

Mars Hill Members Site

Ask Your Elders Anything - Ask Your Elders Anything

pastorjamie - Nov 01, 2007 - 10:59 AM

Post subject: Ask Your Elders Anything

Dear Members of Mars Hill Church,

Over the last few weeks and months, Mars Hill Church has experienced many significant blessings from Jesus and some difficult circumstances unlike any other in the history of the church. Throughout this process, your elders have been refined personally and also made significant organizational progress in clarifying many previously unknown questions and procedures. Our experience has been consistent with the pruning that Jesus speaks of in John chapter 15. While no doubt painful at times, we look forward to a more sanctified church working together for the good of the Gospel and the fruit that Jesus wants to produce through us.

However, we do acknowledge that our members will have many questions that merit thoughtful answers. We have waited to answer all of these questions until we had reached our decisions, and we are now glad to be able to finally serve you with helpful information. Therefore, to further address the questions of our church members, we are opening this forum for you to post questions for your elders.

The forum will be open from Thursday, November 1, at noon, until Sunday, November 4, at 11:59 p.m. The reason for the short opening is that frankly we have many critical issues that have been placed on hold while we dealt with these issues. We are trying to strike that delicate balance of keeping you informed and answering questions, while at the same time attending to the mounting ministry work awaiting us.

After the forum closes on Sunday night, we will take your questions and craft thoughtful responses so as to do a good job of informing our members. Please be patient and give us time to finish what will be a lengthy document. We will answer as many questions as possible in one thorough response.

Our desire is to provide disclosure and answer your questions in a "fitting and orderly" way so that Jesus might be glorified and Mars Hill might be unified. Therefore, as you participate in this forum we ask you to abide by the following ground rules, out of respect for your elders and fellow church members:

Ground Rules

- **All questions should be asked in this single thread.** Please do not start new threads throughout the members' site or on this forum. This will allow all of the members to see the questions that have been previously asked, and make it easier for us to compile the questions to answer.
- **Please do not attempt to answer the questions in the thread.** While many of you may feel the urge to jump in and answer questions being asked, please refrain from doing so. This forum is only for asking questions. Well-intentioned though they may be, attempts to answer questions will create digressions and disorder, ultimately defeating the purpose of this forum.
- **Any question is fair game.** Please prayerfully consider your posts, and be sure to discern the difference between asking an open, honest question and making a public accusation of someone or something.
- **This forum is intended for the members of Mars Hill Church only.** Please respect the privacy of your elders and fellow members. Do not cut and paste questions in any way outside of this private family discussion.
- **The elders reserve the right to not answer questions.** We intend to provide disclosure and answer every question to the best of our ability, but we will not answer questions that would lead us to sin or anything else that is unhelpful or damaging to the church.

Philippians 1:27 – “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”

Our intention for this forum is to live out this verse. As your elders seek to re-plant Mars Hill Church, we need and desire the members to continue to be active and engaged, working together so that many more people may meet Jesus.

Looking forward to it,

Pastor Jamie Munson, Lead Pastor

mwinslow - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:21 AM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Thank you to the elders for giving us this opportunity. My question is posed to understand how the elders approach the topic of Biblical leadership, not to be contentious or create trouble.

In his book **9 Marks of a Healthy Church**, Mark Dever makes a case for some power being vested in the congregation while still having strong elders. Specifically, he says that the final court of appeal for disputes is the congregation (Matt 18:15-18 and Acts 6:1-5); that doctrinal issues are to be determined by the congregation (Gal 1:6-9 and 2 Tim 4:2-3); and that discipline is to be administered by the congregation (1 Cor 5:4-5 and 2 Cor 2:6-7).

Do the elders find Dever's arguments/exegesis of these passages compelling? Why or why not?

(A summation of Dever's arguments can be found at <http://marks.9marks.org/Mark9/LessonB/Slide2of8> and the next 3 or so 'slides' in that presentation.)

aallen - Nov 01, 2007 - 12:16 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

What are the "old bylaws"? Can members get a copy to compare "the old" with "the new"? Thanks.

modea - Nov 01, 2007 - 12:24 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

I have a few questions.

I have noticed that the "giving" is greater than this time last year but yet seems to be below budget. Also, with the new campus openings expenses must be very high. Why are we not hearing more of an appeal to step up giving?

If I remember correctly, M.H. made an offer of about \$4,000,000 for the "downtown" property. Is that money available or will we be financing a loan to make the purchase?

What is the status and future plans for the property M.H. owns just north of the Ballard Campus?

Pastor Paul was loved my many at Mars Hill and will be missed. Has he been given a "positive" letter of recommendation to aid him in finding future employment in a similar field?

Thank you elders for your faithfulness!

tpearson - Nov 01, 2007 - 12:41 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

What are examples of an unhealthy lack of trust in and respect for the senior leadership, as well as lack of trust and respect for spiritual authority? I am not by any means looking for specifics, but rather examples, so as to more fully understand the seriousness of the charges.

Additionally, the verses that have been referenced in the announcements have pointed to sin being committed. Are these charges considered sin, or are they more about breach of trust and/or not being on mission with the rest of the elders?

Finally, since both of the pastors in question were our shepherding pastors, who now fills these much needed roles at Mars Hill? Who should we as the body be contacting?

mcheung - Nov 01, 2007 - 02:01 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

How is an Elder Investigation Taskforce chosen?

What does it mean for an elder to be on probation? (or how are his duties different?)

How do the elders resolve issues when there is a split decision? (or at least a clear dissent?)

How do you guys distinguish between all the Pastor Tims?

tkapralos - Nov 01, 2007 - 02:15 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Hi –

Like the others who have posted earlier, thanks for the chance to pose a question.

My question is regarding the creation of independent elder boards at each of the Mars Hill Campuses. I personally feel like this is one small step from the campuses being jettisoned from Mars Hill Church in the future.

My question is...Has our elder board carefully and prayerfully considered all of their options before creating independent elder boards? (I would imagine it is extremely difficult to manage a rapidly growing church with thousands of people and composed of multiple campuses.) However, there are several churches in the U.S. that are larger than MH, and I was wondering if the Elders have researched how other 'mega-churches' make one large elder board work? Is this church committed to trying to keep the multiple campuses under the Mars Hill Church umbrella, or are we all looking at being Mars Hill 'spin-offs' some day in the not-so-distant future?

One additional, unrelated question...I recently read in the newspaper that our church has purchased/is purchasing a nightclub in downtown Seattle for the downtown campus. Of course, it is no secret that we want to start a downtown church. Upon reading it in the newspaper, I searched the Members site for mention of the intent to purchase the property, but I could not find any information on it. (Perhaps I missed it.) My question is, would the elders consider finding a way (either on the website or some other appropriate means) to notify the members of the church when it makes public final decisions like buying property? It seemed strange to read about our church making the purchase in the newspaper, and not being able to find any information about it on the Members Site. I think the church should consider notifying members before we read about it in the newspaper.

Thanks to the Elder Board and Pastors for their hard work and leadership. Thanks for considering my questions.

Trevor Kapralos

sstephan - Nov 01, 2007 - 02:41 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Will Pastor Bent be able to come back to his role of shepherding pastor at some point?

tcook - Nov 01, 2007 - 04:05 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

I'm curious to know how the elders view the scope of our mission in light of the scope of our reach. Our mission has always been articulated as being a city within the city to bring Jesus to Seattle, yet our reach through technology gives Mars Hill a global audience. Do the elders view our use of technology (satellite, vodcast, podcast) *primarily* as a resource for our local congregation and our mission in Seattle or for the world community at large? (To the extent it serves both, praise God.)

mlim - Nov 01, 2007 - 05:04 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

As the church is being replanted and each campus will have their own governing body, campus specific ministries and future campus member's site - are there motions in place that will allow/prevent a campus from separating with Mars Hill?

lortega - Nov 01, 2007 - 06:21 PM
Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

There are a lot of people who were under the shepharding care of Bent and Paul, but when they were terminated as employees, it left several people feeling disconnected and unsure of where to turn to for help. I dont even know if this is possible, but I think it would really be awesome if there was a way to connect with all the people that Bent and Paul were shepharding and make sure they were connected with another Pastor or they were doing ok or they were able to find another avenue of help.

cblack - Nov 01, 2007 - 07:24 PM
Post subject:

I am not great at being tactful. I love Mars Hill very much. I love the people at Mars Hill, I love the leaders at Mars Hill, and I love the fact that Mars Hill is reaching people with the good news of Jesus. I moved from Korea to Seattle just to attend and become a member of Mars Hill.

That being said my questions come from a place of loving concern not spite. I am concerned that Mars Hill is currently under a cloud of secrecy and need to know information. I feel like Elders are priviledged to certain information which not everyone needs to know like who is dealing with what sin and how much this person or that person tithes. However in regards to things like the new bylaws I don't understand why the members are being kept in the dark.

My specific questions are as follows.

1. Did Paul and Bent oppose the new bylaws?
2. It was stated that Bent had a lack of trust in Mars Hill senior leadership. Under the old bylaws I thought all elders had the same vote. Therefore wasn't Bent part of senior leadership, so was he showing a lack of trust in the other elders? To be more blunt was he in disagreement with the majority and does that equate to sin?
3. It was said that Paul misused confidential information. Was this information about the bylaws? Furthermore can you please reassure us that Paul did not reveal information shared in counseling.

4. Is Paul still a member? Does he intend to continue fellowshiping at Mars Hill?
5. Under the new bylaws will some elders have more power and if so who will that consist of?
6. Why did Lief resign and then change his mind and stay on?
7. Were the new bylaws approved unanimously?
8. Who drafted the new bylaws?
9. When Bent was reinstated as an elder under probabtion was he allowed to vote on the new bylaws? If so how did he vote?
10. Why expand Mars Hill past Seattle instead of planting new churches?
11. Does Mark have more power under the new bylaws?
12. Under the new bylaws who is holding the elders accountable?

I feel that recent events have shown that Elders are human and can and do sin and make mistakes. If Paul and Bent can sin so can all the other elders. I ask my questions out of a concern for the church body and most importantly out of a concern for the reputation of Jesus Christ. I hope that when these questions are answered there will be a sigh of relief and the whole church will move forward bringing more glory to God and reaping an even greater harvest for the kingdom of Heaven.

In love,
Cameron Black

cblack - Nov 01, 2007 - 07:58 PM

Post subject:

I was told how to read the new bylaws so that question in my original post is no longer relevant. However in light of reading the new bylaws I have a few new Questions.

Who are our executive Elders? Who is our board of Directors? Were any of the old Board of Directors Appointed as Executive Elders?

I don't like to beat around the bush. So I will be frank. Did Elders at Mars Hill change the structure in such a way as to make a power play giving them more control over the church in a way that they could not be stopped and when Paul tried to stop them he was fired? This is purposely posed as a worst case scenario question, not because I believe it to be true, but because I believe that is what all the rumors are hinting at and I for one would like to know it is not true and move on.

chblue - Nov 01, 2007 - 09:04 PM

Post subject:

[As requested before, may we have more specifics of the elders discipline issue in the recent past?](#)

[I would like to know more about how to assist the others, like providing more support during a period of tremendous transition?](#)

[Sometimes people use words in discussion of faith, is there a quick reference book you can recommend for the less-informed?](#)

(I am having a hard time phrasing this) I noticed that in the bylaws, a deacon can be dismissed for any reason, with or without cause. So if one is pursuing becoming a deacon, I don't understand why this statement. It's like weird that a deaconship would end without reason at any time. Would you please why this phrasing?

Thank you.

tmangefeste - Nov 01, 2007 - 10:19 PM

Post subject:

In the spirit of financial discipline and transparency, I would like to ask the elder to prayerfully consider publishing the Church's budget in addition to the campus budget. My question on this point is that in light of recent, and perhaps ongoing budget deficits, I would humbly request that a budget be made available to review and understanding. (I would perhaps clarify that I am not interested in a budget that would show in detail the specific salaries of each staff, etc.. I'm more interested in a breakdown of the financial goals for the local church with our campuses, etc...)

I strive to be faithful to the pledge I give to the church, and I have specific areas of ministry that I wish to be involved in the future with my wife, such as pre-marriage, single adults; and having a budget to prayerfully consider from my church leadership would better equip me to understand and perhaps adjust my budgeting priorities to match the Church's priorities.

A specific example, while I am delighted that we are working towards a downtown campus, it saddens me to see cutbacks in the area of teaching such as weekly capstone classes (not to mention the lackluster participation in those classes, another problem), marriage-related classes, biblical family classes, and regular events to encourage fellowship at a corporate level. (I fully understand and participate in the ground-war through community groups and regular accountability to other members).

dforehand - Nov 01, 2007 - 10:46 PM

Post subject:

There is a fine line between disclosure and gossip and we have been careful to walk in a manner that is above reproach in these circumstances. We did want to communicate the terminations forthrightly but could not speak fully because of the ongoing investigation and disciplinary process.

Now that the investigation and disciplinary process has concluded I look forward to you being able to speak fully.

With regards to Paul it was stated, *The EIT presented the charges they found to be credible, which included lack of trust and respect for spiritual authority and improper use of confidential information.*

•Those charges are, as you know, extremely abstract. God tells us in 1 Timothy 5 that Elders who are in unrepentant sin should be rebuked publicly so that the rest will have a godly fear.

I now have an abstract fear of "not trusting and respecting spiritual authority." but I'm not sure that is what God intended in that passage. Can we know what Paul did so that we might have a fear of committing the same sin?

•The original statement from the elders suggested there were other charges which were not found to be credible. What were the charges that were not found to be credible?

•Are charges that are not credible the same as false accusations?

•Since they were not credible, why were they made?

- Were there repercussions for the witnesses making them?

It was unanimously decided that Paul Petry was in violation of the biblical qualifications of eldership and further resolved that Paul should be removed as an elder of Mars Hill Church.

- Someone on the Ask Anything site said that 1 of the 2 votes was not unanimous. Is that true?
- Was Paul repentant?
- If so, why was he not reinstated as Bent was?
- If not, will he be reinstated if he does repent as Bent was?

I have the same questions as to charges with regards to Bent's investigation and trial as well.

Motion 2: Based on Bent Meyer's repentance, we recommend that he continue as an elder of Mars Hill Church on probation, with details and conditions to be overseen by the Shoreline Campus elders.

- What are these details and conditions?
- Why was Bent not put back on staff?

Furthermore, as stated in our previous announcement, Paul will receive full salary and benefits through the end of December 2007.

- Do Bent and Paul have means to provide for their families?
- What if they do not within 2 months when their salary and benefits from MH end?

