

Dear elder board,

My name is Sandy Song and for those who don't know me, I have been on staff at Harvest since 2002 working in the worship department, HBF, and most recently I was sent out by Harvest to serve as a missionary with our Eastern European and Malaysian church plants. I was overseas for 7 years and returned back to Harvest Chicago as the short-term missions coordinator exactly 1 year ago at Luke MacDonald's request due to the lack of HBF staff and the need for someone to oversee all the short-term mission trips in 2018.

Before I go on to talk about some of the things I have seen in my tenure at Harvest, I feel I need to say that I deeply care for Pastor James. I am truly thankful to him for the ministry opportunities and support that he has personally given to me over the years. I have seen spiritual revival happen all around the world as a result of Harvest's ministry, and this church has played a critical role in my own spiritual development over the last 17 years. I am thankful to James for all that he has done for Harvest and the role this church has played in so many lives around the world. However, I write this statement because I have also seen how a lack of repentance, inappropriate behavior and absence of true accountability has had negative consequences for our own church and our domestic and international church plants resulting in church splits, broken relationships and confused/hurting church members all around the world. James himself has said that truth and time go hand in hand, and I believe that now is the time when total truth is being sought after and we are forced to deal with the unpleasant consequences as a result of these truths coming to light. I believe so many are coming forward these days because the same problems we encountered almost 20 years ago are still happening today. There are 2 areas that I would like to address regarding what I have witnessed over the years:

Fear culture/explosive anger

James is an incredibly smart man and I believe any man who leads a large church or business would most likely be a man who has high expectations of his employees and is a visionary person who pushes people beyond what they believe they are capable of doing. Harvest has always been a culture where we work hard. However, James has created a culture of fear, especially for those who work closely with him. That circle of people has grown smaller and smaller over the years in an effort to minimize the number of people who are in the direct line of fire of James' anger, but his behavior has remained the same. Loyalty has been prioritized over righteousness and although many of us have witnessed ungodly behavior, we have learned to simply let it go and believe James to be the ultimate authority over us. We have learned that talking to our supervisors or even the elders is not only discouraged, but it could cost us our jobs because we are unwilling to go with the flow and are seen as disloyal. James has instilled a culture in his employees that what he wants must happen at that very moment no matter the cost. Failure to do so means being humiliated or reprimanded in front of others – being belittled in a way that no person, especially at a church, should ever feel. The fear of this happening causes upper level staff to then put undue pressure on their subordinates to fulfill last-minute and often outlandish requests in order to make James happy. I have seen multiple occasions where James has lost his temper and has screamed and even cursed at employees because he did not get what he wanted. I have heard many stories of James' anger and some of the things he has said to people. I choose not to list specific names here in case they do not want to be involved. However, of the dozens of stories I have either witnessed or heard, I have never heard of James cycling back to apologize to these people. I believe this is the big picture of why James has so many broken relationships today. When employees make mistakes, it is

understandable that they must be talked to so that they can learn from these mistakes and grow in their capabilities. However, due to his status as the senior pastor of this mega-church, I believe that he views humiliating and belittling people as a normal way of reprimanding their mistakes. This is why he never cycles around to apologize for his words/actions. I have personally witnessed this in the worship department, working for HBF as well as hearing about the ongoing conflict with GCC.

I saw the leader of the worship department change almost yearly while I was working there (2002-2006) because that person had too much stress due to working so directly with James with something as important as the weekend services. I have had to comfort grown men after some of their encounters with James and have seen some of them even reduced to tears because of stress and anxiety. I had seen James' anger when we used to meet weekly to plan and review services back when our entire department was part of every meeting. When mistakes were made, people were humiliated in front of an audience in order to shame people to be better at their jobs. It would often happen that people were blamed for things they had no control over or had followed James' instructions but he did not remember the conversation or had changed his mind and told no one. I went on many of the Walk in the Word tours before Vertical Worship came into existence. I was also part of most of the Downpour/Lifeway events. We worked at a frantic pace because plans would so often change due to James' mood or change of heart. But I believe the biggest frustration for people was doing exactly what James said but being blamed for the outcome or realizing that he did not remember what he had said. After 4 years of working in this department, I quit and moved overseas to be a missionary. I returned two years later but moved to a different department.

I was part of the Risen for the Nations world tour in 2015. There were 8 of us who went on that trip. 4 of those people either quit or were fired within months of the tour. Only James, Jeff Donaldson and I still remain on staff. On that trip, I need to say that James was always kind to me personally. That trip was hard on everyone because we were changing countries and time zones every few days and it was very tiring for everyone. James was perpetually late almost every day for meetings and even church services. Even though he was informed the night before and the morning of what the schedule was, he chose to follow his own program. This caused us to have to change plans, transportation and even delay church services with people already present because he was not around. We were consistently having to figure out a Plan B because he would not show up in the lobby dressed on time. And he would often be upset at the new plan because it did not meet his expectations. I traveled with 4 men daily and I saw the stress they were under because of being yelled at regularly and made to feel incompetent. They hardly slept more than just a few hours almost every night of that 4-week tour due to having to work around the clock and re-adjust to what James wanted. This caused a breakdown in their relationships with one another due to not wanting to receive the blame from James and it made the entire tour miserable. One example of James' irrational behavior was when we were in Kenya. It was the inaugural service for their new building. We had been working around the clock because the church building did not even have any electrical power until the night before. We had planned to have 2 services. James showed up an hour late for the first service with hundreds of people in attendance. Prior to the second service, he decided that he wanted to have a baptism service. The church did not have a baptismal. The pastor had called around and found a church down the street that had a baptismal and would allow us to use their building. James insisted that the baptisms must happen on site and grew very irate. So during the second service, several of us were scrambling around trying

