

Seattle, Washington  
October 25, 2007

To the Elders of Mars Hill Church:

With great heartbreak, this is to notify you of our family's withdrawal as members if the following grievances cannot be righteously addressed. You have broken your covenant with us and greatly sinned against us by bringing undue and unnecessary spiritual and emotional harm to our family. You have not acted in a godly manner toward me - foremost in the way the scriptures and the church covenant were violated, the way I was terminated, threatened, my name and character maligned and the malice that was carried out in the way my unjust trial was handled.

I am shocked and heartbroken at the level of animosity that has arisen over these present issues and has brought such harm to our church. As a former elder, I know I share in responsibility for this. And, for this church, I am sorely grieved. I am sorry for how my words and actions have contributed to this painful trial that is upon us. I ask you to please forgive me for all the ways my words and actions have brought offense. I believe godly men should be able to strongly disagree with one another without sinning and somehow we have greatly missed the mark here.

I may have sinned by discussing the proposed new bylaws with member Rob Smith. But, that is not why I was fired and asked to resign. It only came up after the fact during your investigation and has been used to justify my mistreatment. There was nothing in writing that I can find that prohibited me from seeking godly input from anyone as I researched and posited comments of the proposed new by-laws for Pastor Jamie's review. I believe I was maliciously fired because it greatly angered some that I spoke to the church's attorney and submitted suggested changes to the proposed new bylaws which I strongly oppose in their present form.

It appears my conversation with Rob is being blamed for the present chaos. Is the present turmoil the church is experiencing not more directly related to the impulsive actions of Pastor Mark and the EE team in how they fired and threatened Bent and me with no wise thought as to how it would affect this church body? Was it not the posting of by-law information by Pastor Jamie on October 2 in the notification to members regarding our termination and trial that gave rise to all the clamoring for by-laws? Is this perhaps due to the evidenced instability of this church's leadership? Did any of you actually question Rob Smith directly to see who he shared by-law information with? Rob was sinfully slandered, false accusations about his character and actions were made, by more than one elder at my trial. Why did not one of you call the accusers on their gossip and bearing of false witness against a brother in Christ who was not there to defend himself, or to even serve as a witness against me, which the Scriptures require?

My greatest sins, however, are not what I have said and done but what I have failed to say and do. *I failed to speak up to confront and resist the abusive spiritual authority and false teaching about authority that has infected the hearts and imaginations of Pastor Mark, the Executive Elders, and other elders who have bought into it, even though several of you have privately expressed grave reservations - namely, the “domineering over” (1Peter 5:2) which has grown increasingly worse, which is clearly forbidden of elders who are called to serve like Christ, laying down their lives for the sheep.*

The sins I am accused of, “disrespecting and distrusting spiritual authority and improperly handling confidential information,” are they not the sins Mark and the EE team are guilty of because they assume some spiritual preeminence they do not have – not delegated by our by-laws, nor by God Himself? Have they not “distrusted and disrespected” the shared leadership biblical eldership model that is clear from Scripture and that is functionally laid out in our current by-laws? Have they not failed to be open, honest, forthright and willing to hear dissenting opinions about their “confidential” plans to lead this flock, but have instead worked with a heavy hand in secret, taking matters into their own hands to get the control and power they want and believe they should have?

I sinned by failing to speak up months ago when the false doctrine/teaching of “Prophets, Priests, and Kings” was embraced and adhered to as if it were Scripture and utilized to further justify a false/sick authoritarian leadership model. Did not the embracing of this false teaching set into motion a whole string of sinful behaviors, starting with elevating or subjugating and valuing elders based on gifting? Does the Scripture make these value distinctions? My understanding of 1 Corinthians chapters 1-4 clearly negates this teaching and commands us to end all such boasting. Does not God put the body together as *He* determines, commanding us to consider others better than ourselves? And, can “one part of the body say to another part, I don’t need you?” (1Corinthians chapters 12 and 13) Is what is currently being referred to as a “kingly” gifting, as though this grants someone more authority and more importance/value than other giftings, not simply referred to as those having gifts of administration according to 1Corinthians 12:28?