Thanks for letting us all ask these questions. I have felt like I've had no where to go for the most part as Bent and Paul were the pastors that I always went to when I needed help. To be honest I am struggling with trusting our Elders. I don't want to, but with where I have been with Bent and Paul it seems understandable to me. I hope that those like me who share in this struggle (and are not being divisive or disrespectful) can be met with understanding and sympathy.

I'd also second Lydia Ortega's question. Has a list of Bent and Paul's current "clients" been requested so that they can be connected with a new pastor/deacon?

bbatts - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:04 PM

Post subject:

1. I second all of Cameron Black's questions.
2. Barring the need to actually call out gossip [which does occur and does need to be addressed], I have witnessed a number of times in organizations [especially churches] wherein the accusation[s] of gossip or insubordination have been used in an evil way to silence what should be considered Godly dissent. An example from scripture would be Jonathan's allegiance to David when his father was seeking to kill him. I have heard the threat of reprisal thrown around for "gossip" at Mars Hill, and it feels very similar to my experiences in the not too distant past.

Can someone please explain whether Paul and Bent's discipline revolved around some form of dissent or what was deemed gossip?

3. If the answer is yes, why is it considered gossip or slander versus Godly dissent?

4. Generally speaking, how do you determine whether someone is gossiping or not?

5. Is it a possibility in your mind that Mars Hill would ever need to be shut down due to it having become an irredeemable system, where, like Frankenstein's monster, it takes on a life of its own? [Think Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac]. If the answer is no, why not? If yes, how would you make the decision to do so?

I believe that's it for now.

Brian

nirudd - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:11 PM

Post subject:

I was wondering what would happen if for whatever reason Mark was no longer a pastor at Mars Hill, what would become of the video preaching? Is someone all ready designated to fill that role, or would the preaching then be passed down to the specific campus pastors?

Mars Hill is where I was saved, and I praise God for all the hard work all the pastors, staff, volunteers, and members put in throughout the years for me to know and love Jesus. Thank you!

Iwine - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:18 PM

Post subject:

Jaime in one of your letters to the members you said, and I am paraphrasing to get to the point, full disclosure was not going to happen because the leadership did not want to fuel sin gossip rumors etc. And from a follow up letter from you it was stated that Gossip and rumors is exactly what happen. According to Gods word we don't sin because of exterior matters but because of what is in our hearts. I know our leadership knows this. However maybe it was over looked in the process. I would like to encourage full disclosure it is the quickest way to dispell rumors. We can't protect people from thier own desire to sin if that is what they are going to do with the information they have. However when we hear and see our leaders courageously, openly with the membership the body of Christ, (standing) and giving account to what took place and why.. then backing it with scripture, it has greater power and clarity leaving no room for speculation or the ability to cause your "brother to stumble" . Trust the Holy Spirit to guide us, direct us, and let us arrive at our own decissions prayerfully and thoughtfully. We are all members of the same body and equally important. When one suffers we all suffer. The Truth sets us free and there is nothing more orderly than Him. I Pray for all the members including our leadership that we continue not only to spread the Gospell but to live it and walk in it and meet the needs of the body of Christ as we mature in Christ. Mark has said on more than one occassion that the " air war we are winning, the ground war we are not fairing so well"

That is easy to see . When we talk about Jesus we sound different than the world but how do we live so differently that we look different to the world? And please don't tell me its by what we don't do. It is exactly by what we don't do that makes us look so much like the world. How do these new changes translate into our leadership serving the body of Christ at Mars Hill so that our members are maturing in Christ and serving one the other and the community's we live in outside the confines of our campuses during the week?

I know this was a 2 part question with an opinion attached. forgive gramatical and spelling errors my spell check doesn't work and to make matters worse I went to public schools.

Thank you for wrestling with these questions I pray that the Holyspirit helps you all to understand that which can be lost in translation. I long for the days where a man can stand face to face with another man and work it out side by side.

Prayerfully his servant.
Landon Wine
Landon Wine

jerlawson - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:45 PM

Post subject:

I have a few questions, a few of them about Article VIII and a few of it's parts: By the way, I want to say thanks to the pastors for making the by-laws available, especially given the details of article VIII about which I'll now ask:

1a. Regarding article VIII, section A and B together:

Since members do not have any power to vote on the by-laws is signed agreement with the by-laws as a prerequisite for membership considered equivalent to having read the by-laws and knowing what they say?

1b. Since per the above member candidates are approved of by at least one current member might this requirement later change to two members owing to the use of interviews of prospective members and the tendency of said prospects to attend the Gospel class, per "the testimony of two or three witnesses"?

2. Regarding Article VIII, section B of the by-laws, do existing members need to retroactively sign that they agree with the new by-laws since all of us have already signed agreement with the doctrinal statement or would this not be necessary until a general membership renewal and reassessment that may happen in the future? If so how soon can we sign?

3 Also per article VIII, section B:

"They must also agree to support in worship, giving, and service, and satisfy other conditions of fellowship defined by the Council of Elders."

What constitutes "other conditions defined by the Council of Elders"? May these be amendments added at a later time? Since signing agreement with a doctrinal statement, and the by-laws, and agreeing to support the church in worship, giving and service seem pretty comprehensive I would be interested in finding out what other conditions may be defined by the Council as occasion provides. How is the determination of satisfaction of the above criteria made?

4. Regarding the waiving of the option to resign in the case of church discipline (Article VIII section C point 5), if a member decides to leave the church while being under church discipline, what procedures may apply in such cases? Certainly a member's privilege to post on this website would be revoked but at a legal and practical level what other disciplinary action could be taken, if any? Could the member be barred from any sacraments (i.e. refused marriage or communion)?

5. With reference to the previous question I'm curious about the relationship of church discipline and Acts 29 churches--If a member under discipline leaves and goes to another Acts 29 related church would it be necessary to ensure uniformity of discipline through Acts 29 churches as a whole and advise other A29 churches to not accept the person as a member in lieu of resolution of the disciplinary issue?

6. Should moderation of discussion forums on this website be a responsibility handled only by pastors and deacons for the sake of uniform capacity on the part of each moderator for enacting church discipline in cooperation with another moderator?

7a. Should church leadership take disciplinary action toward members in cases where members write about the church in contexts other than this website, and would said action be consistent with article VIII, section A which says that membership is a theological and spiritual term that does not have civil effect in matters of state law?

7b. If so would this be a useful reason for requiring that members sign their agreement of the by-laws so as to be appraised of this possibility in the future?

8. Could we be provided with a listing of current pastoral secretaries, aids, and contacts when cases requiring pastoral care and shepherding and pastoral mediation may be required, which is easily accessible at the front of this site? I use this site more than Vox Pop for finding out contacts because it saves paper and for newer members it might be a helpful resource.

9. Could we get a complete listing of rules, expectations and procedures for conduct on this website that is also a prerequisite to be signed alongside agreement with the doctrinal statement and the by-laws?

10. As a matter of precedent, can we get some guidelines as to what constitutes a lack of healthy respect for or trust in the spiritual leadership of the church so that we as members can make sure we avoid making mistakes that have required discipline up to this point, per 1 Timothy 5?

Thanks again for posting the by-laws and for giving members an opportunity to ask questions.

jerlawson - Nov 01, 2007 - 11:58 PM

Post subject:

Is the process of member resignation enumerated in the by-laws? I can see that member resignation is waived or forfeited but it is not explicitly spelled out that member resignation is in any way parallel or comparable to elder resignation. Can we get some clarification about that? Is it possible that barring any active church discipline a member may resign membership at any time for any reason? Since pastors and elders are at will would it be safe to guess that membership is also at will?

I notice people seem antsy about multiple campus that some fear may break way from Mars Hill. Doesn't the current form of the by-laws apply only to the executive body and decisions it makes on behalf of the congregation as a whole and not necessarily to individual campuses? Does this mean that individual campuses will require their own by-laws as subsidiary organizations in a way comparable to the national and then territorial subdivisions of The Salvation Army, for instance?

Is Mars Hill as a multiple campus church, in seeking independent elder boards for individual campuses, moving toward becoming a denomination, and is there any denominational functionality in the relationship between Mars Hill and Acts 29 since Scott Thomas is an executive elder and also director of the Acts 29 network? I ask all this because it seems like at some level we already are some kind of denomination and I sometimes feel like I'm the only member who isn't a little scared by that for some reason.

nwaltz - Nov 02, 2007 - 05:59 AM

Post subject:

I echo the question about who exactly the Executive Elders are and who is on the Board of Directors (was that in the bylaws? I think I need to look again). I'm also curious why the decision was made for the BoD to serve 2 year terms, but the Exe. Elders serve indefinitely? Why no term limit for the Exe Elders?

droraback - Nov 02, 2007 - 07:43 AM

Post subject:

Does Mars Hill have any kind of plan for major catastrophies such as fires, flood, earthquakes, terrorism, etc? I would imagine that a fair number of people might come to Mars Hill to seek solace and help in case of some kind catastrophe happened and I was just curious if (in the case one or more of the campuses were still standing) there had been any thought put into how to organize relief in a proactive way. If so, is there ways to communicate that to the Members so we know what we can do in case of disasters and how we can help and/or get help?

Where does Mars Hill see itself in five and ten years from now?

When Hillary is president, should we flat out refuse The Mark and face persecution or is it biblical to work in the Christian underground movement that will make fake marks so that we can still buy and sell without sinning?

jabolafya - Nov 02, 2007 - 08:09 AM

Post subject:

Going forward, will there be accountability, discipleship, follow up provided for deacons under their overseeing pastors? Some ministries are not campus specific (at least now anyway), so the deacons & leaders who serve in those areas sometimes get lost in the shuffle. It seems a shame to wait until those people are in crisis before they are attended to, and regular "checking in" by the pastors who oversee the leaders just makes sense to ensure the overall health of the body. It seems logical to me that the flow would go something like:

Elders take care of other elders.

Elders take care of their deacons.

Deacons take care of their ministry leads and assigned community group leaders.

Community Group leaders and ministry leads take care of those in their groups.

Community groups take care of new attendees.

jerlawson - Nov 02, 2007 - 08:29 AM

Post subject:

As a matter of procedural clarity is it possible that the member directory can more accurately reflect membership and not just internet access to this site? While Bent has been retained as an elder pending a probationary period he is not listed in the current members' directory, and neither is Paul Petry or anyone in his family. I understand that access to this site may be restricted during disciplinary procedures but a members' absence from the members' directory makes it unclear if that absence is because a member has withdrawn membership; is undergoing church discipline; or has been expelled from the church body.

So as to prevent any misunderstanding or grounds for speculation regarding a person's absence from the directory is it possible to restrict access to the member site in a way that does not also eliminate them from the member directory? This would seem like a good idea so as to prevent the possibility of speculation as to why a member's name is missing. Since Pastor Jamie has written, if I understood him correctly, that Paul and Bent are restored members I hope the member directory can reflect that as soon as practically possible.

dfinefrock - Nov 02, 2007 - 08:44 AM

Post subject:

I remember when we held high the statement that Jesus was the senior pastor of our church and that below Jesus were all the elders on an equal level, as in, no elder having senior authority at Mars Hill Church.

Did we change this? Since one of the accusations was "lack of trust in and respect for the senior leadership of Mars Hill Church", that would have to refer to Jesus unless this aspect of our leadership structure was quietly changed and we no longer see Jesus as the senior leadership of Mars Hill Church.

That is, unless "senior leadership of Mars Hill Church" refers to all of the elders as a whole. But this would be a strange thing to say since both Bent and Paul were both elders at the time they supposedly did something wrong, and since, again, it implies that Jesus is not the senior leadership of Mars Hill Church. Maybe we can get some clarification as to the definition of "senior leadership of Mars Hill Church".

Secondly, in case it's not obvious, I should probably point out what I (and probably many people) are probably feeling. Bent and Paul are two of the most trustworthy and Godly men I have ever met. Suddenly they are removed from eldership with almost no explanation, and when an explanation finally

comes, it is vague almost to the point of uselessness. So on one hand I have two guys I trust entirely as spiritual leaders without a doubt (and I still do), and on the other hand I have a vague curtain of secrecy laying down a heavy hand on these two brothers and demanding absolute silence and obedience from all members.

I've worked with Paul in particular for a long time and I know him and trust his character. I have a "known" and an "unknown". The "known" is Paul's character. The "unknown" is the details of what happened and the validity of the decision. One is a positive and holds weight, and the other is unknown and holds no weight, and so naturally I am going to lean towards the positive that holds weight. That leaves me feeling like "I'm not sure what happened here, but I wonder if I would have agreed with Paul..." I hope that makes sense.

The entire board of elders is made up of humans with potential to sin, just like the rest of us. This is why our leadership structure was set up to have all elders on an even playing field in terms of power and authority so the winner was always majority vote rather than one or two people's decision. The scenario implied in the vague explanation given sounds like Paul and Bent disagreed with an elder (or elders) that held more authority than they did, and the final decision was not "who is right" but "which of these two parties has more power in this leadership structure?" That makes me suspicious, and combined with how much I know of Paul & Bent's character, you're going to have a hard time convincing me they did anything wrong. If this is not what happened, I think someone needs to clarify the matter to eliminate this kind of speculation.

And you could say "I don't care if you're convinced because this is not a democracy", and I've heard that more than once on various issues in the past. But the bottom line is, my ultimate devotion and obedience is to Christ, and I wholly submit to the leadership of Mars Hill Church only to the extent that I see the leadership aligned with Christ and biblically right behavior. I think you'll agree that, as a Christian, that's my job. I need to be constantly keeping tabs on whether or not my leadership is aligned with Jesus. You can't simply say "We are the leaders appointed by Christ and therefore you must always obey unconditionally without question" because, as you have to agree, even the elders are prone to sin and wrong behavior even to the point of needing to be dismissed.

The church should not be ruled by majority vote in the congregation for reasons Mark laid out in the Church Leadership booklet, and that's not what I'm suggesting. But the congregation does need enough information to determine whether their church is following Jesus, for the sake of each and every person's individual walk with Christ. If you say "obey" and don't tell me anything, then I'm no longer following Christ. I'm just following *you* in assumption that *you're* following Christ but I have no visibility of that, and so 100% of my trust is laid in humans rather than Christ. We don't want that to be the case, so we do need to know what's going on so we can be assured that the leadership truly is aligned with Jesus. For me personally, I need full disclosure in order for me to continue serving at Mars Hill with a clear conscience.

Nothing would make me happier than to have full confidence in the leadership team and to know that no one elder has more voting power or political influence over other elders. If we can get that cleared up and have actual details of what happened with Bent & Paul, then it's all sunshine and daisies for me. Thanks.

smacgillivray - Nov 02, 2007 - 09:09 AM

Post subject:

I have avoided speaking about the whole Paul and Bent subject out of fear of gossip, but what Doug Finefrock just said is exactly what I've been feeling. On one hand, I don't want to know what's going on in this situation simply for the sake of satisfying my own curiosity. On the other hand, "we know best" isn't the answer I've been looking for either.

