

To: Mars Hill Elders  
From: Bent Meyer  
Date: 01/11/2008  
Subject: Continued disappointment related to media spin.

### *Correcting exaggerated communication.*

01/11/2008

The last communication from the elders to the Mars Hill Members, dated 12/5/2007, regarding my transference of membership and calling for the shunning of Paul Petry, needs correction and illumination. I am extremely disappointed by the way my good faith statements to the executive elders were misused in relation to Paul.

I requested a retraction of the false statements made regarding me in the letter from Pastor Mark and other elders that was released to members in their 142-page response to the "Ask the Elders Anything" members thread. I read the lengthy document carefully and submitted to Pastor Jamie the specific statements that needed correcting. I was expecting an authentic and full retraction of the false statements that were written about me.

In some of the explanation to the body about Paul Petry and Bent, a few statements were generalized and wrongly associated with Bent. This was not intentional, but rather an oversight due to the expedient need to communicate to the members of Mars Hill. Specifically, Bent has not been divisive among the members, or shared confidential elder documents outside of the eldership. He has worked with the elders of Mars Hill to lead the church towards health and unity. We ask for your forgiveness where we may have caused confusion about Bent. To reiterate, Bent has apologized for his actions in a humble manner and is not currently in sin against Mars Hill or the elders. Bent made a positive impact on many people through his ministry at Mars Hill and he is deeply appreciated. We know both he and Joanne will be a huge asset at their new church, and we pray for their fruitfulness and peace. They dearly love Jesus and Mars Hill, which is evident in a letter from them that we have included below.

Sadly, Paul and Bent exhibited similar behavior at the same time and, as a result, the appearance could be that they were acting in concert. But the truth is that both men acted independently and have responded very differently; we see Bent as a humble brother who has received correction and friendship from the elders and, as a result, has demonstrated mature Christian character. (This is from Jamie's letter to the members 12/5/2007)

I am also disappointed that no self-correction and acknowledgment of sin by the executive elders has been acknowledged to me or the members.

As for issues related to Pastor Mark, I would address to him directly, but remember you have put a shield between him and anyone who he has sinned against. Matthew 18 cannot be exercised because of your protocol. So, I am going through you.

The 12/5/2007 statement from the elders stated: "The elders stand behind the decisions that have been made recently regarding Bent, his employment, and his eldership at Mars Hill."

A little background reminder:

On September 30, the evening Paul and I were terminated, neither of us was informed why or on what grounds we were being terminated. We were given no notice or warning – just an e-mail to show up for a "mandatory" meeting that night. After we were terminated, allegations by Pastor Jamie were communicated to you elders late that night (9/30/07) and then later yet to the members – but not to me or Paul. I left the building having experienced a terse termination speech by Jamie Munson followed by a verbally violent rant by Mark embedded with threats of a "full and growing file of evidence" being used against us by him if we refused to resign immediately.

This seemed strange since my performance reviews had been good, and favorable verbal expressions were often given. Equally strange to me was the fact that Mark had never confronted me on a single performance or attitude issue on a one-on-one basis or in any other context, other than expressing his disappointment over my letting Joanne (a woman) host a SALTS summit in my absence. Matthew 18 was never exercised by Mark, Jamie or Scott. If somehow I missed an occasion, there had never been two elders approach me either.

I remind you that the "Termination of Employment of Paul Petry and Bent Meyer" memo dated 9/30/07 from Jamie stated: "Paul and Bent were informed of their termination from employment of Mars Hill Church and given the option to **resign from staff and eldership** or be fired from staff and be subject to a full and open investigation of the elders to determine their eldership status." Employment and eldership were combined, since the issues related to employment were thought to be sufficient to reflect on eldership. I chose going through the process of trial, since I knew of no grounds for termination of employment or eldership. Besides the violence in which it was done and pre-announcement to the church, it was not something I was going to kowtow too.

The action brought against me was impulsive and reckless. It is obvious the accusations could not have been well-founded and thoroughly researched, since all but one of the charges were found to be "not credible." I remind you that "trust of senior leadership" was all that was on the table. I also remind you that Mike Wilkerson, who was my supervisor, knew nothing about the action until I told him. I had a full calendar of appointments scheduled for the next day and days following. No thought was given to the well being of those I was scheduled to meet with. The impulsiveness and recklessness was regarded as justifiable anger in Mark's sermon.