This church started out with a clear commitment to biblical eldership. Where is that commitment now? Is not the way the new EE team was installed, the way it operates, and the new proposed by-laws, a clear shift away from a biblical model of authority and leadership to a corporate/militaristic model where power is centralized, autonomous, and authority is not to be questioned? Are we now to follow a leadership model that more closely aligns with “the divine rite of kings?”

I sinned when I did not speak out earlier this year when five of the duly-elected executive elders were “asked” to step down by Pastor Mark. These were elders that had been voted for and elected by the full council of elders to serve a two-year term as representatives of all the elders with a sacred, fiduciary responsibility to the whole church - and to hold the decision-makers accountable. Was this not a significant change in leadership that required the EE team to provide all the elders a 30-day advance notice? Was that ever given? Were detailed minutes of that meeting ever provided to the Council of Elders

as the current bylaws clearly require? For a time, were there only two men sitting on the EE team, Mark and Jamie? Or were we just led to believe that? Was this not a gross violation of the bylaws and our trust? And, how would another “board” of 5-7 men be able to withstand the pressure that the good men who resigned from the EE team were unable to withstand?

I sinned by failing to neither speak up nor offer help when Pastor Leif and Pastor Mark disgracefully tore into each other in front of all the men – and the way Pastor Leif was put down, disrespected, and vindictively removed as a pastor – with no recognition of whatever friendship he and Mark had or his being a founding elder of Mars Hill Church. This has brought great harm to the church, with as yet no public reconciliation but instead what appears to be a hush-hush attitude which has had many in the church speculating on what happened - breeding gossip and distrust. Has unforgiveness given the devil a foothold to wreak great havoc in this church? Is our church not experiencing great havoc? Will Mark and Leif and all of us not give account?

I sinned by not speaking up that I believe the new pay raises and payscale evaluations were biased and unjust as they reflect the false teaching on authority, giftings and value from the “prophets, priests, and kings” leadership model that has been wrongly adhered to by the EE team.

I sinned by not speaking up about my concerns regarding Pastor Mark’s teaching of Nehemiah. Was Mark’s teaching of Nehemiah often used to advance his own agenda for himself and the church “reorganization” rather than remaining clearly faithful to the Scripture?

I sinned by not speaking up when Pastor [REDACTED] was treated with contempt, slander, humiliation and secrecy regarding his muzzling and financial penalty after he attempted to speak up and confront Pastor Mark regarding anger and abusive power.

I sinned when I did not speak up when Pastor Mark insulted elders for not leading their wives well while he insulted the un-named wives in front of all the elders and elder candidates instead of speaking in private to particular men whose wives he had taken offense at.

I sinned by not declaring openly to the elders information from the church’s attorney, Nat Taylor. He is the church’s attorney. He represents the church. As of today, you men are still officers of the church, directors of the non-profit corporation that is Mars Hill Church. You have every right and should have freedom to speak openly to the church’s attorney. However, Nat volunteered that he had only spoken with two other elders during this process, Pastor Jamie and Pastor Bent; and, that he had also discussed the proposed new bylaws with Tim Belz. In my conversation with Nat, I understood him to say he had nothing to do with crafting the new proposed by-laws. In fact, he was only asked to review them to see if they were “legal” and if they safeguarded against legal liabilities; that he was not asked to give his opinion as to whether he thought it was a wise document that outlined a safe and healthy leadership model for the church.

Nat Taylor confirmed to me that the proposed new bylaws represent a complete philosophical shift away from a shared authority and accountability model (biblical eldership if you will) to a small centralized power structure comparable to a corporation where a few top leaders hold all the power and wealth. That currently, the authority of Mars Hill Church is vested in the full Council of Elders, which may **delegate** that authority to the executives. Under the proposed new bylaws, however, the Executive Elders will no longer have delegated authority from the full council of elders as it is now, subject to election every two years, but becomes its own autonomous power with an indefinite term akin to a dictatorship.