When Leif resigned and was reinstated, we were given full disclosure, so much so that I was actually surprised to read about it, since I had no idea that anything had happened before I read it. At first, I felt a little like a Peeping Tom, seeing inside the window of someone else's house when I had no intention of

looking in the first place. I became encouraged, however, knowing that our church was so transparent. One of the things I have always appreciated about MH is the openness of the elders to expose their own sin, in the same manner that apostle Paul was willing to do in his letters. When I have heard Mark or Tim or Leif or any of my brothers up there on stage talking about their own struggles, I find encouragement that I am not alone. It just has seemed very odd to me how these most recent events have been handled.

jerlawson - Nov 02, 2007 - 09:11 AM

Post subject:

I want to throw in a 'ditto' to Mike O'Dea's question about the property north of the Ballard campus. Didn't we have a building campaign affiliated with that at one point? I forgot that we had that thing. What are the plans for that facility now?

cfrancisco - Nov 02, 2007 - 10:03 AM

Post subject:

I have been feeling much the same way as Doug described and have many of the same questions. I know that many of us at MH who have known these men for quite some time feel the same way and have the same questions. While i respect the privacy of the families involved there are still many unanswered and important questions. Some clarity on the matters would be greatly appreciated.

toakerson - Nov 02, 2007 - 10:35 AM

Post subject:

Doug put into words exactly what I have been thinking too. Thanks Doug. Thank you elders for allowing us this opportunity to have our questions answered.
Kristin

ddekoekkoek - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:07 AM

Post subject:

Doug's words are a good explanation of my concerns as well.

mwinslow - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:33 AM

Post subject:

Was any thought given to seeking the counsel of members when deciding to spend \$4 million on a new building in Belltown? If not, why not?

zmalm - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:51 AM

Post subject:

I'll join the "thanks, Doug" gang, and wish to express my gratitude for the creation of this forum. I've felt uneasy, but unable to articulate it, for a while now. Doug summed up my view, particularly when he said, "But the bottom line is, my ultimate devotion and obedience is to Christ, and I wholly submit to the leadership of Mars Hill Church only to the extent that I see the leadership aligned with Christ and biblically right behavior." As Mars Hill has grown, our visibility has attracted criticism, but I don't think all the criticism has been unwarranted, and I am much more interested in defending Christ than defending Mars Hill Church. Maybe it's because I've never attended a church that faced attacks that weren't just general attacks on Christianity.

I think a lot of people are weary of the baggage that comes with telling someone you are a member of this specific church. Before we were on "top ten" lists (which always seem kinda ridiculous to me), I used to tell everyone I knew that this church changes lives, changed my life. etc. Maybe it's a positive growth in me, that I'm more excited about sharing my faith now, but I can't help taking a deep breath when someone asks which church I go to. Between the incidents of Mark's inflammatory rhetoric poking the

blogger hornet nests, the massive growth, and the recent mysterious circumstances with 3 longtime elders, I've felt more and more wary of the direction the church is heading.

So, what I want to know is, beyond the doctrinal beliefs, does Mars Hill purposefully court controversy as a means of increasing our visibility? Along with that, I think just after the media circus about Mark's blog comments, Mark stated that the church would hire someone to be a media liason/P.R. advisor. Has this person been hired, and is this helping to prevent unnecessary incidents in the future?

To end on a positive note, having recently switched to attending Wedgewood, I thank God that the multi-site method has allowed for a smaller, more intimate setting than Ballard. I really, really like the Wedgwood building (it certainly doesn't hurt that Wedgewood is using the candelabras from the old Paradox). Also, my experience with community groups, starting with the Abrams' group in 2002 or 2003, has always been phenomenal. Community groups really are the heart of the church.

zmalm - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:55 AM

Post subject:

To add on to Matthew's question, I believe I read that the downtown building sold about 6 months ago for, if memory serves, \$3.4 mil. Forgive my memory if I'm wrong, but I recall this building being described to us as having been purchased for significantly under market value. Considering the current real estate climate, that seems like a big jump. I'm not too familiar with that area, but could you explain what makes this property a particularly wise investment?

cpersaud - Nov 02, 2007 - 12:38 PM

Post subject:

I, too, echo Doug, Seth, and Zach's concerns. (Thanks guys!) I love this church yet feel like I'm in the dark on a lot of what's going on. I feel uneasy knowing these godly "old stones" who have served Mars Hill for quite some time are gone. We're all one body and we feel this on a deeply intimate level. The statements made about what took place are ambiguous and I'd much appreciate some clarity. Details are unnecessary, but I love the transparency of the leadership with the body and would love to see it continue in the same direction! Thank you elders, you are held in high regard and your self-sacrifice and labor is treasured!

hedwards - Nov 02, 2007 - 12:44 PM

Post subject:

First thank you for opening this forum. It is a sign of deep commitment on the part of our elders to its church body. As for all of the thoughts that have been rolling around in my head, I feel as if they have already been stated by the people before me. Therefore, being that my concerns and requests are similar I ask that the previous statements be addressed. Both Doug and Zach have put things well.

Secondly, being how visual I am, I was curious if for simplicity's sake a heierarchy chart could be put together to display who falls where, so that when issues of submission are spoken of I can see why X was supposed to submit to Y.

Lastly, what is the thinking among the elders around filling in Marks role should something cause him to be unable to preach? I think everyone knows that as far as face time, Mark is kind of the rock star of Mars Hill. And he preaches on Jesus in a way I have never seen. This being how does his seemingly irreplaceable talent effect his role. I am not saying God would not take care of His church by rising a man up. I am just curious as to what you Elders think about this issue.

Thank you

jerlawson - Nov 02, 2007 - 12:56 PM
Post subject:

Per Article VIII section C point 2

"Members of Mars Hill Church are not guaranteed confidentiality regarding issues of church discipline, and understand that in submitting themselves to the authority of the church, issues of a sensitive or personal nature may become known to others. This includes, but is not limited to, notification of the authorities if a crime has been committed or if a real threat of someone being endangered exists, as well as other violations of scripture that may not result in physical danger."

Does this effectively say that church members have no assurance of confidentiality in cases of church discipline and that the matters pertaining to their discipline may be discussed not only beyond any need for compliance with the state and local authorities, but also potentially in other settings? Given that confidentiality agreements are given for pastoral counseling should confidentiality agreements be vitiated in light of this by-law?

Is there any possible perception of tension between this statement that confidentiality is not assured in cases of church discipline of members given the precedent of pastoral discipline up to this point? May members perceive there to be a tension between the confidentiality afforded pastors under current discipline and the by-laws which state that no confidentiality is assured for church members?

I understand that confidentiality is assured conditionally in the case of pastoral counseling and other cases and am wondering how soon future written agreements will reflect conformity with the current by-laws.

aallen - Nov 02, 2007 - 12:59 PM
Post subject:

I echo Doug's questions.

Also:

1) The members covenant and old by-laws call for Matthew 18:15-18 to be followed (as well, regarding elders in 1 Timothy 5:19-22) in cases of discipline. How was Matthew 18 employed with Pastors Paul and Bent if the first action was to fire them in a very public way?

2) How can votes casted for the new bylaws be seen as "unanimous" when 2 elders that may have good input lost their chance to vote right before these were being voted on? This is coincidentally close timing. Were Bent and Paul removed in time just to get the bylaws passed in full agreement because they had genuine concerns?

3) Is it true that Pastor Paul's "improper use of confidential information" merely involved his discussion of the proposed bylaws with a respected Mars Hill member?

4) What appeal does a member that is wrongly accused by two elders of sin have? It appears that two elders can simply end a member's membership and the member - although innocent - has no way of having his or her day to argue their innocence.

5) Since the communication of October 2, 2007 by Pastor Jamie stated that neither pastor faced accusations of "moral impropriety", how does one go about repenting of something that's not morally improper?

rssmith - Nov 02, 2007 - 02:30 PM

Post subject:

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality." 1 Timothy 5:21

The charges against Paul Petry and Bent Meyer included distrust and disrespect of "spiritual authority" and the "senior leadership" of the church. Assuming that this means they exhibited a distrust of the other elders at MH, then what measures were taken to assure that their investigations and trials were conducted without partiality, since those investigating, hearing and judging their cases were also those who were allegedly wronged in both cases? Apart from the "consecrating" that each elder in the EIT performed over himself, what other measures were in place to ensure that justice was fairly wrought?

I second both Dwayne Forehand's and Doug Finefrock's questions as well.

ljaeger - Nov 02, 2007 - 03:47 PM

Post subject:

thank you Elders for having this forum!

what i LOVE about MH is NOT that we don't have problems (that would be abnormal) but that we get to resolve these problems in a healthy way.

so many folks have asked such great questions & articulated it in better ways than i could have, i don't have any questions left to ask. (thank you Cameron, Doug & Landon)

looking forward to reading the answers to those questions & in reference to moving forward, the questions asked by Judy Abolafya.

thank you.

srehberg - Nov 02, 2007 - 04:53 PM

Post subject:

Who picks out the colors? (And I know I'm not the only one who wants to know this.)

awmyers - Nov 02, 2007 - 05:38 PM

Post subject:

I understand that eldership and employment are two different stations, but why weren't Paul and Bent's jobs simply suspended (as was their eldership) during the investigation process? Why were they terminated from staff before all of the charges were fully evaluated?

mwinslow - Nov 02, 2007 - 06:48 PM

Post subject:

Has any thought been given to having regular (2 or 3 times/year) members meetings (most likely by campus) to allow members to know what's going on and to have open discussion with their pastors as a body about what being 'on mission' with MHC means in the upcoming season?

wchamberlin - Nov 02, 2007 - 08:02 PM

Post subject:

I wanted to dovetail off of Matthew's question:

As our body grows i would guess that it is not safe to assume that everyone has internet access, skills to cruise the web, or may not feel comfortable participating in an online community - is the church considering additional ways of communicating with its members aside from the internet?

As well as we roll out the satellite campuses, will the members' site as we know it now be the most effective way of communicating with the entire body at large or will each satellite have their own forums?

Lastly, has there been consideration for opportunities to gather with other A29 churches in the area? When the church was smaller we used to have the gatherings with Harambee, Imago, the Gathering, etc. I'm not sure how this could be facilitated with the current set-up and is perhaps a scenario more appropriate for the satellite campuses, but just thought i would throw it out there.

One more "lastly": thanks for providing this opportunity.

dbrill - Nov 02, 2007 - 08:10 PM

Post subject:

I have a question about the future of the member's site. I believe Pastor Zack mentioned that it was in the works to have campus specific member's sites in the near future. With so many campuses opening up lately (praise God!), you have many members whose friends are or will be attending a different campus. I've been thankful that the current setup of the member's site allowed my wife and I to "check up", so to speak, on friends that we don't see very often now, and to stay informed with how to be praying for them, what they're going through, engagements, births, etc.

Will the Member's directory still have every Mars Hill member in it in the future? And, I think most importantly, is there any plan to have a multi-campus forum, alongside whatever sort of campus-specific forum there will be? Thus far the forums have really enabled me to follow 1 Cor. 12:26 by mourning with those who mourn and rejoicing with those who rejoice. What exactly will campus-specific sites entail? Will there be another way for us, aside from knowing we all listen to the same sermon, to feel that we're all in the same church body, and not dismembered limbs?

Working full time, being married, leading a community group, coaching, and serving, as well as making an effort to go out to eat with friends after church doesn't leave a lot of time to keep up with all our old friends at other campuses. I understand that it's not always God's will for us to keep all our close friendships, and I'm all about closer-knit campuses, I just think it's helpful to retain some muti-campus connection as well.

I suppose the broader question to the elders would be: although change and movement is a good, healthy, and biblical thing, is there recognition that much of what makes a family a family is familiarity and a sense of being "at home"? I honestly really enjoy change when it's for the better, but there are some things that seem to be change for change's sake.

Thanks for this oportunity! My wife and I are excited about raising our family in Mars Hill, and are grateful to be blessed with such godly leadership. Though with so much going on at this point in MH there's bound to be some head-scratching. 😊

mdosch - Nov 02, 2007 - 09:30 PM

Post subject:

I am in agreement with what many others have already questioned on this forum. I felt very uneasy several months ago when Leif first voiced concerns with Mars Hill's direction. I had that same feeling of uneasiness when I read about Pastor's Bent and Paul. All these men have been involved at Mars Hill for so long and have a wonderful reputation, that when problems arise with them, I actually start to question what is going on within the church. If these men have concerns with the direction of Mars Hill, I would like to know what those are in case I am in agreement with them. As a member, I have felt left in the dark like

many others have stated.

Secondly, I wondered why it was thought to be impossible to have a membership meeting on this issue? I would have liked to attend even if there was only standing room.

Thirdly, when I first started attending Mars Hill nearly 6 years ago, men applying for the eldership role were actually presented before the congregation during Sunday services. Why does this no longer happen?

tchamberlin - Nov 02, 2007 - 09:40 PM

Post subject:

In order to avoid restating questions I would say I share the concerns and questions of Dwayne, and Doug.

My other questions are :

1.

I was recently looking at the acts 29 site and I realized there about 8 churches in the area the, closest being up on queen ann. Has the idea of encouraging people to seek out churches in their community been considered? I'm not saying we should tell people to shop around and I don't want to sound like I want Mars Hill all to my self. I'm just thinking about how we have sent out leaders to churches but there hasn't (at least to me) been a strong effort to send people. It is strange to me that we plant satellite campuses next to Acts 29 churches we plant and presumably pray will succeed. I realize this wouldn't likely handle the massive numbers of people but could help.

2.

If the elders at a campus choose to no longer play broadcast sermons and instead use its elders for preaching can they? If so or not so why?

Thank you vary much for this opportunity.

chblue - Nov 02, 2007 - 09:59 PM

Post subject:

I want to ask a question that may sound impertinent when asked with an audience of 2000+. Sometimes questions can be untimely or plant dissent/doubt/place an obstacle in another's faith.

How would I be able to present these questions now and in the future?

I don't want to shunned or ostracized b/c my questions are too probing. And I don't want to be labeled a troublemaker. (Pre-MH experiences) Just meaningful and careful communication and fellowship.

jtinsley - Nov 02, 2007 - 10:18 PM

Post subject:

Will we continue to practice expository preaching? It seems with the ask anything series followed by another topical series followed by summer that we are looking at over half of 2008 without an expository series.

kimmelson - Nov 02, 2007 - 10:34 PM

Post subject:

Why have the elders chosen to do the Ask Anything series instead of preaching through the Bible? I understand answering questions our community has, but wouldn't they eventually be answered anyways just by simply preaching through the Word? I am uneasy about this upcoming series because it seems far

from the Gospel and focused on Mark.

