

Paul Andrew Petry
1833 North 105th
Suite 101
Seattle, Washington 98133

**SENT VIA E-MAIL
& FIRST CLASS MAIL**

January 26, 2008

Dear Mark,

This communication is a pursuit of peace and my direct appeal to you in hope we may yet find a godly resolution to this conflict. Please recall the e-mail I sent you as soon as I got home the night I was fired and, sadly, which you ignored:

I would far prefer that we could resolve this as brothers who love Jesus, and even when we disagree in robust discussion, at the end of the day we can go home as brothers in Christ who share a common vision and goal and love each other. That is my hope and prayer. My heart is broken by the strife that has come upon us as of late. I harbor no malice towards my brothers. It is my prayer that this will all still be able to work out in a way that glorifies our Lord and spares us all the anguish and dishonor to Him and ourselves.

My heart is still broken by what you have done and failed to do. Instead of sitting down with me to work out our differences of opinion on open-handed issues, as brothers who love Jesus and each other, you chose instead to terminate me from employment and forced me, Bent, and the whole church to undergo a fiery ordeal that has left great pain and chaos in its wake.

People have asked me why I have remained silent these last couple of months. During the weeks that followed the evening of September 30th, I had a recurring daydream: that I would hear a knock at my door, it would be you, and you would say, "Hey buddy, I am so sorry about what happened – things really got out of hand. How about let's go grab a beer and talk?" Unfortunately, that never happened.

I am writing to appeal to your conscience, to state clearly how I believe you have sinned against me, Jonna, and our children, to call you to repentance and to ask you to make things right – as far as possible. You have greatly wronged us and the entire church by the following actions:

On September 30th, 2007, after a threatening and mocking sermon, in anger, you along with three other elders, Jamie Munson, Scott Thomas, and Bubba Jennings, with no notice or reasonable explanation given, fired Pastor Bent Meyer and me from employment at Mars Hill Church. You threatened us with a "very personal and painful trial" and "a full and growing file of evidence" if we refused to immediately resign as elders. This action, which came as a complete shock, was extremely cruel, senseless, heartless and ruthless. Pastor Bent and I were immediately cut off from all communication (as elders and as members) and effectively cut out of the Mars Hill body of Christ, in a very mean, vindictive, ungodly manner. You impugned our character and maligned our reputations before the church. And, for what? Because Bent and I had expressed serious concerns about the proposed new bylaws? This initial instigating violent action, along with the sinful actions that followed, has brought great harm to me and my family and to the dear people of Mars Hill Church who placed their trust in all of us.

You did not come to me privately, on any occasion, before or after I was fired, to point out any fault or to discuss how I had offended you. You did not even permit me to ask questions the night I was fired. There was never anything in my employment reviews that would indicate anything was amiss in my work ethic or performance.

During our last personal discussion in June, you assured me you were completely pleased with my job performance and only switched gears on Wedgwood (In December 2006, you informed me I was your first choice to be campus pastor there) because you saw my giftings as a "prophet and a priest" and you believed the heavy administrative tasks involved as a campus pastor would stifle other areas of ministry I was more suited toward. You told me that I was "one of the most hardworking pastors at Mars Hill," that you loved me and my family, and you encouraged me to write out my own job description and said that I should expect it to be long-term. I did this with my ministry coach and submitted my proposal to you and Jamie in July 2007.

On no occasion did you come to me with another elder regarding any grievance.

In fact, you were unwilling to talk with me at all to discuss any of this until after Jonna and I withdrew as members - although I pursued you and Jamie by email and by phone.

I still cannot fathom why you acted this way toward me and my family, why there has been such a complete lack of love that should be evident among followers of Christ. Your failure to handle our differences of opinion, wisely and uprightly in the beginning of this conflict, and your unwillingness to discuss them at any point, has led to a whole slew of sinful actions which have continued by you and other elders to this day in what seems to be an exorbitant effort to defend and justify and cover-up the sinful way in which Bent and I were fired and subsequently treated.

I have endeavored to walk faithfully with you through this sinful mess by:

Submitting to the biased process that was crafted to "try" me as an elder. I also submitted a statement of confession and repentance at that "trial" with an explanation of those things I supposed I was being charged with - since my requests to be provided a copy of the investigation findings were not granted.