During the elder investigation team meeting, I asked about all the other charges I had been accused of. What was their status? Do you remember?

Pastor Bent Meyer - Grounds for Immediate Termination of Employment

- o Total lack of trust for Executive leadership and insubordination
- o Multiple unfounded accusations from Bent regarding abuse of power, power grabbing and motives of leadership
- o Not following protocol and process for making bylaw comments by contacting church attorney without permission
- o Showing unhealthy family favoritism by establishing son Cameron as spokesman for SALTS recap meeting
- o No communication with elders regarding Cameron's sin and removal of grace group leadership

Do you know of or have you seen a different list with another set of charges related to eldership different than termination?

Pastor Scott's [who led the EIT] reply was, "the other charges were found not credible."

I have been reminded that there is a bifurcation of issues related to employment and eldership. Yet, there was only one list of charges. If the employment charges are still on the table, then is there no accountability regarding their accuracy. Yet, in the investigation, each of the charges were researched. I understand that two elders have been asked, "What were the charges that Bent was fired from his job for?" Their answer: "I don't know." Is it not strange for leaders not to know why another leader is fired?

During my trial before all of you, I asked the question again, with the same reply: all the charges, except the one related to an unhealthy mistrust of senior leadership, were found “not credible.”

All of those statements were made before the 142-page document was written and distributed to the members. Even a casual reading of that document makes it clear that degrading and demeaning language was freely expressed and directed at both Paul and me. Reread Mark’s preface again. His language is quite clear. He must own the content of his characterizations. His communication was public. His confession and repentance must be public also.

I also remind you that his marshal arts analogy in his 9/29/2007 sermon was clearly pointed to Paul and me. If there is any doubt listen to the segment I previously sent you. I have heard it explained away as preaching hyperbola - but that is nonsense. Mark’s denial is a lie. That also needs to be publicly confessed. This one is not going away and cannot be hidden. It is in the public domain. The only thing missing in that domain is my documented account, timeline and correspondence.

“In some of the explanation to the body about Paul Petry and Bent, a few statements were generalized and wrongly associated with Bent.”<sup>1</sup>

I had a telephone conversation with Scott Thomas expressing my dismay at the continuing defamatory, slanderous language being used, reminding him that he said on two occasions all charges, except mistrust of senior leadership, were found “not credible.” He agreed and volunteered communicate a retraction to the members.

Later, I left a meeting with Jamie Munson, Steve Tompkins and Scott Thomas, in which they agreed to write a “retraction.” That is why I have initiated this communication. A retraction is not an ambiguous, blame-shifting statement which ended in placing all the weight and blame on Paul. [Their statements are also untrue of Paul] Paul does not deserve this. I am greatly disappointed again and feel used inappropriately to spin the communications away from the real issues surrounding this debacle.

Those who have investigated Paul's side of the story report a much different understanding than the one-sided version which has been presented by the communicating elders. I have likewise read Paul’s communication and find no lack of confession. The truth of the matter is his confession is a large blanket that covers all the elders, as well as, me. We are all guilty of not speaking up and confronting Mark’s violence, heavy-handed use of position and demeaning characterization of others in our presence. So, I have to conclude Paul is smeared with the same malicious brush to obscure the sin of the senior leadership.

Now, regarding my 12/3/2007 correspondence to Jamie:

To: Jamie Munson, Elders and Members of Mars Hill Church 12/3/2007

From: Bent and Joanne Meyer

Subject: Transfer of membership from Mars Hill Church, Seattle to Grace Fellowship, Lynnwood.

Thank you for your generous expressions of blessing and ease with which you are expediting Joanne's and my transfer of membership to Grace Fellowship, Lynnwood.

I am grateful for the opportunity God allowed me to step into seven years ago to serve, full time, Mars Hill Church members and attendees in their seeking to be authentic expressions of Christ in the community. I experienced the purposeful joy of being in the presence of miracles as various people transitioned from being stuck in various habits of behavior and beliefs toward fulfillment in modeling Jesus in relationships and life. As the last page of this chapter closes a new one is open with delight and anticipation.