Also, with the increasing deficit I understand there have been lay-offs at at least one-campus, I do not know about others however I see the production of Mars Hill becoming more and more elaborate. I feel that instead of raising up leaders in the Church to aide our already over-burdened leaders, the focus is spent on the "Big Show". I realize I am seeing a small part of MH finances, but is the budget focusing on the air war to an extent that the ground war is suffering needless casualties?

Thank you for the ability to air out our concerns, we love the leadership of MH and love the ability to ask questions when there is confusion.

estuderus - Nov 02, 2007 - 10:41 PM

Post subject:

I would like to know exactly what Paul and Bent are accused of doing. We're only left to speculate as to what actually happened. It feels like a game to me. I believe the members of this church have a right to know the plain truth. If it's complicated, then it's complicated. So be it.

It also bothers me that we're being limited in our time to deal with this issue as a church. These two men have been extremely important to the health of Mars Hill and a lot of us are very close to them. Many of us still have a lot of questions and concerns that need to be addressed. We should be able to take as long as we want and have all our questions answered, *within reason*. There might be other important issues to deal with, but to me *this* is the important issue. Right now, I don't care about the next big push or the next big thing we're doing. I care about the members of this church and their lives. That most definitely includes Paul and Bent and their families.

As painful as it is to admit, I think you guys probably did the right thing here. I'm proud of you if that's the case. However, I don't know that until I know more.

Thank you,
Eric

jerlawson - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:07 PM

Post subject:

Can we make requests for books of the Bible to go through? I've been waiting for us to go through Luke ever since Pastor Mark mentioned we might a few years ago and ever since he preached his sermon on christus exemplar. 😊 I know I've made this request before but I want to make it again because it feels like it's been a while since we've gone through a gospel and I remember the gospel of John series being pretty good.

And can we go through one of the major prophets? My personal vote is for Isaiah because the promise of Christ is so much clearer in it and there's so much great poetry in it. So them's my requests for future sermons if it's okay to make some requests.

Thanks again for making this forum available for questions.

sosterberg - Nov 02, 2007 - 11:13 PM

Post subject:

I also share Dwayne's and Doug's concerns.

I trust in the leadership of the church and I have confidence that all of this is merited. Despite this, it's extremely difficult for me to conceive and accept.

I am also concerned that more damage has been done to the reputation of these men because of the veiled and abstract nature of the accusations. The facts have been made ambiguous, and gossip tends to thrive in ambiguity. For me personally, this seems to have drawn out the discipline process longer than necessary, which has done even more damage.

"Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down." - Proverbs 26:20

bbatts - Nov 03, 2007 - 12:39 AM

Post subject:

Let's see if I can phrase this in the form of a question.....

While you have the option, given the ground rules of this forum, to avoid hot topics, or areas that you fear would cause problems, would you agree that when efforts to manage people and information appear in the Bible, things pan out horribly? [For instance, David's behavior when working hard to conceal his affair with Bathsheba, or an even more stark example, Ananais and Sapphira.]

dharder - Nov 03, 2007 - 01:21 AM

Post subject:

I concur with Dwayne and Doug's concerns, and add the following, hopefully to provide a precise definition of the issue. I greatly submit to pastoral leadership in the church, knowing that I am not called to be a pastor. But pastoral authority seems vastly different from "spiritual authority", which to me implies a priestly function, that no longer exists, as we are all priests, with direct access to Jesus, through the torn temple veil.

What "spiritual authority" exists, other than Jesus Christ, our only great and high priest, and that given to all believers? What does such authority consist of precisely? Does such authority over-ride an individual believer's conviction?

Put another way - is there anyone on the org-chart of authority between "ordinary" believers and Jesus?

Thank you for seeing the need for a place for feedback. I appreciate the elder's sincere intent to lead MH as best they know how.

mwinslow - Nov 03, 2007 - 08:58 AM

Post subject:

Two more questions:

What checks and balances exist to keep the elders qua elders from abusing the authority vested in them?

When the elders have responded to these questions, what opportunities will exist to continue dialogue about the concerns raised here?

aifland - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:21 AM

Post subject:

Is there a way our elders can help us to trust them more? It's difficult to trust people you don't know.

Is there a way we can contact Paul and his family and tell them how much we love and miss them - or is that wrong altogether?

rsluys - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:39 AM

Post subject:

This forum, although undoubtedly uncomfortable/controversial on many fronts is an EXTREMELY healthy thing for the body of the church, and I am thankful that it exists.

With that said, let's not make it a 4 day event, but maybe a regular or even a permanent forum-- remember, the truth needs no defense, and for those of us not "in the know", I'd venture that our loyalties and faithfulness would even grow larger and deeper as we feel and are embraced as a full member of the body-not just a rank and filer who are fed scraps as seen fit-not that I'm suggesting that that is the case, although that potential does exist.

I would like to, at this time and in this forum, apply to the church for the position, as Mark has admitted is sorely needed, of "media consultant/p.r. director/tell you your fly is open and you have spinach in your teeth advisor" . . . Jesus is doing great things in the air war-but the ground war, as acknowledged, needs assistance.

Just as Sting has a producer, Brittney Spears has a therapist and even Pastor Mark has an editor for his writings, it is pretty much impossible to edit/critique/be objective about your own works.

Examples of needs include getting new members their website passwords-some recent members have waited for over a year for this-a growing church must not let new believers/members fall by the wayside due to administrative overwork/oversite. Another area could be proof-reading all public/private releases . . . quality control---remember, Mars Hill has a HUGE bullseye on it's back; we are being attacked right and left by satan in all sorts of ways-and every little thing we do is scrutinized . . . yes, we are human, but that shouldn't be a reason for accepting anything that falls below the bar that the Lord and our leadership has set for us.

Thanks again for this forum. Ultimately we must and we will submit to authority. This opportunity goes a long way towards reaching that goal.

rdosch - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:52 AM

Post subject: Ask Your Elders Anything

In our justice system, if someone is accused of a crime, those accusations are made public weather they are true or not. We are studying Philippians, were Paul is in prison, or under house arrest, for false accusations of crimes. From the reading of Acts we are made fully aware of these accusations. Our society does not just throw people in jail without disclosing the details of the charges and the authors of the Bible did not edit out the accusations against Paul to protect his reputation or eliminate gossip.

Why does Mars Hill leadership feel that they are justified in giving a vague explanation for the termination of Paul and Bent and don't need to reveal the details of the accusations?

If well respected leaders of Mars Hill such as Paul, Bent and Leaf have concerns with the direction of the church, then shouldn't those concerns be made public for everyone to evaluate?

Why are the candidates for elder not brought before the church anymore? Shouldn't everyone have a chance to air any concerns about the potential leaders of the Mars Hill, weather they are a members or not? Aren't Sunday services the best way to communicate with the congregation?

The Bible speaks of the inability of being "slaves to two masters", with Mars Hill acquiring all of this debt for the new buildings on top of our existing debt, aren't we running the risk of being a slave to the bank? In making our decisions for the church, will they based on furthering the gospel or on how to pay the mortgage?

Why are Leaf, Bent and Paul not given a chance to tell their side the story and if they are in sin, given a chance to ask for forgiveness from the church? These men are not heretics that should not have a chance to speak, they are servants of Christ that deserve our love and respect.

Mars Hill has always said that everything it does is open for review and the elders are held accountable not only by Jesus but by the church. Mark always speaks of bring leadership, or members that are in sin up before the congregation to hold them accountable. Why in this instance with regards to Paul & Bent, does this not apply?

As a member of Mars Hill for the last 5 years I have felt greatly blessed to be able to see and be apart of the work Jesus is doing in Seattle through Mars Hill. I have always had the greatest respect for the elders and deacons and for the difficult job they have trying to manage an ever growing and changing church. I will be praying for the church and it's leaders during this difficult time.

sunnybates - Nov 03, 2007 - 11:02 AM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

This is just a suggestion...

A few months ago it was very helpful to receive the letter in the mail regarding Leif and the direction of the church. It was helpful and it was great to read about Leif's transparency and was willing to share the information.

It seems that one of the grips is that people don't know what's going on, but some don't look at the members site on a regular basis. I understand that it would be very difficult to have a member's meeting with 2,000+ folks (or more), but a letter via snail mail, may be a better way to communicate since a lot of folks simply don't look at the members site.

Thank you Elders, for all that you do for us. Thank you for your faithfulness, your love for the Body, your love for Jesus and your love for your friends that you've built relationships with and your trying to protect them. I appreciate it and I respect you all the more for it. Since Mike and I came to MH 7 years ago, I have been amazed at how well conflict and discipline has been handled. We've been in other churches where there has been a TON of gossip and disrespect. Thank you for trying your best to protect friends yet try to give the most information that you can at the time.

agiboney - Nov 03, 2007 - 01:11 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

The new heirarchy and voting structure defined in the bylaws concern me. It is important that our leadership be unified, and willing to work to resolve differences, and if the difference is not able to be resolved, to not move forward on that issue until it is resolved. This helps limit individual power. I also recognize that this could lead to paralysis if unity is not present.

I also want answers to the questions that Doug and other's have posted. I also hope to hear how the ground war support is continuing to be supported, in this season, it appears needed more so than the air war. We appreciate that How People Change and the Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands training, and need more of this ongoing.

Why does the children's ministry not have enough ciriculum writing resources to support, the children learning from the same text as their parents each week, or month or the following quarter? Why do we think primarily expository preaching is good for adults and topical teaching for children in children's ministry?

The preaching time from the word seems to be getting shorter, we want more of the bible, straight through so that the humans find it harder to get in God's way.

Despite my questions and uneasiness, I choose to trust in God's sovereignty, knowing that He is loving and will work all things for good, for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. This is a difficult season, and there may be many more, as our Lord removes pride, power and glory from people in our church. May we all be humble and thankful and wise, praying for our leaders.

Thank you for making this forum available, looking forward to the responses.

droraback - Nov 03, 2007 - 03:08 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Could we do less topical and more biblical teaching? That particular question has been gnawing on me for a while now, and I have been downloading Genesis and listening to such meaty preaching and it was amazing how Mark would bring it back to Jesus constantly. I feel that topical sermons do have their place but it seems like every other church uses topical preaching as their bread and butter and we have always been more about pure scripture.

My other question would be is it a good idea to allow people to vote on what Mark preaches? To be honest, it just seems more like a fun trendy thing to do when it would seem wiser to pray and meditate and listen to what the Holy Spirit would lead our pastors to preach.

lreraback - Nov 03, 2007 - 03:09 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

1) Why do the earliest biblical manuscripts not have John 7:53-8:11 in them?

2) People just naturally assume that dogs would be incapable of working together on some sort of construction project. But what about just a big field full of holes?

pmiller - Nov 03, 2007 - 05:20 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

If we can step away from Elders and the bylaws for a moment...

I am not a math guy, or a numbers guy, or a business guy. I am a married guy though, and a fella that serves MH as a lay deacon and hopes that the Lord will put the timing and opportunity in front of me to serve MH full time in the future. My wife knows this, and while she hopes for the same, we both know people who have come on as staff, served faithfully and effectively only to be laid-off when budget woes hit us. As a result, she looks forward to that day with a touch of apprehension. To their credit, the people I know who have been laid-off have not been bitter and understand the need for the church to adapt and change to the situation at hand, but it saddens me all the same. Further, I think the consequence of this might be reluctance on the part of some great men and women to answer the call of their Elders to serve the church as staff, and as our needs become more and more specific, this may be problematic. My question - is there a way to value the sacrifice and hard work of staff people, many of whom have children and have left careers by finding ways to get them through our financial rough spots with the jobs/ministries we ask them to take on, or is there a way to better evaluate where we are and where we'll be so that their job security isn't so in the hands (and pockets) of the church body via their giving?

Secondly, and also relating to growth - as we grow and have a greater need for people to step into the role of deacon, how are we making sure people are ready and meet the requirements of the position? For example, I work in production - if someone comes in and works faithfully for the Lord every Sunday, how do we know how they are living the rest of the week? As a deacon myself, I know we are expected to be in authentic community, and open and accountable to the people that serve above us, and pro-active in getting to know the hearts of those serving under and alongside us, but things get busy, and sometimes the right questions don't find themselves being asked. Can we add a piece to the process where we talk to community group leaders, or submit the names to the members like we do Elders so that the membership might let us know about concerns?

Thanks! All of you Elders are in our prayers - what a crazy time! It will be interesting to see how the MH remembers this season in the years to come.

pmiller - Nov 03, 2007 - 06:57 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

my turn my turn!

first and foremost: God IS good and faithful. His work is afoot at mars hill and somehow sometime soon (or later) we'll be able to look back and see His sovereignty (sp) during this time. much breaking, humbling, repentance, character shaping, integrity strengthening, and healing is so obvious in this season of our church. at least, that's how i'm seeing it. anyway, i just want to say that my hubby and i love and treasure both the meyers and petries and owe so much of the wisdom we've learned over the years to these great families. though some things are unclear and unsure (and quite vague), we find it very important to honor the privacy of our former elders out of respect. therefore, we are not asking for specifics but, rather, trust our elders in the leading of mars hill. working so closely with our elders, we know without a doubt that though sinners, they are men who seek after the things of God prayerfully, cautiously (sp), and biblically. uh, alright. enough of (as my hubby put it) "elderss and bylaws".

? # 1: i echo paul's question regarding greater accountability for our lay deacons.

? # 2: i also echo paul's question regarding stewardship and care for the financial health of our staff

? # 3: someone brought up a good question regarding godly dissent. there's a sense of fear amongst people. how can we create a sense of safety for questioning what may be perceived to be poor choices made on behalf of our elders (for the record, this is a hypothetical question. i'm not saying i think poor choices are being made right now).

that's all. paul and i are praying for you (our elders), our deacons, our members, our attendees, and our city/region. we love you all very much and fully support you.

-claudine

pmiller - Nov 03, 2007 - 06:57 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

oh crap. i accidently posted as my hubby. oops!