The "investigation" was more accurately a behind-the-scenes "witch-hunt" in which slanderous statements were made about me as no stone was left unturned to dig up any dirt that could be found - going so far as calling Proxy interns to see if they would share any gossip about my children. This was appalling. Nothing I was guilty of amounted to a biblical disqualification for elders. I verbally repented to Jamie on three different occasions, one of those times in front of all the elders and elder candidates at my trial.

My consulting with Rob Smith over appeals process language for the proposed new-by-laws was done with a clear conscience and with the best interest of the church in mind. The trumped-up charge of "mishandling confidential information" was completely overblown. I asked in good conscience to be reinstated as an elder and to be restored to staff as I was willing to forgive you and continue working with you for the cause of Christ, with a firm conviction that God called me to Mars Hill Church to serve as an elder.

After being removed from the office of elder on non-disqualifying grounds, I sent an email to the elders – a confession and a strong rebuke of myself and all of us for our failure to serve Christ and His church faithfully, pointing out specific ways in which we all failed to live up to His standards as shepherds and overseers, and to strongly exhort you away from adopting bylaws that would in my mind be disastrous for you personally, Mark, and disastrous for the church. I also addressed specific ways you and the other elders had sinned against me and my family and requested a redress of grievances. I sent that letter after much thought and prayer, hoping it might pierce men's hearts toward right actions.

After these gut-wrenching appeals were disregarded, for the sake of peace and because we could not be in agreement with the new by-laws as required by the members' covenant, with great heartbreak, Jonna and I submitted our withdrawal as members on November 2nd, 2007. Surprisingly, after your ongoing refusal to meet with me at anytime throughout this process, you responded within six minutes to our resignation in email (with no mention by you that we were "under discipline") extending an invitation to reconcile our "personal" relationship at some point in the future. This communication felt very impersonal, suggesting our six years of devoted service with you in the church was merely "business." We have never viewed our service to Christ as business. We thought we were family.

Just days later, on November 9, 2007, I was shocked to see the letter you submitted to the church members – a defamatory letter with lies and slander, along with other elders' comments that contained lies and slander about Bent Meyer and me in the 142-page document you published in response to the "Ask Your Elders Anything" thread which appeared on the members forum. Bent Meyer informed you in writing of the errors and false statements in those documents, asking for repentance and a full retraction and correction.

Then, on December 5, 2007, you came out with more pronouncements, stating I was under church discipline, over a month after I resigned as a member, with instructions on how I was to now be treated (even though I was never given notice). Those edicts to church members, which are still posted, contain further lies about my so-called "lack of repentance" and require the church to shun me. You and the elders have continued to escalate this conflict by inflammatory posts and lies to the members of the church - which have resulted in further injury to me, my family and my livelihood - even stooping so low as to use Bent Meyer's good faith effort to leave peacefully, to further impugn me. Again, Bent Meyer wrote and asked you to remove those posts, repent of your actions and correct your course - to no avail. A copy of Bent's letter is attached.

Not even in a worldly organization would leaders treat their people the way Bent and I have been treated. Your actions have not only been a gross violation of Christian ethics and conduct, they would be considered reprehensible even by non-Christians.

I have received counsel advising me to bring a claim for damages against you and other elders who are jointly and severally liable for all the harm (spiritual, emotional, and financial) you have brought upon me and my family, including intentional infliction of emotional distress, defamatory, libelous and slanderous statements, tortuous interference with business relationships, violation of employment standards, and more. You should know me well enough to know that I am loathe to pursue such a path. Nevertheless, I implore you to consider the gravity of your offenses.

At this point I am requesting three things:

- 1.) Immediately take down the updates that you have currently posted about Bent and me on the members site.
- 2.) Replace them immediately with a post (that Bent and I approve) admitting wrongdoing on your part in: the way Pastor Bent and I were fired, subsequent wrongdoing in the actions that followed, including the way our "trials" were handled, and the many false statements that were spoken and published that must be retracted and corrected.
- 3.) Agree to bring in an outside third party (perhaps from Peacemakers International) that we mutually agree upon to walk us through a godly and biblical repentance, reconciliation, restitution, and resolution of this conflict.

Mark, I left my law practice which I had worked 10 years to build, my life profession, to join you in the service of Jesus as an elder and pastor at Mars Hill. I never looked back. Jonna and I were excited to be a part of a growing, faithful, Christ-centered, culturally relevant, multigenerational church, and looked forward to seeing our children and grandchildren grow up there, all serving to spread the Gospel. We still share the same mission.

May the Lord deal with your heart in love and grace as you consider this plea.

I await your written response within 10 days.

Paul Petry