Pastor Mark and Pastor Jamie know why I am opposed to their proposed new by-laws. Have they maliciously determined to silence me? Is this why two weeks before the deadline for the comment period, Pastor Scott Thomas approached Pastor Bent and me on September 11<sup>th</sup> during our lunch and told us that if we were not prepared to support the proposed new by-laws we needed resign? And, that if we did get behind them, “there might be a place on the board” for us?

I love this church. I love Pastor Mark. But if you men don’t see the glaring shift of authority and accountability that is represented by the proposed new bylaws and you choose to pass them, you are giving Pastor Mark the power to do basically anything, including the power to destroy himself and this church with no checks, no brakes, nothing to stop him from making gross mistakes. Is not the way Pastor Bent and I have been treated, the church harmed, all this turmoil, a confirmation of what will continue with this kind of destructive abusive authority?

I am guilty of distrusting the leadership model that was thrust upon us as if the proposed new by-laws *had already passed*. I have been operating under the current by-laws that provide for limited but shared leadership and accountability. I wouldn’t trust myself or any man with the proposed new by-laws because so much power over wealth and property without an adequate checks and balances system in place is dangerous to any man or organization. We are all sinful men. We all have blindspots. That is why the church is to have shared leadership and a solid mechanism for accountability. Things should not just be left open to someone's "discretion" in the future. There should be openness about these issues with the elders and the congregation so *trust is built - not demanded*. The new by-laws have no such solid mechanism. The board that is being proposed appears as nothing more than a puppet board that will still be controlled by the EE team. Is it not a classic case of “smoke and mirrors” to give the illusion there is accountability when in actuality there is not? Any attorney worth his salt will tell you these new by-laws do not contain a valid mechanism to hold the EE team accountable. Period.

The congregation still believes we have biblical eldership. If the EE team is permitted to continue in this path of abusive power and these proposed new by-laws are passed, **we clearly will no longer have biblical eldership.** And, I get the sad sense that maybe you men don't really care - that this is all just legalities and you just want to get on with business. But I imagine the members of this church care. You have a duty to them and to God to whom you give account. You should at least be honest and open about our church government philosophy changing instead of allowing deception on your watch. All the nice postings of members saying they trust our eldership because we are a "biblical eldership" - if they only knew the abusive power structure that has been permitted to run rampant and the weak cowardly men like me who have allowed it. We have not been acting like a biblical eldership and the proposed new by-laws will do away with it entirely.

And, lastly, I am guilty of not speaking up that Pastor Mark's strengths as a leader go hand-in-hand with weaknesses and temptations, one of those being a proneness [REDACTED] I am sure Pastor Mark has heard of these before as strong leaders are often plagued by this. You may think I raise this point in malice, but this is love. If Pastor Mark is able to see more clearly his weaknesses and temptations that come hand-in-hand with his great gifting, he will be stronger and wiser and more effective for the Kingdom. I trust because Pastor Mark seems open and diligent to seek counsel, coaching, and greater wisdom to increase his usefulness to the Lord - he will take a hard look at his propensity toward this destructive behavior and you men who claim to love him will speak truthfully with him about this rather than feeding the sickness.

**These are my great sins before God and His church. I failed in my duties because I was afraid of men rather than God (John 12:42 & 43 ), because I cared more about men's approval rather than God's, because I craved the glory men can bestow, rather than loving His glory. I have been a fearful cowardly man. I should have spoken up sooner. So God, in His mercy, has seen fit to have me stripped, fired, de-eldered and my reputation trashed so now I have nothing more to lose from men who I wrongly elevated to an exalted place. Now, I am speaking the truth for His approval alone. May God forgive me. May this church forgive me. May you men forgive me for my dereliction in my sacred duty to the Lord and to you by not resisting the spiritually abusive power that has taken hold of this leadership. And, now, unless you men rise up with courage in this last hour and defend Christ's church, resist the power that is out of control and deny passage of the proposed new by-laws, and straighten out the sickness of this authoritarian power structure, it will be too late. When the members discover we no longer adhere to a biblical eldership model that provides strong accountability, will they trust this leadership? I would not. If you do nothing, the church will likely limp along in this sick dysfunctional manner for sometime - not unlike Saul, who remained king for years even though God's anointing had left him.**

**You have grievously sinned against us by:**

The un-godly manner in which I was terminated, threatened, my name and character maligned and the malice that has been carried out against me and my family in the way my unjust trial was handled.