-claudine

mwinslow - Nov 03, 2007 - 07:16 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

There seems to be a lot of 'bad blood' that has been generated by the recent actions taken by the elder board. What are the elders' plans to help restore unity to the body (beyond the document that will answer all these questions)?

dwilliams - Nov 03, 2007 - 08:28 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Pastor Lief resigned? Did I miss something mailed out to this effect? Wasn't he Mark's accountability partner? I'd just like to state that this church is very dear to my heart and I pray extra for Mark as I believe the opposition will be greatest against him. I have been very confident in our leadership thus far and feel God is working to move us forward as a church. I guess I'd like some reassurance that there isn't some seed of dissension growing amongst the elder leadership because I'm reading these posts and my mind is wanting to wander down the maybe-this-is-bigger-than-I-think-you're-being-Pollyana-again-Danelle

path. I also feel that what we're doing here at MH is unprecedented at least in my lifetime and I'm a preacher's daughter who has grown up in "the Church"; the whole thing is stretching my mind and my faith and my vision, actually. I pray God's grace will be upon us in this season as we move forward.

duwisniew - Nov 03, 2007 - 09:14 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Under what circumstances would our Elders execute the Biblical procedure for body discipline as set forth in Mathew 18?

Why was an extra-biblical system implemented in the cases of such esteemed Elders as Bent Myers and Paul Petry?

cblack - Nov 03, 2007 - 09:23 PM

Post subject:

We just finished studying Nehemiah and I feel there were some lessons in Nehemiah that are timely to remember. The first is that Godly men who are faithfully serving Jesus can still make major mistakes. The example being that Nehemiah was charging interest to the poor of Jerusalem as were many other rich men in the city. Nehemiah repented of that sin and made sure that all the other rich men were called out for that sin as well. Nehemiah then left Eliashub in charge as priest and when he came back Eliashub had let Tobiah an enemy of God move into God's Holy Temple.

My point is that it is not only acceptable but actually prudent for us to lovingly hold our leaders accountable. I trust no man 100%, but I trust Christ with everything. If the Elders have done nothing wrong, which I believe they haven't then we will be able to move forward together as a church. But if there has been wrong decisions made then the Elders should know that All godly leaders throughout the Bible and since have fallen into sin and yet God is still able to restore their ministry and continue to use them to lead his people. David sinned, Moses sinned, Peter sinned, Paul sinned.

It is my prayer that we are growing together as a church and that growth and change can be painful, but ultimately Christ uses trials to teach us to depend more on him. I pray that the elders have acted out of righteous accountability in submission to Christ. I pray that we will all see Christ at work in the new plan and organization of the church. And lastly I pray for Paul and his family that they would continue to serve and love Jesus and feel welcome to fellowship with the body.

jbronson - Nov 03, 2007 - 09:51 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

The question I have is in regards to the unhealthy lack of trust of the senior eldership part. I know there are many Christians who have seen a lot of wrong done by those in ministry, pastors, and I myself have a very hard time trusting pastors after seeing many people get hurt in churches. What should people do who find themselves in that place or feel distrustful as to how decisions like this are made? I would echo Matthew's question.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power of love and of sound mind 2Tim 1:7

aalsup - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:09 PM

Post subject:

I am concerned about the time restrictions given for accepting questions. This puts the members in a position of asking more probing and stretching questions than may be warranted out of fear this may be the only opportunity to be heard.

1) Is there any biblical support for a tiered elder hierarchy? Obviously not all decisions can be made by all the elders, but it seems very important that the trustworthiness of the body of elders stems directly from the accountability of the elders to each other, and the equality of all the elders in the body. This point has been made and reinforced countless times in Mark's preaching.

2) how is it possible for an elder to not respect his authority if the elders were all equal before the new bylaws were passed?

3) Is Mars Hill moving away from the vision for training up our own pastors only from those with history of service within Mars Hill?

4) Is Mars Hill moving away from pure expository preaching?

5) Do the elders have a process for incorporating feedback from members into planning and strategy?

6) is the "air war" and the vision of reaching beyond the local congregation a distraction from the teaching and growth that needs to happen first in the local body at MH?

bkelly - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:31 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Just a few questions...

It states in Article III

SECTION E – Discipline and removal of elders shall be consistent with the standards set by the Bible, the specific procedures to be determined by the Board of Directors in its discretion. An elder who is also an employee is employed at will and may be terminated as an employee at any time, with or without cause, by the Executive Elder Team or its designee (e.g. campus pastor or employee's immediate supervisor). Any such termination shall automatically result in suspension as an elder pending discipline or removal as such by the Board of Directors.

1. Can you please explain the circumstances for terminating an employee without cause?

2. Why are employees terminated prior to an investigation rather than suspended, investigated and then possibly terminated?

3. Please refer to Dwayne and Doug's earlier posts (they are both well articulated).

Dwayne Forehand

Posted: Nov 01, 2007 - 10:46 PM

Doug Finefrock

Posted: Nov 02, 2007 - 08:44 AM

This is a hard season and I appreciate being able to get some of our questions answered.

bgeihlsler - Nov 03, 2007 - 10:56 PM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Thanks for opening up this forum. I know this is seconding a lot of questions above, but here's my question:

1) Were Paul and Bent's lack of respect for spiritual authority in regard to the new direction of the church? Did they disagree with where Mars Hill is going and then disagree in an unrespectful manner?

bg

nporter - Nov 03, 2007 - 11:05 PM

Post subject:

First, we pray.

My question for the elders is simply this: how can we pray for you?

I believe in my heart that the elders of MHC have just endured something incredibly difficult. They have had to investigate and dismiss one of their closest friends, and admonish another. When I decided to sit down and read some of the questions laid out on this forum tonight I didn't know exactly what I would find... but I have to say, the level of discontent and (almost) accusatory language directed toward our eldership is a bit disconcerting...

I'm not a yes-man, and haven't been brainwashed or drank any MH brand Kool-Aid recently, but I do know one thing. I do know how hard it is to call out a brother who is in sin, especially if you love and respect, and spiritually look up to that person, as I'm sure many fellow elders did to Bent and Paul. Can you imagine the heart-ache and anguish they must have felt? Where are the posts asking how it felt for them to have to do such a thing? It's not something to delight in, or to do from personal gain... it's something that is heart breaking, and never to be relished, or sought after.

I would challenge every member of MHC to ask themselves this question: that even if they get every answer to every question they could think of, would that really be enough? Is our curiosity really motivated by God? If so, then ask away! If not, then maybe we need to ask ourselves why we are so absorbed by this situation. Do we really think something evil, nefarious or underhanded is afoot? I for one, do not. And while the prospect of answered questions sounds rewarding, an argument could be made that a simple faith that God is working things together for the good of those who love Him, even though it might be painful... in the end might be more rewarding than getting all the answers we desire so badly.

I know I may get some well articulated responses to this post. Reasons why we need to be inquisitive, questioning of the eldership, questioning of the never ending bylaws, old bylaws, new bylaws, blah blah blah-laws... but first... before we question, before we accuse, before we seemingly (but not overtly, of course) doubt those whom God has called to lead... let's pray. Let pray for those men and their families. Let's remember the reason why we're all here. Jesus. Beginning, middle, and end... we're here because Jesus first loved us. HE draws us together. HE sustains us... not questions, answers, or bylaws.

I'm not calling anyone out for asking questions... we've all got em, and their all legitimate. I would simply call on us all to pray for these men who have endured great hardship throughout this process. From Bent, Paul, Mark, James, Jamie, a multitude of Tim's, and all the he rest on down the line.

Please everyone, I implore you: first... we pray.

echeung - Nov 03, 2007 - 11:55 PM

Post subject:

Dwayne and Doug stated much clearer than I would have the thoughts, questions, and concerns I have; and I respectfully ask that the church answer fully their valid questions.

My heart has been so heavy over the events that have happened, and I have been in prayer for all that call, and have called, Mars Hill home. I greatly respect Paul Petry and have regarded him as my spiritual authority, and to be told that he no longer is, and that I (being a member of the church) need to submit to the spiritual authority now in place is very confusing. We have been given no clear answer on why we should not respect Paul and no clear answer on why he has been removed.

For the faithful trust and submission that the church is requesting, I ask that full disclosure be provided to the members so that we may believe and submit with a clear conscious, not be silent begrudgingly for

fear of repercussions. I also feel that the silence is extremely harmful to the removed Pastors and their reputation, as they are living under a cloud of speculation. I will continue to pray for all involved, and I once again respectfully ask that full disclosure be provided.

Erin

Ibrown - Nov 04, 2007 - 12:01 AM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

We appreciate your willingness to answer our questions. We are thankful for our elders and all that you do and they ways Jesus has used you in our lives.

We are in agreement with many of the questions and comments posted in this forum about Paul and Bent. These men are our pastors that we have trusted, loved and have come to know over the years. Men we have trusted our lives with. We were disappointed in the way the "disclosure" was handled. We have felt as many in this forum have....left in the dark without any real answers, just more questions. By not being more forthcoming, the door was left wide open for speculation and growing concerns. As many have already stated, our questions too are in line with Doug's and Dwayne's. A couple questions we would like to add are:

1. I'm grateful that Mars pulled together the 'How People Change' series and had vision enough to see it's need, however what other steps will be taken to strenghten the ground war? Our hearts are very interested in seeing this area of Mars grow to the capacity our air war is at now and we will be stepping up our game to help out any way we can.

2. We also second Kimberley Nelson's post about the "big show"/production and the money that is spent on it. We feel that the ground war, including grace groups, counseling and Children's Ministry are in much greater need of the money.

Thank you for opening up this forum and thank you to the long time faithful members for posting your questions. We feel very encouraged that we are not alone in our concerns. Lee and Autumn Brown

Iroraback - Nov 04, 2007 - 12:54 AM

Post subject: RE: Ask Your Elders Anything

Actually, I am interested in hearing about the future of grace groups, counseling, children's ministry as well. These have been absolutely vital in the lives of so many people I know, and I hope these ministries will continue to have a vital role in our plan moving forward.

jyoungs - Nov 04, 2007 - 01:43 AM

Post subject:

I realize that some of these questions may already have been touched on in prior posts, but thought that it might be easier for the Elders to respond if they were to hear the questions in a couple of different ways. Clarity of questions is imperative in this forum, as appears that we will not have an opportunity for clarifying or follow up questions.

A. Elders

1. "We are pleased to report that the adoption of the bylaws and approval of the board of directors were unanimously supported by the elders" (P. Munson regarding the new bylaws) Is it true that two elders who made their dissent known in writing to the body of elders were removed from eldership with a week of their having submitted such dissent?

2. Article VI, Sec. A: Describes the Executive Elders using a very Orwellian -sounding phrase “First among equals”. This seems by definition impossible, except to describe a seating arrangement. What does “First among equals” mean?

3. Over the past 2 years, how many Executive Elders have resigned their positions as such, and when did they do so?

B. The Board of Directors (BOD):

1. Per Article VI. Sec. E, the slate of nominees for the BOD is to be developed by the Executive Elder team. In light of this, how are the elders and the church protected from the Exec Elder team consciously or unconsciously creating a puppet BOD?

2. Recently, an elder was removed for expressing “unhealthy” distrust of the elders. As such an event obviously creates a chilling effect upon elders holding each other accountable or engaging each other as “iron sharpening iron:”

a. What precisely does an expression of “unhealthy dissent” look like, so that we as members and elders might avoid it. (I’m hoping it is more helpful than Justice Potter’s 1964 definition of obscenity: “I know it when I see it.”)

b. If an elder can be removed under such a charge, what safeguards are being put into place so that an elder can feel able to dissent without being subject to such a charge.

C. Bylaws:

1. “Throughout this process we have sought significant counsel from other churches, organizations, consultants and our church attorney.” (P. Munson regarding the new bylaws):

a. What level of participation and counsel was the church attorney asked to provide, and what level did this attorney actually give?

b. If the elders felt the need to utilize counsel and outside sources to come to competent understanding of these bylaws, why are members prohibited from seeking outside insight on the documents that are to govern our relationship to Mars Hill? (Not all members of MH have engaged in legal training.)

2. Since the need for new bylaws was presented to “establish a more long range document that accurately reflects our vision and direction as a multi-campus church,” and “to delegate authority over campus oversight and care to local campus elder teams.” why do the new bylaws never reference the multiple campus vision, or campus oversight by local campus elder teams?

D. Financial Accountability

1. Have the elders been receiving the quarterly financial statements of Mars Hill Church? If not, how has financial accountability been maintained?

2. Will quarterly financial statements be produced now that these new bylaws are in place? If so, who will receive them?

3. I understand that MH produces annual audited financial statements each year. Since MH holds financial transparency as a core organizational value, I presume that members have access to these statements.

a. Where might members request and gain access to such statements.

b. If access to such statements is not available to members, why not?

c. Does MH file a form 990 with the IRS and Washington State?

E. Forgiveness/Restoration

1. If a MH member has shown repentance for an action to a MH elder or person in leadership, and received forgiveness and/or restoration,

- a. How does such person know for certain that s/he has received such forgiveness/restoration, and
- b. May s/he may rest assured that such forgiveness/restoration is sincere and permanent? (similar to the prohibition on "double-jeopardy in our criminal courts.)

F. Oct. 25 Allegations

2. The Lead Pastor's letter of October 25, 2007 pronounced an unidentified group of members as being "utterly sinful", and participating in "slandorous gossip". As the group of offending members was unnamed, many members who have expressed their concern to the elders are left wondering if they were the utterly sinful, slanderous gossips. To set innocent hearts at rest:

a. Were each of the persons referenced above approached individually? Matthew 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. (If this is the case, any person who has not been so approached can rest secure that they have not offended.)

b. Both "utterly sinful" and "slandorous gossip" require malicious intent on the part of the offender. Since the Lead Pastor posts on behalf of the elders on the MH members site, can we presume that the majority of the elders support these assertions?

(1) If so, what process was used to evaluate the heart and motives of the offending individuals, were they given an opportunity to refute such charges.

(2) If not, was the Lead Pastor speaking only on behalf of himself, and can we expect a public retraction and apology for presenting such harsh words as the voice of the elders at large?

"In this season, Christ-like humility is an important lesson and truth of Scripture ...We must be sober-minded, alert, and quick to give Jesus our sin, our worries, and our fears. P. Munson, October 25, 2007

aharrington - Nov 04, 2007 - 07:57 AM

Post subject:

Thank you, Julia, for such concise and thorough questioning. I ditto each one of your points. I have prayerfully followed this process closely since the first letter in October concerning these matters. I have been greatly affected as have much of the membership.

Praying fervently for this process, for full disclosure of the matters, for forgiveness and restoration where needed, and that there would be stronger unity than before as Mars Hill moves ahead.

mcheung - Nov 04, 2007 - 08:53 AM

Post subject:

Doug, Dwayne, and Julia have well articulated many great questions. I would love to hear answers to all of them.

Just a few more thoughts though....

Observation 1: It kind of seems like we now have "junior" and "senior" elders....

Q: Are we as members supposed to respect them all equally as spiritual authority, or are some more authoritative than others?