The morning after my employment was terminated, I read Rev. 3:1-13. Reading it brought me to tears.

1 This comes from Jamie's communication to the members regarding our transfer of membership – paragraph 3

(I want you to understand it is not my practice to claim promises and hold God hostage to fulfilling them.)  
Yet, Jesus connected with me in a way I could not avoid.

He told members of the Philadelphian church that he was opening a door that no one could shut. Though they were a people with little power, yet they kept his word and had not denied his name with the consequence that others would know unambiguously that Jesus loved them. He ends by signing his name on them, like an artist signs his creation as an expression of his glory.

This drives me into the next chapter with anticipation and longing. Joanne and I are moving forward, believing there is an open door for us to train and spread Grace Groups through out the Northwest Region. I am also moving toward creating a counseling practice locally. In both instances are walking through it (the door) without hesitation. We have no intention of ruminating or living in our past.

Joanne and I are committed to create our future in step and attitude with Jesus, which means genuine gratitude for the chapter already lived and creative anticipation going forward into this new chapter.

Thank you for your contributions to the richness of our experience.

Bent and Joanne Meyer

*“Thank you for your generous expressions of blessing and ease with which you are expediting Joanne’s and my transfer of membership to Grace Fellowship, Lynnwood.”*

I was concerned the executive elders would create a fuss, preventing Joanne and me from transferring membership easily. We both had clear direction to leave Mars Hill and we did not want to be prevented from moving on. Jamie surprised me and I was grateful for that.

The rest of the email was intended to express, truthfully, how I view my years at Mars Hill Church.

I experienced the best years of the church, I believe. I have no idea what the future holds for the Church, blessing or cursing is not in my hands - that belongs to God alone. Jesus has instructed me to overcome evil with good, which is what I intend on doing. The good in this instance is to appeal to you men to bring about honest communication. Hold the executive elders to their own statement:

**“the executive team wants to conduct itself in a way that is full of integrity, walking in the light, under full disclosure.”**

I do not believe they have demonstrated that. Some of you will yet be fired with less disclosure than Paul or I experienced.

I also appeal to you to cease the continual shunning and shaming of Paul and his family and take the decrees related to Paul and me off the member’s site immediately. It would be best to communicate the magnitude of the cover-up that followed the actions taken on 9/30/2007 and restore Paul to good standing in the community.

I grieve with you that this is being played out in the public square so quickly. I reaffirm the material distributed did not come from me and in talking with Paul, did not come from him either.

Realize, if I had been brought into conversation with regard to future employment, a mutually agreed upon transition from employment from Mars Hill would have happened without the trauma to all. Realize also, the responses, including this communication, are framed by the violence that initiated what has followed. The violence is owned by Mark. Here again, in evaluating Paul’s response, you have to factor in the opening salvo. The violence and continuing violent communication from Mark is unbecoming of the office of elder.

When you compare anything that I have said or done, or Paul for that matter, to the harsh actions and communication from Mark, at least use the same standard. I am saying nothing you are not witness to, as well as, the members. I will also remind you that the venues of communication have been yours all along. I have restrained myself, taking the blows, hoping you would act by addressing my concerns directed to you.

To date, there is no indication that Mark has been held accountable for his actions, language, anger and thus his abuse of position and power.

What has been made clear to me from the use of my 12/3/2007 correspondence to Jamie is the ease in which my well-intentioned email was used by Jamie to boil Paul in more shaming, which was deplorably wrong and something I never wanted to be a part of.

I want it to be clear that what I acknowledged to you elders all along was that I used "loud language" in one of the emails to Jamie and I could have met with him to discuss my concern again, which I did not do. My repentance was that I would not use loud language toward him in the future. You all were witnesses to this. I made no other confession or repentance of wrong doing, since there was none other on the table to confess. I did surrender to the notion that, because Jamie was hurt by the way I communicated to him I inadvertently sinned, but all embellishment of my confession and repentance beyond that should be regarded as false twisting of the truth.