The harshness, abusive power, anger, manipulation, and control exhibited by Pastor Mark and the EE team.

Dishonoring Pastor Bent and me, fellow elders and older men, by not walking in humility and understanding of shared spiritual authority. We have been terminated, maligned and castigated for attempting to rightfully fulfill, though not perfectly, our duties before God as elders of this church.

Passive submission of the other elders in the face of great abuse of authority. I am also guilty of this. No checks on Pastor Mark's emotions or decisions. Being easily persuaded to go-along. I understand how this is possible. We love Pastor Mark and I understand the deep desire we all have to receive his approval and be taken into his confidence – and the fear of his rejection.

Dishonest representation of the new proposed bylaws as if the church's attorney had actually had some major role in crafting them and was recommending them as best for the church - when the truth is he was only asked if they were "legal" and provided safeguards for liability.

Malice – Using your power as a club because you were angry that we called the attorney when every elder should have free access to the church's attorney to ask whatever questions they want. Demanding Pastor Bent's and my immediate resignation as elders, without even telling us why, and if we refused, Pastor Mark threatening us with a painful personal trial that he managed to pull off and win after dredging up all that could be found to defame me using abusive personal power to coerce/persuade others

Injustice – My trial was a "witch- hunt" conducted in malice because I refused to resign and Pastor Mark was determined to have me off the eldership. The Investigative task force was led by Pastor Scott who was one of the executive elders who consented to my mistreatment, firing and threatening. There is much more that could be said about this.

Off – mission. Sadly, it seems the mission has become more about Mark Driscoll than Jesus Christ, even though you give lip-service to the contrary.

Complete lack of Christian love, humility and peace-making. I did not ask to be subjected to a trial. The very night I was “terminated,” I sent out an e-mail to every elder pleading for this to be handled in a godly manner, as brothers in Christ. That was ignored.

Lying. Pastor Jamie sent an e-mail to the elders the day after Pastor Bent and I were terminated, stating “I am grieved for them and their families and will contact them tomorrow...” He never did. I sent an e-mail right after I was terminated, asking to meet with the EE team to discuss their grievances with me. They never responded. I only received an e-mail from Pastor Scott informing me that he was leading the investigation against me, which he stated, “This process is not a witch-hunt...” I made attempts to meet with Pastor Mark and Jamie, before the trial, to try to resolve things peacefully – they refused to meet with me in person or by phone. While the elders were deliberating following the trial, Pastor Mark approached me in the sanctuary and said that he was unable to meet with me beforehand, but that “after this business is taken care of” he was going to meet with me and Jonna that week to see if we could work things out. That was 10 days ago, and still not even a call from him.

Gross hypocrisy and Pharisee-ism

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**You have violated the Mars Hill Church Members Covenant, as follows:**

### **Mars Hill Church Members Covenant**

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the church leadership covenants the following:

We commit ourselves to lovingly caring for you and seeking your growth in Christ (Heb. 13:17; I Thes. 5:12). **No, you have not.**

We covenant to provide teaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Gal. 6:6; I Tim. 5:17-18).

**Pastor Mark, Nehemiah was not taught with your best faithfulness to the text but was often used to promote your personal vision.**

We commit that this teaching will span the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-28).

**Somehow love, grace, and humility is completely lacking. Has Pastor Mark sadly become a clanging gong? I Corinthians 13:1-3**

We commit to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, Jm. 2:14-17).

**We have been devastated by these past events that you must bear responsibility for and no one in leadership has stepped forward to help us except for a few half-hearted phone-calls.**

We covenant that your elders and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (I Tim. 3:1-13 & 5:17-22, Titus 1:5-9, I Pt. 5:1-4).