Q: Are "senior" elders (AKA executive or BOD elders) the spiritual authority for the "junior" elders?

Observation 2: Some members have expressed concern that they do not know who some of the new elders are....

Q: Is it true that some of the newer elders (or those in the elder process) are relatively new to MH?

Q: Why were some lesser-known elders chosen to preside (on the BOD) over the more widely known, seasoned, highly-respected, trusted elders?

Q: Would it be possible to introduce the new elders to the entire church body? (if live presence is not feasible, I hear we have the appropriate media equipment and personnel that could probably put together a video and play it at the services)

Observation 3: In a room full of men, it seems like a certain level of disagreement is inevitable...

Q: How will dissent be handled?

Q: Will an elder that is not in complete agreement with a decision by the majority be removed as an elder and said to have "lack of trust and respect for spiritual authority?"

jerlawson - Nov 04, 2007 - 08:56 AM

Post subject:

Regarding the disciplinary actions taken regarding Bent and Paul and subsequent instructions about enquiries, I have wondered why Moira Bugler's request to read the current by-laws was given a response which treated that request as being equivalent to asking about the cases of Paul and Bent in the following thread:

<http://members.marshallchurch.org/index.php?name=PNphpBB2&file=viewtopic&t=19020>

What did Pastor Mark mean when he wrote

"Once again, Pastor Jamie's request was to not do this. Without knowing it, you are pressing on the very issue that is the source of our current situation."

Pastor Jamie's Oct 2 announcement regarding the termination of Paul Petry and Bent Meyer included the following:

"At this time we do not want any discussion regarding this matter on the members site forums. Speculation or gossip would only be unhelpful to the church and unkind to these men. When a final decision regarding Paul and Bent's eldership status is complete the members of the church will be notified. Join us in prayer for the elders involved and for the mission and vision of Jesus to be accomplished through faithful leadership of this growing body. Any questions or comments should be directed to Pastor Scott Thomas (scott@marshallchurch.org)."

Was this supposed to refer to ANY questions about ANYTHING or just about the situation regarding Paul and Bent? If the former then I worry that Pastor Scott was incredibly busy, perhaps having to field questions that could have been fielded by others.

If the latter then why did Pastor Mark reply to Moira Bugler and Dustin Dekoekkoek as though any question about the current by-laws fell under Pastor Jamie's request that any questions or comments be directed to Pastor Scott Thomas if Moira and Dustin's question had nothing to do with Paul and Bent's pending cases?

Is it possible that Pastor Mark's response may have unintentionally fueled rather than quelled speculation that the case of Paul and Bent had something to do with the by-laws? I do not have any evidence on which I could ascertain what Paul or Bent were fired for and am wondering why Pastor Mark implicitly linked a question about the by-laws to questions about the discipline of Paul and Bent since it seemed Pastor Mark could have simply written, "Pastor Scott can get the by-laws to you", right? If Pastor Mark hadn't written "without knowing it" would anyone have known whatever it was that Pastor Mark wrote, that by asking about the current by-laws that faithful members were asking about the thing that was the source of the current situation? Did Pastor Mark accidentally and unintentionally link the issue of the by-laws with the issue of disciplinary action taken regarding Paul Petry and Bent Meyer?

Could that response be partly why members seem to think there is some connection between the disciplinary cases and the by-laws?

I want to thank the pastors again for providing members an opportunity to ask questions and I am praying that we can move forward in the work of the Gospel through this.

pmcvicker - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:32 AM

Post subject:

I would like to know why the Elders at Ballard decided to cancel Paul Petry's Tuesday morning men's prayer ministry? As a participant, I thought it was a valuable time of men getting together and praying for our church. Is there any discussion to bring back this ministry at Ballard?

zmalm - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:23 AM

Post subject:

In that thread with Moira and Dustin, Pastor Mark said, "Additionally, as we add **new campuses that may extend even beyond our state and/or nation** such things as the elders all gathering as one body once a month for a vote on every issue in the church is no longer tenable and we need teams of elders to lead campuses etc."

I have no idea why this would be a goal, and until I read it just now I thought the few mentions I'd seen (from people other than Mark) were just ridiculous speculation. Please explain why we would do this, rather than plant churches. Isn't the issue Mark mentioned reason enough to avoid this (elders being incapable of meeting together). This sounds like we don't trust that God can work through pastors other than Mark, that he's the only one who has correct theology.

Additionally, since Acts 29 churches tithe 10% to Acts 29, but campus tithes all go to MH, which in turn tithes 10% to A29, if we were to have campuses in other states/countries, would the church change the tithing structure/distribution of funds?

jforehand - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:35 AM

Post subject:

The Sunday before Bent and Paul were fired Mark preached the "Fathers and Fighting" sermon. In it he mentions wanting to follow Nehemiah's lead:

"And beat some of them! Now, he's an older guy and he's beating up certain members of his church. What do we do with that? I'll tell you what I'd like to do with that. I'd like to follow in his example. There's a few guys right now, that if I wasn't going to end up on CNN, I would go old testament on them, even in leadership in this church."

My question is was Mark talking about Pastor Bent and Pastor Paul in the sermon?

I've heard Mark say often that he loves us and I believe him. If in that sermon Mark was referencing Bent and Paul (knowing the tragedy that we were all about to go through) then I don't think that was very loving to us as a body and was disrespectful to them as brothers.

Thank you!

jbird - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:38 AM

Post subject:

Why was the Pastor Munson's post about Paul's termination deleted? I am sure there was a post about him being fired, for us not to talk about it on the forums, and there will be an investigation. Now it is not there to reference any longer. It was the first posting that was so vague. Why was it deleted?

adevine - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:59 AM

Post subject:

Why has Leif Moi been reduced to only a "co-founder of Mars Hill Church" as stated in his bio on the Pastor's bio page? From the Pastor's bio page, it looks like there are several other pastors currently doing the marriage ministry that Leif was doing. If he isn't doing the marriage ministry anymore, what is he currently doing?

Why is Bent going to be overseen by the Shoreline campus pastors to restore him? Why is he not overseen by the MH "general" pastors? Will his ministry be limited only to the Shoreline campus? Did he lose his office? If he can be reinstated as a pastor, yet not qualify to be an employee... there seems to be a disconnect. He's qualified to spiritually lead us, but not be employed by the institution he is to lead in spiritually? What will Bent do for a job?

If Paul can't generate enough revenue from his family law practice by December, will MH help out the Petry family?

I echo many of the same concerns through out this thread in relation to Bent and Paul. My hope is that a full disclosure can be done, however I am concerned about preserving these men's dignity. I have the greatest of respect for them both. They have both meant so much to me and my family and have been there during the most trying of times. My prayers are with the Petry and Meyer families.

kbell - Nov 04, 2007 - 12:13 PM

Post subject:

There is precedent for solid Christian men to clash. Paul and Barnabas had "no small disagreement" over Mark and his continuing with their journeys. They split up and went separate ways. Each thought he was right and each was to some degree. I'm sure the churches in southern Turkey were confused when Paul showed up with Silas and there was some tension when they asked about Barnabas. At the end of Paul's life there was reconciliation and, in fact, he wanted Mark to come to him at the very end. There is nothing in the new bylaws that I cannot live with. I think I will just wait until things calm down after this and trust the Holy Spirit to do His thing.

jerlawson - Nov 04, 2007 - 01:22 PM

Post subject:

Will we get to hear Pastor Lief preach again some time soon? I haven't heard him preach since the Mother's Day sermon and while I can understand why that sermon got pulled I hope he gets to preach some more in the future if he's in better health (I read the prayer request that said he was in bad shape and his wife was not in good health, either). My hope is that we get to hear at least a little preaching from all our pastors at some point. I haven't heard a sermon from Pastor Tim Smith in a while or from Pastor Bubba at all and Pastor Bill's sermons on Jude were fantastic.

rssmith - Nov 04, 2007 - 02:06 PM

Post subject:

Our previous form of bylaw governance, where every elder is a member of the legal Board of Directors, simply became cumbersome, slow, ineffective, and untenable with the growing needs of our church and the growing size of our eldership.

Why was the decision made to create new levels of power rather than simply create a more efficient workflow within the power structure we have held high and trusted for so long?

dwatkins - Nov 04, 2007 - 03:02 PM

Post subject:

Wow. I'm not sure if we really need another person (me) to add to this. But I do love this church, and I breathed a sigh of relief today when I read the posts, and found out that I'm not the only one who shares similar feeling about the current "issue".

So I guess I'll say my at (this point obligatory), "I couldn't have said it better than Doug (Finerock)", and add my own questions. But I seriously could not have said it better than what Doug has already written. And I think it was Dwayne that mentioned public rebuke...and that's probably one of my biggest concerns also, as it relates to the scriptural precedence for us to know more details. Aaron Allen also already had some good questions I'd like to eco.

I hope theses are different questions, but some of it might just be re-iteration. I'd like to ask a couple questions about Jamie's opening statement at the top of this forum...

- 1) "Re-plant" Mars Hill? That's the first I've heard we were "re-planting". Is that just a reference to the reorganization. Re-planting sounds much more involved than re-organization. This is unsettling. What does this mean?
- 2) "frankly we have many critical issues that have been placed on hold". As far as I am concerned this the critical issue for the church. What is on hold? Is it future growth? When does the health of the current membership (and our concerns) get put before growth? (I think Eric Studerus had a similar point).

And some other general questions:

- 1) Why haven't I seen any of the new Elders be presented to us from the pulpit and be prayed over and initiated as Elders as we have in the past? Did I miss that Sunday?
- 2) Where is Leif? Is he still and Elder? If he came back why did his role change out of being the Ballard campus Pastor?

I am almost less concerned about what Bent and Paul have done than how the balance of the Elders respond to us...their congregation. I might not give as much time, money, or talent as some of the other members...but I place my trust in this leadership, and it's current lack of communication about long standing Elders, new Elders, new rules, and new property is highly unsettling. I think we have a "need" to know more about the decisions that are being made. Is there a way to have our voices heard in a "proactive" way rather than a "reactive" way that would be acceptable to the Elders? I'd really like to see something put in place...I would be willing to dedicate some time to that....

Thank you for all of your hard work. I know that your jobs are difficult and I hope that this current difficulty yields health for us as a church family.

bdecker - Nov 04, 2007 - 05:03 PM

Post subject:

I sincerely and fervently share Doug, Dwayne, and Julia's questions and concerns. They have articulated well many of the questions I have.

The Decker family also prayerfully awaits the elderships' clear, honest, and direct answers to those questions. We are praying for you as our leaders. We love and respect the Mars Hill pastors. Most importantly we desire that God receives His glory first in all that we do and say as a church. May we die to ourselves so that Christ will be glorified!

Questions:

1. According to 1 Timothy 5:19 – 20 we should not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Who are Paul and Bent's accusers? Who are the witnesses against them?

2. "This was not an easy decision for the elders. . ." - Pastor Jamie Munson, Lead Pastor. Specifically what hard questions were asked by the elders, and what were the answers? It's helpful for us to understand your deliberation process. Maybe some of the elders could chime in on what specific questions they dealt with.

3. It seems like it was a quick process to come up with the new bylaws. Do all the elders feel that they were given enough time and input to hammer out a quality document? Was it rushed? Does everyone agree it was or wasn't rushed? What sorts of hard questions about the bylaws were asked and defined or redefined?

4. Were the elders free to vote against the new bylaws, or were they informed that they were non-negotiable?

5. Was Paul Petry the only professional lawyer on the eldership staff? Do we have anyone else coming in who might have the same credentials to ask professionally informed questions from within the elder staff?

anpack - Nov 04, 2007 - 05:52 PM

Post subject:

First off I hope my questions are not redundant, I tried to read as many posts as I could.

I still am not quite clear how the issue of their salary and their payroll can be two separate issues?

Is cutting ones salary a means of discipline?

How can someone be worthy of a salary but no longer worthy of the position (except in the instance of leave pay) or visa versa?

I would have to second Doug's question I think it was.

Do to the size of the church I have had limited exposure to many of the Pastors. The way the church has been structured and the sacrifices you guys have made as a whole has deepened my trust and respect for you and your descisions .

What makes ponder slightly is when two Elders that have been voted in have trust issues at the same time . I can't help it it just simply makes me ask why . What were there trust issues? Are they valid? Are they invalid? Did they just simply spread like cancer one to the other. What do they know that might cause distrust?

The decisive decision and process on the one hand encourages me that issues are dealt with at this church and is a good example and reminder to us all that as christians we keep sin in the light and deal with it. ON the other hand what seems to me as such an easily grey sin with so many variables it just draws lots of questions for details. As we search for reassurance ,stability and continued trust.

I thank you again for being open about such issues I am sure its no fun.

adecker - Nov 04, 2007 - 05:59 PM

Post subject:

Mars Hill is the first church I've called home, and that has actually felt like family to me rather than just a distant voice coming from behind a pulpit. I've been really bummed about these current issues in Mars Hill leadership and it's brought up some questions and concerns that have been sitting in the back of my mind for a while.

1. How much does the success of Mars Hill Church depend on Pastor Mark's charismatic personality rather than on Christ? What would happen to the church if something happened to Mark? I absolutely love Mark's honesty and preaching style and the way his sermons hit home and touch on subjects other churches nervously avoid, but I've sometimes uneasily wondered whether we are all standing on the solid rock of Pastor Mark rather than on Christ? Has this been discussed among our pastors, and what conclusions have been drawn?

2. Echoing Kimberly Nelson's first question a few posts back, I felt unsettled recently when I went to the main church website and saw the "Ask Mark Anything" feature because it somehow seemed like Pastor Mark was being pushed into center stage as the main attraction, with Jesus and the Bible sort of fading off to the side. I'm having trouble articulating what I mean - I'm just trying to describe a feeling. Also, I know it's probably not statistically true, but lately it seems like I've heard the phrase "one of the fastest growing churches in America" coming from the pulpit more than I've been hearing about Jesus and the gospel. I guess I'm wondering whether our vision and focus is shifting too much toward the numbers, physical church growth, and getting media attention and too far away from the simple message of the gospel. I wish Jesus were here in person and preached the sermons. I wish I could've been there when He preached the sermon on the mount and left the Pharisees tongue-tied in debate. I wish I could've seen his face when He cried over Jerusalem and held a little kid on His lap. Anyway, ramble. I suppose my question is whether the elders have considered this change of direction and what is the reasoning behind it that will draw people to Christ and glorify Him as opposed to drumming up excitement and interest in Pastor Mark and our church specifically? Please help me get more on board with our mission and church direction.

