

November 3, 2021

Dear friends at Bethlehem,

Mickey and I (Hannah) are concerned about what has happened at Bethlehem. We started asking questions after three downtown pastors resigned. We went to all the public meetings, talked to a few people present at key events, and asked the elders questions. We have grown increasingly concerned as we've learned more about what has happened, both in 2021 and in years past.

In late September we sent a letter to the elders sharing our concerns and asking for an independent investigation into the culture at Bethlehem. We had two in-person meetings with elders regarding our concerns (one before the letter, and one after), and we invited them to correct anything in this letter. We are the latest in a long line of people in the last 6-12 months who have pleaded with the elders to address these concerns. We are now sharing our letter publicly in order to:

- 1) get things into the light,
- 2) stand with those who have been hurt, and
- 3) persuade Bethlehem that a 3rd party, independent investigation is necessary.

Though our letter focuses on the elders' misuse of power and pattern of questionable actions this year, we are just as concerned about the number of people who have been hurt by Bethlehem, both recently and in years past. We believe that unless something dramatically changes, people will continue to be hurt at Bethlehem and at Bethlehem College and Seminary (BCS).

We realize some people just want to move on. It's been a hard year. These problems are messy. Engaging is hard. But we believe that until the root issues are dealt with properly, harm will continue, and the problems will repeat.

After you read our letter, here are some next actions to consider:

- Email your elder and ask him to pursue a 3rd party investigation.
- Share this letter with friends at Bethlehem. This is especially helpful at North and South campus, where we don't know as many people. You have our full permission to email or share it on social media.
- Reach out to those who have left Bethlehem or been hurt by Bethlehem and offer to hear their story. That can be really healing for those who have been hurt. Members can email the church for a list of members who have left in the last year.
- Learn more about misuse of power. We're reading the three books mentioned on page 8 and finding them very helpful in describing what a healthy church culture can look like.
- Talk to the elders you know. If this letter raises any questions or concerns in your mind, reach out to your elder and ask him about it.
- Pray for Bethlehem (for the elders, for repentance where that is needed, for healing for people who have been hurt, and for good reforms going forward).

We love Bethlehem and want to see things brought into the light so that harm can stop and healing can happen.

Take care,  
Hannah and Mickey Sheu

# **An Invitation and a Plea: An Open Letter to the Elders of Bethlehem Baptist Church**

## **Executive Summary**

We love Bethlehem and have been deeply invested here for many years. We are grateful for its many fruitful ministries. But after what has come to light this year, we are concerned that Bethlehem has an undiagnosed illness and desperately needs treatment. We understand that no church is perfect, but we strongly believe the issues at hand go far beyond the “we need to improve communication” or “this is normative sin” that the elders have been claiming. We think a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent investigation is necessary to provide a diagnosis and a path to healing. We are writing this letter to get the problems into the light and as a plea to the elders for an independent investigation.

### **Our Concerns:**

- Ming-Jinn Tong had concerns about unethical behavior by the elders in dismissing grievances without an investigation.
- Jason Meyer had concerns about a culture of charges, institutional protectionism, and unity culture.
- Bryan Pickering and Gretchen Spencer (Lead Admin downtown) had concerns about bullying, domineering behavior, and spiritual abuse at Bethlehem.
- Multiple reports identifying concerns have been either buried or minimized.
- Many people have been hurt at Bethlehem by the elders’ actions (or inactions). They’ve been hurt in 2021, and they’ve been hurt in years past. People who raise good faith concerns often get sidelined, ignored, or shut down. They often leave deeply wounded, there is minimal or zero follow-up, and the same patterns repeat.
- BCS faces many similar issues, including multiple resignations, using non-disparagement agreements, and suppression of reports. Students and faculty appeal to the Bethlehem elders and instead of being helped, their concerns are minimized and they are further harmed.
- Many longtime members have recently left the church because of these same concerns, some deeply wounded by Bethlehem.
- And yet in light of all these things, the elders have not publicly owned their role in these problems, admitted wrongdoing, or repented.
- Instead, in the elder communication around this “hard season,” we have seen minimal communication, evasion, minimizing, and half-truths.

Something is not right. These problems are longstanding and deeply rooted in the Bethlehem culture. And because elders and members entrenched in the system have blind spots, an outside perspective is critical. We believe an independent investigation is necessary for an accurate diagnosis and a path to healing.

