposely dismantled and nearly destroyed in just a few months. A glib "we're sorry" from Leadership is not true repentance and it is not what our Congregation wants to hear nor will it lead to an acceptable or Biblical outcome.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deanna Wielhouwer

"The Lord has shown you what is good and what He requires of you, to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

Seven things are an abomination to the Lord – a proud look – a lying tongue – hands that kill the innocent – a heart that devises wicked plans – feet that are swift to do sin – a false witness who speaks lies – and those who sows discord among the brethren.
Proverbs 6:16-18