Thanks for having this forum and allowing us to openly ask questions we've been having.

fhall - Nov 04, 2007 - 08:34 PM

Post subject:

When members don't understand or agree with things, how can we go about getting a better understanding? Alongside that, how can we go about finding ways to help things change for the better?

This is all regarding anything and everything that causes the members to think that something is whacked.

Instead of complaining about things, we need to be willing to step up & help things change – but we also need a process that is structured enough to attain this goal. Too many of those trying this route are getting lost in the runaround. So, can we have a very tangible step-by-step process so that any member at any time that had questions, concerns, etc. could find answers and ways to and help improve things?

syoungs - Nov 04, 2007 - 08:56 PM

Post subject:

Again, I start with the warning that some of these questions have been asked before in a different form but hope that a few iterations will actually improve the formulation of answers.

Pastor Mark's sermon highlighting humility was excellent today. In light of that I've thought through these questions and seek only truth and Christ triumphant. Indeed it is Christ I trust and Him victorious (Jer 17: 5-9: v.7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose hope is the Lord." v5 "Cursed is the man who trusts in man..." and v9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.")

This I know: we as men have our measures of success and failure but God's will proceeds to His ends. All I can do is the best I can by God's grace and grow closer to Him through all the duties of life.

I'm not keen on asking these questions but the Elders have asked us to. As members we agree to the bylaws as a condition of membership. If we agree, we have a duty to understand what we agree to.

I am sure the Elders do not want us to agree to something we haven't read and understood. So, I need help understanding the following:

1. Pastor Jamie said the new bylaws are needed to reflect the vision and direction as a multi-campus church. I see next to no mention of multiple campuses. We seem to have gone to multiple campuses ok with the old bylaws. We seemed nimble enough to buy a \$4 mil building in just the last few weeks under the old bylaws – what were the obstructing parts of the old bylaws? . Please describe the changes that reflect that vision and direction and how they specifically help.

2. The introduction to the new bylaws states 5 primary functional objectives of the “bylaw amendments” one of which is to “ Establish a structure where the elders become a team of teams rather than a single large team.” Another is to “Delegate authority over campus oversight and care to local campus elder teams”. The new bylaws don't address these objectives but the old ones did and that part was removed. – The old bylaws said:

Art IV Sec B – Elders shall be structured into multiple working teams with lead elders for those teams.

* Council of Elders – all Elders of Mars Hill Church

* Executive Elder Team – a small team of elders, elected by the vote of the Council of Elders, who have organizational influence over the entire church and who can and will lead the organizational vision and mission of the church

* Departmental Elder Teams – each department builds a team of specialists to lead, pastor, and manage the department

* Site Elder Teams – each site will have a team of elders to pastor and manage the details of the site

* Ad Hoc Elder Teams – these are teams assembled on an as-needed basis to handle a particular project or process; these teams will be assembled for a particular season to deal with particular issues

Art. IV Sec C – The duties and powers of the Departmental, Site, and ad hoc Elder Teams: the Executive Elder Team; and the full Council of Elders are set forth in Articles V, VI, and VII respectively

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Art. V. Departmental, Site, and Ad Hoc Elder Teams

Section A – Departmental, Site, and Ad Hoc Elder Teams may be established from time to time by resolution adopted by majority of the directors. The Departmental and Site Elder Teams shall be of indefinite duration, resolutions creating an Ad Hoc Elder Team shall specify the purpose and powers of such team and its duration. Subject to the limits specified in Section C. below, and RCW 24.03.115 or similar statute, a Departmental, Site, or Ad Hoc Elder Team shall have the powers and duties set forth in the resolution establishing such team.

Section B – The elders serving on a Departmental, Site, or Ad Hoc Elder Team shall be designated by the Council of Elders from time to time, and a particular elder may only be removed from an elder team by a decision of the Council of Elders.

Section C – No Departmental, Site, or Ad Hoc Elder Team shall have the powers or duties reserved for the Executive Elder Team or the full Council of Elders. The Departmental, Site, or Ad Hoc Elder Team shall notify the lead elder of any decision that might reasonably have church-wide significance in order to determine whether it should be submitted to the Executive Elder Team or full Council of Elders.

How did these sections offend and how does removing them give better direction?

3. Another significant change appears to address the objective of creating “...a balance between organizational nimbleness and proper accountability and safeguards.” Now this seems to be the biggest deal but has gotten little discussion: the concentration of organizational power in the Executive Elders. The Full Council of Elders has been reduced to only two functions – voting on the Elected Elders of the Board of Directors (BOD) (presently 6 but no more than 7) and voting on changes to the church doctrinal statement. The Executive Elders (now 5 but no more than 6) now have life terms, they nominate and thereby are the gatekeeper for the BOD. They set the salaries (the BOD as a whole approves) for all BOD members (including themselves), that are employed by Mars Hill and they determine whether they work

for Mars Hill Church. So, they hire and fire the very elders that are responsible for holding them accountable and presently to remove an Executive Elder would take 8 of the 11. Please correct if I've got it wrong or explain how this provides/improves "proper accountability and safeguards" (especially considering the current "chilly" environment for "dissent" amongst elders).

4. The new Executive Elders – were they in those offices before the new Bylaws and had they gone through the examination and vote of the other elders or were the positions conferred upon them as part of the new Bylaws adoption? Since the BOD is a new construction the members must have been nominated new. Normally they would self-nominate but that couldn't have happened here so who put this slate forward?

5. Who was the primary author of the new Bylaws and changes? John Adams had help but was the chief architect of the US Constitution – who is our Adams?

6. Pastor Mike Wilkerson is noted on the Elders listing on the website as being an Executive Elder but he is not in the new Bylaw listing as such. Did he resign, was he removed for some cause or due to the new Bylaws process or what happened?

7. One Elected Elder is required to not be employed by MHC – why only one and what purpose, what protection does that provide?

8. Pastor Jamie indicated that the elders are submissive to spiritual authority through "accountable relationships" with godly pastors from other churches: what is an "accountable relationship"? Can we know who those pastors are, frequency of contact, what steps do they take to assess our church body, can we contact them or is it purely a personal, self-reporting process for the individual elders?

9. The old bylaws provided for quarterly financial statements to be provided to all elders, the new bylaws make no provision for financial information more frequently than annually. What will be the new distribution of financial statements and how does this new plan provide more accountability and safeguards?

Thank you elders for adding this measure of transparency and education, allowing us members to fulfill our duty of understanding the church governance that we submit ourselves and families to. Mark discussed how people can pursue information as a prideful effort to acquire power and he's right. Hoarding information can be the same thing. God admonishes us to seek understanding and this includes seeking information and also how we use it. Understanding our rights and responsibilities is part of engaged membership and something I've not pursued enough in the past. Jesse Winkler, when I recently asked for a copy of the bylaws said it couldn't be all that important to me since I hadn't had it for my four or so years of membership – that was a good word of warning to me. I don't think I've taken it seriously enough, thank you Pastor Jesse.

Pastor Mark listed 10 things to employ to encourage humility and fight pride – laughter is one. I have to confess, I'm always skeptical of any organization that would accept me as a member (wink) – I'm looking forward to learning more about this one.

Thank you Elders, for Jesus' Glory, Stan

whofman - Nov 04, 2007 - 09:06 PM

Post subject:

The old by-laws (and the new) impose many restrictions on the individual member – such as not being able to resign if under church discipline and the giving up of any civil recourse against the church. They also state that by signing the member's covenant the member is agreeing with the by-laws and the church's statement of faith. (Candidates having been approved by at least one church member must affirm by signature their agreement with the Doctrinal Statement and the Bylaws of Mars Hill Church)

Given these facts I ask the following:

- 1) Why have the by-laws been inaccessible to members when agreement to them is required to be a member? Would not this make these impositions on the members irrelevant and non-enforceable?
- 2) Should not every membership be held in suspension every time the by-laws are amended so that members can review the change and assert their agreement to it?
- 3) Is it just assumed that even though the vast majority of members have not seen the by-laws –that by signing the member's covenant (which does not state or imply agreement to the by-laws) they somehow intuitively are in agreement and agree to have their rights removed – such as the appeal to a civil court or the desire to leave?
- 4) Are all of the members of Mars Hill Church going to be asked to read the new by-laws and re-affirm membership – or is agreement just assumed or imposed on each member?
- 5) If a non-member who desires to become a member is asserting (by signing the covenant) that they agree to the by-laws, then it is clear that the by-laws need to be seen by non-members. This would necessitate that they be accessible to non-members. Why have members now being asked to keep the document non-accessible to non-members?
- 6) Seeing that membership requires agreement with the by-laws,
 - a) should every existing member carefully read the new by-laws and resign if they are not in full agreement with them as Pastor Paul did on Friday?
 - b) will every future amendment be presented to the members so that they can in good conscience resign if they do not agree with an amendment that occurs?

Pastor Jamie stated...”The primary functional objectives of the bylaw amendments are to: - Establish a more long range document that accurately reflects our vision and direction as a multi-campus church.”

We have been repeatedly told that the new by-laws were needed in order to establish a document that reflects and facilitates the multi-campus direction of the church. I am therefore more than surprised that the new by-laws completely fail to reflect the vision and direction of multi-campus. Why are they better than the old by-laws that do address the matter of “Site” pastors? “Campus” or “Site” is only mentioned twice in the entire new by-laws, yet the old by-laws more clearly deal with the campus-site issue (19 times). Have we been misled?

Instead the major difference between the old and new bylaws concerns elder authority. The regular elders are almost completely stripped of any actual authority. Under the old by-laws every elder had equal authority with any other elder – even though they delegated certain duties to the executive elders. Under the new by-laws, they only have constitutional authority to 1) vote on any doctrinal change and 2) affirm the slate of the board of director nominees each year. They cannot even nominate the elders who are elected to the board of directors – these are nominated by the unelected executive elders - 5 men. The rank and file elder can be fired at will – but it is almost impossible to remove a non-elected executive elder. The executive elders now have most of the ruling authority and their term has been lengthened from 2 years to a life term.

Was the passage of the new by-laws therefore a successful attempt to give the executive elders a disproportionate amount of power, and to render the role of regular elder essentially a non-ruling position?

If this is so, were we misled as to the urgency of, and the nature of the changes in the new bylaws?

Is this what Pastors Paul and Bent were, in fact, contending? This would explain why there were 2 elders that fell into “sin” at the same time, and why both were fired within days of filing their separate objections. I put “sin” in quotes because if this is the case, as seems evident, then I am grateful to them for attempting to stop a wrong-headed and far-reaching change in the bylaws, and rather disappointed that the other elders did not do likewise.

It would also explain why the “confidential information” was never specified. Was this really kept unclear because of fear of gossip, or because, identifying it as having to do with the proposed bylaws, would have raised questions as to why this was wrong, or sinful ...needing discipline.

It is clear that you, elders, are determined that you have handled things with Paul and Bent correctly, and that there is no need for repentance or correction. If it turns out that things have been handled rather poorly or perhaps sinfully, are you willing to reconsider? Paul and Bent have been charged with lack of trust, and we have been called upon to trust the elders; but, since no one is without sin, we can not trust elders not to make mistakes. And, just as wives' trust in their husbands depends much on the husbands, our trust in you is closely related to your actions and your willingness to repent when needed. There is a general unsettled feeling and unease among the members concerning the harsh treatment of two (perhaps three) beloved pastors. If it turns out that things have been handled rather poorly, or even sinfully, are you willing to reconsider?

tdietz - Nov 04, 2007 - 09:53 PM

Post subject:

The last month has been one of the most troubling times for us in our time at Mars Hill. The church is not a democracy nor is it a corporation - it is a family. And when something is broken we need to talk about it. It is obvious to us that there is a significant disconnect between the elders and the congregation. We offer these questions not out of idle curiosity or because we hold ourselves in higher esteem than we ought. Rather we ask these questions in hopes that our doubts and fears will be put to rest and we can continue to attend Mars Hill with a clear conscience and with full knowledge that our eldership and by-laws are biblical and trustworthy.

With Christ as our example,
Ted and Sarah Dietz

Regarding the Bylaws:

To reiterate questions already asked, what is the biblical premise for a hierarchy of elders (as detailed in the bylaws Articles IV, V, and VI) and what precautions have been put into place to safeguard against too much power in too few hands? Specifically citing Article VI Section G, is it a conflict of interest to have the executive elders as members of both the Executive Elder Team and the Board of Directors?

The bylaws describe elders as having a supervising elder (Article III Section C). Does every elder have a supervising elder? And how is it determined who supervises who? Do only Exec. Elders supervise other Exec. Elders?

In the bylaws it states that a staff elder or deacon's employment can be terminated without reason. What is the reason for this and how can it be explained biblically? (Article V Section F and Article VII Section D)

Would the elders have shared the new bylaws with the members if not for this current situation?

We would like to reiterate a question already posted regarding Article VI SECTION A –“The Executive Elder Team is a team of firsts among equals within the Council of Elders and is the executive leadership and management of Mars Hill Church.” What is the biblical explanation for the term “firsts among equals”? Where did this term originate from?

Regarding Article VIII- SECTION C- Number 3- “Those who are members of the church or who regularly participate in church activities may be dismissed from the church by the agreement of at least two elders. The dismissal of a church member may be made known to all church members.” How is this biblical? Matthew 18 clearly lays out how church discipline is to be conducted. Believers in sin are to be brought before the church with the intent to restore fellowship. Under this article someone may be dismissed with or without the congregation ever knowing about it. In my mind, the article above is clearly outside of the scriptural mandate. How many members have had their membership revoked without the congregation being notified or involved?

Regarding Paul Petry and Bent Meyer:

Under the new bylaws (Article IV Section A) only the Board of Directors has a vote in matters other than doctrinal issues and elder candidates. It was said that the approval of the bylaws and the decisions regarding Paul and Bent were unanimous. Does this mean the entire elder board was agreed or only the Board of Directors?

We would also like to reiterate the concern over the fairness of the trial of Bent and Paul. It appears that the accusers were also the judge and jury. Also, we would like to know why Matthew 18 was not exercised.

The language used to explain what happened with Paul and Bent was very slippery, and felt deceptive and secretive. We are baffled at how the pastors did not foresee what kind of effect this would have on the members. This combined with limited communication raises suspicions. Why did the elders choose to communicate only through the website? Why not send a letter to ensure that all the members would be informed?

What is going to happen to the two positions that are now vacant? Are they to be filled or is the money that paid their salaries going to be redirected? And if so, what is the justification for this?

To reiterate others – Why wasn't Bent restored to his staff position? What does an elder on probation entail?

The word trust has been used a lot. The accusations against Bent and Paul were an "unhealthy distrust" or "a lack of trust". Can you please explain how biblically this is grounds to dismiss an elder? And to go one step further, can you differentiate between distrust and a respectful dissent? After all, our Protestant tradition is based upon Martin Luther having a distrust of the spiritual authority in the Catholic church and then dissenting.

