

Fwd: An Important Message From Pastor Brian Houston

1 message

[REDACTED]
To: Julie Roys [REDACTED]

Fri, Feb 12, 2021 at 8:29 PM

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: February 12, 2021 at 9:57:32 AM EST
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: An Important Message From Pastor Brian Houston

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Brian Houston [REDACTED]
Date: February 12, 2021 at 8:09:32 AM EST
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: An Important Message From Pastor Brian Houston
Reply-To: Brian Houston [REDACTED]

Dear Church,

I am writing to you today after a particularly difficult period in the life of our Hillsong East Coast church. I want you to know that I have prayed regularly for you and the challenges you have faced. Bobbie and I, as well as our global church leadership, are extremely saddened by the current situation, and we know that many of you feel the same way.

In this season, our team has faced the difficult task of providing care for a devastated community in a global pandemic while simultaneously addressing very serious issues.

The transition of leadership at Hillsong East Coast late last year was absolutely necessary, but it has also been painful. Among other things, this transition revealed ways in which our culture there did not align with that of our church's global core beliefs and culture, which have undergirded Hillsong's work since the beginning.

During this transition, I want you to know that all along the way, we have tried to understand and address our organizational weaknesses and mistakes so that our church can move forward to a healthier place. We have a lot of work still to do at Hillsong East Coast.

In December of last year, following the termination of our Lead Pastor in New York, we engaged an independent third-party law firm named Zukerman Gore Brandeis & Crossman, LLP, to provide a comprehensive investigation of the issues we faced at Hillsong East Coast, including its culture. We granted Zukerman Gore unfettered access to all relevant personnel, records, and correspondence. This was done to ensure that we did not interfere with the process in any way.

Over the last several weeks, investigators performed hours of confidential interviews with current and former staff, volunteers and church members. The goal of this inquiry was to provide a full and complete picture of Hillsong East Coast's culture so that we could identify our past weaknesses, make necessary changes to address any failings, and realign our East Coast church with Hillsong's heart and core values.

As part of that investigation, in order to encourage people to come forward and speak candidly, our attorneys assured everyone that their comments would be kept confidential and would only communicate to the extent necessary to permit the Board of the church to understand the issues and promote change.

The investigation has officially concluded, and the Hillsong Global Board of Directors is currently discussing what we've learned and formulating a comprehensive action plan. The church will of course continue to respect the privacy of those interviewed, but we can, and will, share each step we are taking to implement changes.

I'm sorry to say that we found significant ways that Hillsong East Coast culture has failed to reflect Hillsong global culture in the past. Every Hillsong location must honor our commitment to creating a caring and healthy environment for our team, volunteers and members.

Under the previous lead pastor, this was not always the case. Serious concerns and incidents must never be ignored. When problems arise,

proper and effective reporting mechanisms must be in place. And proper guidelines should be enforced. And when failings occur, especially among senior leaders, they must be addressed.

Although I wasn't aware of the moral failures until late last year, I regret that I did not deal with the leadership issue much earlier. I chose to trust at times when I should have taken more decisive action. I gave the benefit of the doubt when I shouldn't have. Our global team is determined to reflect carefully on what we've learned and make any changes necessary, even difficult ones, to guarantee that all our leaders are held to the highest standard.

Let me be clear about our Hillsong East Coast locations: The vast majority of staff and volunteers who keep our churches running have behaved admirably. Your energy and enthusiasm have carried our church through these difficult waters. Bobbie and I could not be more grateful for you.

Thank you for being patient with us as we worked to find new leadership for Hillsong East Coast. We are very pleased to let you know that the search process has concluded, and we will be announcing the new Lead Pastor this Sunday during our Vision Sunday presentation. We have been diligent and prayerful in this process, and we are confident that you will fall in love with these steady and seasoned leaders.

As we continue to discuss how best to move forward, I am making three commitments to you:

- 1 You will be informed first about the cultural change that we will make for Hillsong East Coast. Now that we have a clearer picture of how we need to move forward, I will be sending you another update shortly about where we are in the process of realigning our church culture.

2. In addition to cultural changes, we will be implementing significant structural changes and enacting new policies and procedures in order to rectify the issues we've uncovered. I plan to address this more comprehensively in my next email to you

3. My heart is with you, as is Bobbie's. As we finalize plans to implement new Lead Pastors, our work begins afresh with hope, purpose, clarity, and the greatest of all love. We intend to love greatly as we rebuild trust with you. I promise you that our entire team will work hard to earn it.

As we prepare the way for new leadership for Hillsong East Coast, we will also make room for God to work in new ways for our Church. We are confident that our best days are ahead.



With love,

Brian Houston
Global Senior Pastor



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