**Have you? Compare yourselves to these lists. Are we not all found wanting?**

We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (Jm. 5:14).

We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).

**It is my opinion that the "prophets, priests, kings" leadership model, the way it has been tweaked and adhered to, is false teaching and has been used to support the sick abusive power structure that has infected this leadership.**

We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; I Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1).

**This was blatantly and grossly violated by Pastor Mark and the entire executive elder team, and by the rest of the elders by not holding the executives accountable to the covenant. Matthew 18 was never followed even after I sought the Executive Elders and Pastor Mark and Pastor Jamie individually.**

We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28, I Peter 5:1-5).

**God's will is that we follow Jesus, doing unto others as we would have them to do unto us. Isn't that what "being on mission" is all about?**

We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church members (1 Co. 11.1, Philip. 3:17, I Tim. 4:12 ).

**Pastor Mark and the Executive Elders abusive, deceptive, and scheming leadership is an example no one should follow. The elders have not fulfilled their duties as church members to me or my family.**

With the guiding help of the Holy Spirit, I, the undersigned, publicly proclaim as follows:  
I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be (Isaiah 5:6; Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 4:25-26; 6:29; 8:58; 11:25-27; 14:6-7; 15:5). I have renounced my old way of life, repented of my sins, asked God to forgive my sins, to cleanse me and make me a new creation (I John 1:9; II Corinthians 5:17). I confess Jesus Christ is the Lord and Master of my life (Romans 10:9).

I recognize that my sin nature has separated me from God and put me at enmity with Him, the object of his wrath. Because of my sins I deserve eternal torment and separation from God, i.e.: Hell (Romans 3:10, 23).

I recognize that there is only one way to God, salvation, the kingdom of heaven and eternal life: Jesus Christ. There is no other way. My redemption and the forgiveness of sins is an unmerited gift of grace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, accomplished by His death and shed blood on the cross at Calvary (John 14:6; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have accepted His gift of salvation bought by His death on the cross, the penalty for my sins, and His resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life (John 3:16-18; Romans 3:23-26).

In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized after I became a believer in Jesus Christ as evidence and testimony of my commitment to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, my Savior (Colossians 2:12; I Peter 3:21).

I have read and understood the Mars Hill doctrinal statement and agree to not be divisive to its teaching. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:7, 17). No diligence in preserving unity and peace here. Only malice and destruction and subsequent division.

I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. My commitment to follow Jesus Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the Sunday assembly and worship services, my willingness to serve where needed, and my involvement in fellowship with other members of the church body through a small group or class (Psalms 119:97; 105:1-2; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25).

I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, spiritual gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Proverbs 3:9-10; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-16; 5:15-18; Gal 5:22-26). This includes regular giving and service to the local church (Mars Hill) that is sacrificial, cheerful, active, and voluntary (Romans 12:1-8; II Corinthians 8 & 9; 12:7-31; I Peter 4:10-11).

I commit myself to the Mars Hill church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to both be and bring the gospel to Seattle by being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only, serving Jesus as my Master and Lord in every area of my life.

**You may be preaching the gospel but your lives in these present circumstances sadly do not evidence it.**

I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-11), by seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17), and by not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28; Matthew 18: 15-17).

**No words to describe this complete non-adherence.**

I covenant to have friendly Christian relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ from other churches, but I will not function in leadership or as a member in another church family (Hebrews 13:17).

I covenant to be self-disciplined, to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline regarding my brothers and sisters in Christ, and submit myself to church discipline if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17; I Corinthians 5:1-5; II Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1-5, 8; I Timothy 5:20; II Timothy 2:25; Titus 1:9; 3:10-11; Revelation 2:5-7, 14-25).

**Biblical procedures of church discipline certainly include fairness, justice, graciousness, humility and love. Jesus scolded the Pharisees: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-25)**

I covenant to submit to the authority of Scripture as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119, II Timothy 3:16-17).

**Scripture has not been followed in how my family and I have been treated. The elders did not submit to Scripture in the way this whole process was conducted, although they may consider it all very "legal."**

Your fellow servant in Christ,

~ Paul