Review the documents related to language about my confession, and repentance. The language used by the communicating elders is over-stated, implying the nature of the wrong was far graver than what is true and the magnitude of my repentance was way more significant than what is true. This has been a shell game to fool anyone trying to pay attention from the real issues of sin and manipulation by the communicating elders.

I spoke clearly to the issue of trust, and did not yield. I trust no man who will not acknowledge his own sin and repent in a fashion to prevent that sin from happening again.

What has been demonstrated time and time again in this process? The executive elders believe and maintain a self-righteous position that they are free of sin. They continue to convey the fiction that their deliberations were ethical and concluded accurately on all matters of fact, process and communication, except a "few statements *that* were generalized and wrongly associated with Bent." Again, read Mark's preface to the 142-page document. Jamie has acknowledged making mistakes in the process and stated that in retrospect, he would have presented the charges in writing at the time of Paul's and my termination. That is an acknowledgment that there was a lack of discernment and thought – which has greatly wounded the church.

I appeal to you men to hold the executive elders to their own words, "the executive team wants to conduct itself in a way that is full of integrity, walking in the light, under full disclosure"<sup>2</sup> The communication has often been embellished - misinforming, withholding, and obfuscating the truth. It has been controlled to prevent disclosure - not transparent.

Regarding not trusting senior leadership, I am now assuredly guilty. The spoken and acted-out sin confirms what I spoke and wrote about before my termination. My charges are nothing the rest of you have not witnessed or been on the receiving end of yourself.

I pressed for accountability language to be written into the new bylaws, which would have created the opportunity for structure safeguarding future mischief - but that was not to be.

So, what I am addressing? Not the whether I or Paul should be employed at Mars Hill Church, not even the matter of eldership. I am addressing the violence of the process, the tight control of information, the language of assassination, which presents only one-sided communication that vindicates and obscures the sin of the senior leadership and creates a scapegoat in the person of Paul Petry. I have allowed those who communicate to do so freely without answering in public. They have spoken and written their own condemning words, while I have hoped for better of them. But, the damage control has piled up explanations to explain explanations and in a sense self-entrapment.

---

2 9-30-07 memo - 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph

I remind you I have not released my correspondence or documents, hoping leadership would self-correct and disclose publicly their sin in this. I have asked Scott Thomas to release documents to Scott Golike, so he could understand and determine from himself my status at Grace Fellowship. To date this has not been done.

Finally, Paul has been the object placed before everyone to divert attention from the real issues: behavior and attitudes of senior leadership. For him to show the kind of “repentance” being demanded, he would have to surrender his convictions, become passive, absorb all the blame, and end up being a broken man with a “broken nose” that is compliant to all instructions right or wrong going forward. Be thankful he has shown himself to be a man that would, at tremendous risk to his own welfare, speak and, given a chance, vote his convictions. You might likewise find yourself in a similar place where the one holding the microphone and venues of communications makes the public pronouncements, while you are not permitted to speak in the same venue. Then, the moment of clarity might come.

Mark, I am addressing this email to you first, so you can respond if you wish. If the executive elders wish to respond I welcome that also, but I do want to hear from you, not a surrogate. At this point I would like all responses in writing. After you have had a week to consider this email, please distribute it to the rest of the elders.

I am not out to get revenge or destroy you (Mark). I want to protect the Gospel and mission as you do. I do want you to be accountable for what you do and say. If this is not addressed, you will do the same thing many times over, driven by your anger and insecurity. You will destroy Mars Hill Church.

The forces that are throwing your words back on you, in my opinion, can only be stopped by a show of authentic disclosure of sin, confessed with detail and voluntarily submitted to measurable, and verifiable repentance over a long time span. I mean disclosure of the matters you started related to Paul and me. You placed it in the public domain. Neither Paul nor I did that.

Shows of heavy-handed suppression and retaliation will not work. Spinning information as translucent as miso soup is not believable. You are destroying your own credibility. To continue will only fold back and validate mistrust. If there is a time to listen and trust me, it is now. My concern is that you will not, because you are blind to yourself, the consequence of which will be grave.

Secondly, find a way to connect with Paul so he doesn't have to feel in danger or having to grovel. This is a family that literally feels in physical danger from you. Take a different course, with greater wisdom going forward related to him.

With sorrow,

Bent Meyer