We realize some congregants just want to move on. They are busy. They might hope this storm will pass if they don’t engage. Someone else will fix it. But inaction is its own choice, and the

consequence is that people will continue to get hurt. We believe that until this illness is diagnosed and treated, harm will continue. When people are sick, they don't just ignore it and hope for the best. They take medicine, and if that doesn't work they go to a doctor. They get diagnosed and treated, so they can move forward healthier and stronger. We pray for this same long-term health for Bethlehem.

### **Our Request:**

We request that the elders commission a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent investigation into the leadership culture and allegations of domineering and spiritual abuse at Bethlehem. An investigation can help Bethlehem diagnose the problem properly and suggest healthy steps forward. It will be costly (time, energy, and money), but if it can help stop the harm, it will be well-worth it. It can also serve as an endpoint. Once this independent analysis is completed, and appropriate actions have been taken, Bethlehem can move forward stronger and healthier. The heartache of this year doesn't have to be wasted or repeated. Let's bring all the problems into the light so that healing can happen.

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Dear Bethlehem Elders,

Mickey and I (Hannah) feel deeply grieved about what is happening at Bethlehem. Three pastors have resigned. Former staff and pastors have raised concerns about bullying and spiritual abuse. Many people have been hurt by Bethlehem, and many of them have given up and left in frustration. And against this backdrop, we see the leadership responding with minimal communication, half-truths, and seeming institutional protection. We think that something's not right.

Yet we also think this is a golden opportunity for Bethlehem to fix some of these unhealthy dynamics. Other organizations are coming to terms with their own institutional problems, and if Bethlehem can respond well, it could model a healthy and life-giving way to respond to these dynamics. It could model how the gospel frees us to own our sin, repent of it, and find healing, both personally and at an institutional level. It could help bring healing to those who have been hurt by the church. We see this as an incredible opportunity for good to come out of all the heartache at Bethlehem this year.

## **Our Story**

Why am I writing this? I have not been directly hurt by Bethlehem, but we have become deeply concerned about what has happened. I am an ordinary person in the pew who loves Bethlehem and loves the people who have left. I attended all the public meetings downtown between January and October, and when we had questions we followed up by talking to a few people in our network (including elders). As best we can tell, almost everything in our list of concerns came from either the public meetings, documents now publicly available online, or our conversation with Daniel Kleven. (Appendix A explains why he was such a helpful source.) Daniel said we could share anything he said with anyone, and that we could put his name to it. His candor was refreshing.

When the three pastors resigned this summer, Mickey and I were grieved, but concerned mostly about the direction of the church rather than thinking something was seriously wrong. We felt a deep affinity for Ming-Jinn, Bryan, and Jason, and so we felt really sad to picture Bethlehem without them. However, the details that have emerged since then are sobering. They have pushed our concerns to a much deeper level. We are now concerned about patterns of behavior by the elders that seem not only questionable, but in some cases morally objectionable. These actions by the elders have started to undermine our trust in the leadership at Bethlehem.

## **Our Confusion and Our History with Bethlehem**

What is most baffling to us is that the elders' actions seem so inconsistent with the Bethlehem we thought we knew and loved. So much of the seeming cover-up and institutional protection seems out of line with the gospel hope that our sins can be forgiven. It's at Bethlehem that we learned we can be open and honest about our own sin. I specifically remember learning this from Amy Wass when she and Jared shared the Gospel Circle diagram in a marriage class. I remember being shocked she was so aware of her own sin and shocked she was willing to talk about it in front of a group. It's at Bethlehem that we learned the depth and riches and far-

reaching application of the gospel. Christians of all people can be honest about our failures. So why does it seem that there has been hiding and minimizing of sin by the leadership, from whom we learned these things?

We feel deeply invested at Bethlehem. I (Hannah) have been at Bethlehem since 2000. I was baptized here. I regularly see people at church that I've known for 20 years. For 6 years Bethlehem financially supported me as a U.S.-based global partner. Mickey has been here since 2009 (though because of his convictions about infant baptism, he can't be a member). He graduated from Bethlehem Seminary in 2013 (and had a wonderful experience there!). We were married by a Bethlehem pastor. We've been part of a small group for the duration of our time here, including co-leading our current small group the last 4 years. This small group has been such a gift to us. We are on two Barnabas teams. We have a huge network of friends at Bethlehem. This church has been home and family for us. When we had our miscarriages, we shared it with various pastors and friends at Bethlehem. When we heard of other miscarriages, we brought meals (and made new friends). We attended weekend intensives and took classes. Mickey taught Arcing as a TBI class and Math for Bethlehem College. I did MOMS for 7 years (and served as a table host for 2), and we spoke there together in 2019. We volunteered in Senior High and nursery. We care about this church, which is why we want so much for these things to be put right.