to find a solution. They ended up cutting down a neighbor's water tank from their house. It was drought season in Kenya and it was unclear how soon he would be able to replace it to have running water in his house. Of course we left the man with money to replace it, but this is just one of many pressures that we were under to make something happen with little notice and unreasonable expectations. And because people kill themselves to try and make these things happen, this becomes the norm and James is allowed to continue with this behavior. Another example is when James was flying from Israel to Malaysia. I do not know the specific circumstances, but James caused a scene on the airplane and got himself kicked off the flight. Upon arrival in Malaysia, rather than simply take the blame or even say nothing, he blamed HBF staff for booking him on a bad flight and claimed it was a missed layover. He consistently called HBF staff at all hours of the night demanding flight itineraries be changed because there was a layover longer than 2 hours or because he simply did not want to stay any longer.

Regarding his ongoing conflict with GCC, I believe everyone is in agreement that he should not have shut down HBF the way that he did. I also believe that everyone is in agreement that HBF staff should not have been treated the way they were after the shutdown happened. The impact of how that was handled and the ongoing harassment of ex-HBF employees caused several of them to have medical issues due to stress and it destroyed them emotionally. I believe that so much of that conflict could have been salvaged by a simple heartfelt apology from James, not even necessarily for the decision itself but for how it was handled. Harvest keeps claiming that GCC refuses to reconcile, but the refusal is because James tried repeatedly to send in XLT to deal with the situation. GCC has been saying that they do not recognize XLT as the leadership of the church and they wanted to meet with James and the entire elder board. This request was refused. Our entire network of 175 churches was thrown into utter turmoil because of a refusal to apologize and to reconcile the problem in the right way.

Financial carelessness

The other area I want to address is how finances at Harvest have been handled over the years. I believe legally we might be in the clear, but this does not mean that financial mismanagement did not take place.

The World Tour in 2015 took place when our church debt was probably near its peak. James traveled first class or with private planes to every destination and always had at least one person travel with him in first class. He would go on lavish excursions and eat at fancy restaurants and we paid a lot of money in change fees on flights because he was not happy with the itinerary even though it was presented to him prior to leaving for approval. At the end of the tour, he wanted to leave Haiti on Sunday night after service to go home, but his flight was scheduled on Monday. He was told that planes would not fly out of Jacmel because the runway was too short. He had HBF staff call the Haitian government to offer money to build a longer runway so that the plane would leave from there. When this request was refused numerous times, he had them call Missionary Aviation Fellowship which flies small private planes. Because they are a Christian organization, they do not fly on Sundays. However, enough money was offered to them to break their long-standing rule to fly James from Jacmel to Port-au-Prince so that he did not have to wait another day to fly home. I do not know the total sum of money that was spent on that tour, but I do believe all of the monies came from HBF funds.

When HBF was in existence, all of their funding came from the 10% that came from HBF churches along with private donors who wanted to support church planting. I worked specifically with our international churches. Some churches gave above and beyond their 10% because they were so enthusiastic about overseas missions. As I was living in Romania, I kept hearing about how funds that were designated specifically for missions had been used for HBC purposes, whether large or small and we were consistently having to fundraise and find more money for projects we had committed to at the beginning of the financial year. The biggest example of this is the \$500,000 of HBF money that was used for the tech upgrade at HBC. I know there is some overlap as to who actually benefitted from this upgrade, but the bottom line is that money that was given specifically for international church planting was used for another purpose and HBF staff was put under pressure to raise more money to cover the deficit. Explaining to other HBF churches why they needed more money put them in a difficult ethical dilemma because they were asked to make up reasons for why they needed additional funds. Although this management of funds was not necessarily illegal in the eyes of the law, it definitely puts in question the moral standards we have for managing funds.

In conclusion, I just wanted to say that I had an opportunity to leave Harvest prior to coming back on staff a year ago and was encouraged to do so by many, but I returned for two reasons: 1) loyalty to James and a desire to help Harvest through the absence of any HBF staff and 2) a desire to see with my own eyes whether or not lessons had been learned and wanting to see major changes moving forward. The past 12 months have shown me that despite the struggles of the last 7 years and especially after seeing the dissolution of HBF, nothing has changed. A plurality of elders still are not involved in major church decisions, James' behavior continues to go unchecked and the culture of the staff at Harvest remains the same. I was asked to write this statement and it truly grieves me to do so, but being a long-time staff member, I feel obligated before the Lord to share what I have seen in the hopes that the fruit of Harvest Bible Chapel, not just James MacDonald, can continue to grow. Harvest has been instrumental in the spiritual growth of tens of thousands of people and for the sake of these sheep, a close examination of how we have done things and some radical changes need to take place in order to lead the sheep to solid ground and greener pastures.