Please explain your use of the term "spiritual authority" and what this means biblically and within the context of Mars Hill.

Regarding communication and the relationship between the elders and the members:

This experience has underscored the already present feeling that a legitimate disagreement or concern will not be heard in good faith. In the future, how will the elder board handle disagreements or concerns among themselves or from members? How does the elder board plan to change the current climate of 'don't like it, then leave'?

This last month has been trying and stressful for our family due to how this was handled. We are distraught over the lack of pastoral care extended to the members during what we can only describe as a crisis. The communication with the members was vague, heavy handed, and lacked what the members really needed – assurance that this was being dealt with in the most upstanding and biblical way possible.

The explanation given for only 72 hours for this forum was "The reason for the short opening is that frankly we have many critical issues that have been placed on hold". This gives the impression that the elders do not believe this to be as important of a matter as it clearly is to the congregation. It also makes it appear as though the elders are simply placating the members by allowing us to ask questions. This is further underscored in the Ground Rules that the elders can choose to not answer any of the questions mentioned. At what point does the church's health outweigh other "critical issues"?

What measures does the elder board intend to take to restore trust among the growing number of members who are struggling with trusting them and/or the use of the governing by-laws?

Regarding the future of Mars Hill:

To use Pastor Mark's analogy, how is the Elder Board working towards closing the gap between the air war and the ground war?

What measures are being taken to ensure that the Mars Hill body is maturing in faith and not just growing in numbers?

dirvine - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:03 PM

Post subject:

I had some questions, then I started doing catch up with all the other posts and formal letters that have been sent. Wow, lot of stuff. What remains is this question to the elders, any elder: Who can risk with us his heart? What does it feel like all these questions of concern, anger, love, ambivalence and confusion? Not a tidy response that reads like a legal notice, but more your heart. I don't know if this is scary for you or exciting? Maybe a little hurt or pissed?

jerlawson - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:14 PM

Post subject:

How does the requirement of members signing agreement with the by-laws, in addition to the member covenant and the doctrinal statement, help the pastors fulfill their obligations to all church members as laid out in the member covenant? How does signing agreement to the new by-laws help members fulfill their obligations as laid out in the membership covenant? Do they? If we have gotten along fine without signing off on the old by-laws or even knowing what they were how does signing agreement to the new by-laws change things?

Would the pastors ever consider changing the doctrinal statement in the future? It seems like the one we have now is pretty good and probably won't even need to be changed.

Since the pastors have covenanted to provide teaching that will span the whole counsel of God's word can we get sermons from the Psalms and the major prophets? In the eight years I have been at Mars Hill I have not heard us go through these great parts of the biblical literature and I pray we can do so some time in the next few years.

Especially since Pastor Mark has said from the pulpit that Mars Hill sucks at singing I feel at liberty to say that based on the membership covenant the pastors have not yet fulfilled their obligation to preach through the whole of God's word by teaching from the Psalms and I look forward to hearing sermons from the Psalms in the future. If we really suck at singing and worship why haven't the pastors gone to the Scripture God has provided that can most help us as a church in an area of weakness?

Can we get more psalm settings integrated back into or corporate worship? Trust me, I'm not turning into some regulative principle freak but I miss the Psalm 63 and other Psalm settings we used to sing as a congregation sometimes.

Speaking as a former Mars Hill choir boy I'll vouch that we could be a lot better about congregational singing. My concern is that while the congregation may have failed in this the pastors have not yet gotten up to bat and preached through some biblical literature that could help us as a church recover from this. If we go through the Psalms and stuff like Isaiah 40 as a church we will have stuff to sing about.

I want to thank the pastors again for giving us an opportunity to ask questions and to read the by-laws.

jyoungs - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:16 PM

Post subject:

I am aware of at least 12 licensed attorneys within the membership of Mars Hill Church. Out of that number, at least a third of us have significant corporate and/or organizational experience, and several of us have practiced in the arena of non-profit governance. I am certain that if asked by the Elders of Mars Hill church, I and most, if not all of my colleagues would be willing to serve the church and the Elders in this fashion. We are well aware that these ongoing issues have taken up significant pastoral and staff time already.

In the interest of giving the Elders the opportunity to respond to the questions as completely and thoroughly as they desire, would it be helpful to have a team of us organize these questions and assist in the responses?

jmallory - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:20 PM

Post subject:

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns. Please know that my appreciation for the work and sacrifice of the leadership of this church is far greater than the concerns listed here.

I too concur with Dwayne and Doug's thoughts. And I appreciate Stan's questions as well.

Probably redundant, but these are my concerns:

Quote "It was unanimously decided that Paul Petry was in violation of the biblical qualifications of eldership and further resolved that Paul should be removed as an elder of Mars Hill Church."

Honestly, unanimous votes make me nervous. In the past this has always been touted as a positive indication of the unity of our church leadership. Lately though, I have begun to have doubts in regards to this issue.

When you have a unanimous vote, it seems two options are available:

- 1.) The elders are truly unified and on the exactly same page or
- 2.) Those who disagree do not air their concerns out of fear of retribution.

Of course it is the latter which concerns me. Is a culture of fear and elitism being perpetuated through the leadership of Mars Hill? Personally I would take far greater comfort in knowing our elders, deacons and members are allowed to respectfully disagree and air their concerns. There is a world of difference between divisiveness and respectfully disagreeing. What is being done to foster an environment of healthy, humble correction and feedback?

Regardless of the final decisions of the elders, many members sense a veil of secrecy around the major decisions of the church. This is completely irrespective of whether or not the elders believe they are correct. The reality is this secrecy has the potential to cause just as much resentment and division as being more forthright with the latest events. What are we doing to address this issue?

We are told Mars Hill is not a democracy. There appears to be a certain pride in this. Why? Why must our Executive Elders wield so much power? I understand that it is important to have a shared vision to carry the most impact, but does such a concentration of power not also leave us dangerously open to rule by oligarchy? What checks and balances do we have in place for the Executive Elders?

It seems odd to me that both corporations and our government contain significantly more internal checks and balances than our own church. Is there a justification for this? This may not be a democracy, but don't people in essence vote one way or another? Won't members simply vote with their actions - leave the church, stop serving, etc.?

If we have no say in any of the decisions of the church or even privy to information, how is this helpful? I think we all agree that leadership must make tough decisions that perhaps the entire congregation would be unwilling to make. But if we also have no say in who becomes elders and who does not, what rights do the members ultimately have? Personally this leaves me feeling untrusted and powerless. Lately it feels like we have gone even farther than having no say, we are not even trusted with the information. What steps are the elders taking to ensure members are an integral part in casting the vision and direction of the church?

I hope and pray that the Elders take the concerns of the members seriously. I am amazed how quickly an organization, whether in work or in ministry can turn caustic when leadership is perceived as heavyhanded (though I am not insinuating that this is occurring already).

Lastly I will say it has been extremely important to balance my concerns with the direction and leadership of the church with my own personal focus on Jesus Christ. I pray that we may all carry the gospel in every circumstance and amidst every distraction.

Thankyou

dforehand - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:34 PM

Post subject:

I have one more question after reading Stans post. I was actually thinking of what I am about to ask a few weeks ago and considered asking an Elder then but thought I'd be a burden. I want to preface this with something though. I have a question about an idea that I had for an addition to the new bylaws. What I am not doing is trying to tell you what to do. I am not saying this idea is such a good one that if you don't implement it I'll question your wisdom. Nothing like that. It just seemed so obvious to me that I'd assume that you guys have discussed it and dismissed it and I was hoping to find out the reasoning for that. So here goes . . .

I understand why having the full counsel of elder meetings as specified by the old bylaws was not nimble. I mean any single Elder could call for a full council meeting at any time for any reason. With all due respect all of our Elders are godly men who have been gifted with wisdom among other things, but even so I don't doubt that sometimes one thinks something is more important than it really is and so full counsel meetings could get triggered way too often. I get that and I am guessing that's why they were considered a barrier to nimbleness as Jesus continues to grow this church and thus grow the number of Elders that could have triggered these meetings.

At the same time though I *really* liked the idea of the full counsel of Elders having the ultimate say in things. It really made me feel safe in that if, God forbid, some of our Elders ever fell into really bad sin or were just making an extremely unwise decision that was detrimental to the church that an all elder meeting could be called that could redeem the situation. Even the phrase "full council of Elders" sounds . . . weighty.

I see both the positive side and the negative side I think: 1) The lack of nimbleness they provide as we grow in our number of elders and 2) the end all, be all safe guard that they are.

Given that, why didn't you simply change *how* they got called. For example, you could of required that (I'll just pick a number) 40% of the Elders were required to even call a meeting. That number could be more or less as seems wise, but the point is you can prevent the meetings from getting triggered for silly reasons. Technically they could still get triggered for silly reasons if 40% of the Elders thought the silly reason was important, but that would reveal a whole bigger problem that probably needs to get dealt with anyways and you'd just so happen to be having a meeting soon where it could be dealt with.

If something like that was amended then it seems you'd have the best of both the worlds: The nimbleness of not being weighed down by huge, long, regular meetings and the safeguard of the full council of Elders being the final court.

Again, I want to stress that I am not asking why you didn't do this, because "of course anyone with any brains would have" but because I think you guys are wise and probably did kick an idea like that around and decided it wouldn't work and I'd like to know why.

When I read the old by laws a few months ago I found great assurance when I read about the full council of elders being able to veto any and all things. Because of that it would be nice to know why it couldn't have been kept using some sort of clause like the one I described above.

Thanks again.

jyoungs - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:35 PM

Post subject:

We all can and have asked specific questions regarding specific matters, which deserve the respect of honest, direct answers. That being said, James Mallory's post above captures the heart and the spirit of the issues at hand, and we look forward to a response to his questions as well.

Stan and Julia Youngs

dharder - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:39 PM

Post subject:

One last question that about by-laws: Is it normal to co-mingle church discipline with legal sanctions? Shouldn't these be separate issues? Surely we can deal with problems of gossip or slanderous talk etc within the church. The way it is set up now, we've created an actual legal sanction for merely contradicting the opinion of the elders.

tchamberlin - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:42 PM

Post subject:

I realize that I have posted already but I must emphatically say I agree with all of Ted's concerns.

In addition: Will a public detailed explanation be given as to why any of these questions are not answered?

I am very grateful for this opportunity. Please know we are praying for all the Elders and Mars Hill.

enicholson - Nov 04, 2007 - 10:58 PM

Post subject:

I have not been able to keep up with this thread, but I want to voice my questions. Sorry if they are exactly the same as others, but even though I did see some questions in the same general category, I didn't see some specific things.

First of all I thank God for the men that he has brought up to lead our local church on the mission that Jesus has called us to. I do highly respect each and every one of you and I know that God has put each of you where he is, or is not for a very specific reason. So for that, Praise be to God.

Here are my questions:

1) What system/process/accountability is in place regarding making decisions for specific monetary purchases? In asking that I am wondering, who governs each of the budgets and decides if the money that has already been allocated, is used in a way that is most beneficial and glorifying to Jesus? Who or what keeps a group from buying something that is cool, just because they "need" it? In addition, how do we as a church evaluate our spending based on our mission? (where your treasure is, there will your heart be also). As I see it, we spend a significant amount of money on productions, much (even most) of which is well spent, but how do you balance spending on something as costly as productions, with spending on something as important counseling or community group?

2) How formal is the accountability of the elders? What relationships are in place to make sure that an elder is investing the into the people that he oversees, and not simply telling them to do better without giving them the tools and encouragement and counsel they need to succeed.

3) Where is the balance, what is our take on trying to be better than other churches? What are we doing to make sure that our focus does not shift from Jesus Christ to Mark Driscoll or cool videos or awesome band or flashy lights? How do those things fit into our mission to reach as many people as possible with the Gospel? When do we have to worry about crossing the line from being missional, to trying to sell more than just Jesus?

In asking these questions, I by no means intend to imply that I know the answers, but I do hope that the questions have been or will be thought about.

Thank you all again for your faith and dedication to the Gospel. You are a great encouragement to me.

God Bless you all,
Enoch.

estrong - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:20 PM

Post subject:

1) What vetting process do businesses promoted in the Business Directory section of the Mars Hill Members website go through? As a follow up, what recourse does a customer/client have if they believe good business ethics were not followed by a business listed?

2) It seems there has been a shift away from involving church members on a certain level with the strategic plan or direction since the members' meeting and dedication at the second building acquired in Ballard. There is a perception of less information disseminated regarding the use of that building or building funds since that time, while members have less of a voice in any step along the way. And judging from the tone of many questions in this forum, people are hesitant to ask questions or add input (on this or other issues) for fear of reprisal. Therefore, what incentive does one have to become a Mars Hill member (other than access to the members' site)?

Thank you,

Elliot & Daytona Strong

tdietz - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:29 PM

Post subject:

Referencing Joy Forehand's post from earlier today:

Quote:

"And beat some of them! Now, he's an older guy and he's beating up certain members of his church. What do we do with that? I'll tell you what I'd like to do with that. I'd like to follow in his example. There's a few guys right now, that if I wasn't going to end up on CNN, I would go old testament on them, even in leadership in this church."

Did Pastor Mark really say this?

cengler - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:33 PM

Post subject:

Is Mars Hill part of any independent financial organizations such as the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA.org)? If so, how long have we been a member and of which organizations? If not, is this something that we may do in the future? I apologize if this has already been asked. The questions on the board have gotten away from me in terms of being able to read through them all.

dkirkpatrick - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:36 PM
Post subject:

I've been watching this thread every day since it went up and I've read almost every post in detail. I'm posting now not to ask a question but just to show where my heart is in all of this. In many ways, Mars Hill is my life. Everything going on lately has weighed heavily on me. Of all the posts, Ted Dietz's post really does the best job of conveying what I'm thinking and feeling about all of this. I'd been resigned to not posting at all on this thread, but that didn't seem right because I have many of the same concerns and questions that have come up repeatedly.

pastorjamie - Nov 04, 2007 - 11:37 PM
Post subject:

Thank you for your questions. We will now compile and begin to answer them, I can't promise but our hope is to have a completed document to distribute to the members by this coming Friday.

We will seek to answer every question with a Biblical response according to 2 Timothy 3:16 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” As your elders answer the questions we will be praying for humility, wisdom and discernment to know when to teach, when to rebuke, when to correct and when to train.

As Pastor Mark preached from Philippians 2 today, please join us in the pursuit of humility as we personally repent of our pride and seek to make Jesus' name great in our midst.

Pastor Jamie