## **Our Goal**

Our goal in compiling this document is to put our concerns on paper so that we can bring them to the elders as clearly as possible. We also have some requests for the elders (below). This letter is an invitation to repent and a plea for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation.

## **A Few Caveats**

I want to say upfront that I respect and appreciate the Bethlehem elders. I have known many of them for 5, 10, or 20 years. They are godly men, and I could say good things about each of the ones I know. I'm grateful for the hours they have poured into shepherding our church, especially these past few months.

I admit it feels uncomfortable to me to have a detailed list with specific names and actions. However, my goal is to document a pattern of behavior. I don't know how else to do that other than to list all the examples I'm aware of and to be as specific as possible. I've done my best to double check facts and cite sources. If any of my facts are wrong, please let me know. My goal is not to pin specific people with specific sins, as it seems that the problem may be as much with the elder culture as with any individual. I realize any given elder could probably look at this list and say, "I didn't do 95% of these things, so I have nothing to repent of." But collectively the elders have done these things, and so I'm hoping that collectively they can put them right.

Also, while we acknowledge that we deeply love the three pastors who resigned, we know they are sinners too, and there are things we wish they had done differently. (And we appreciate that the elders are working so hard to speak charitably of them even while being asked pointed questions.) We also acknowledge that we are sinners too. I've been trying to empathize with the

elders by imagining how I would feel if my sins were being publicized on Twitter and *Christianity Today*.

Our list of concerns is probably incomplete, and it may well emphasize the wrong things. I focus on the public events this year, because that's what prompted my concerns and it's what I know firsthand. But we also wanted to include some of the stories of those who have been hurt, as this has fueled our desire for these wrongs to be put right. Also, my main focus is on the church, because I am a member, but there is so much overlap with the school (and Mickey was a seminary graduate) that I wanted to include those concerns too. I've put the BCS concerns in a separate section. This letter feels like a tiny flashlight, and we're trying to shine it on the problems we see. We don't have the power to turn on the lights, but we're trying to shine as bright a light as we can on what we see in order to say, "Something's not right."

We also want to acknowledge many mitigating factors. We know not every elder is responsible for everything on this list. We know the three campuses are very different. We know getting 40 elders to agree is hard. We realize communicating with a large congregation is challenging and that emails, large meetings, and small meetings all have various pros and cons. We realize some elders staying silent in meetings may be more a function of efficiency in long meetings rather than unity culture. We don't think every item listed is a result of high-handed desire to deceive, but could be the result of good intentions with negative consequences. Yet despite all these concessions, we are still deeply concerned about the patterns of behavior.

### **A Word About Terminology**

When it first came out that Bryan Pickering had accused the elders of bullying, domineering, and spiritual abuse, I did not like those terms. My immediate reaction was, "But I know Pastor Bud! He's not domineering. I trust Pastor Jared! He's not a bully. I respect Pastor Kenny! How on earth could anyone accuse him of spiritual abuse?" That language was a stumbling block for me. Because of that, I'm reluctant to use those words in this document, for fear others may have a similar reaction, so I tried to list specific actions rather than using abuse language.

However, something clicked for me after our conversation with Daniel Kleven. I suddenly saw how trying to protect an institution can lead to a misuse of power. I saw how a few key players can manipulate things (e.g. change an agenda last minute). I saw how even well-intentioned, upright elders can become indirectly complicit in these dynamics.

While I was already familiar with the concepts of domestic abuse and sexual abuse (from our training with Darby Strickland and Pastor Jason's sermon on hyper-headship), I realize I have a lot to learn about institutional systems and misuse of power. One silver lining of this mess at Bethlehem is that many of us are getting a crash course in these dynamics, so we can all be on the lookout for them at the organizations we are part of.

So Mickey and I are trying to educate ourselves and learn more. Mickey found Wade Mullen's book *Something's Not Right* very sobering. The book describes how institutions will attempt to manage their public relations to avoid actually owning the wrongs they are responsible for. He found the playbook to be eerily similar to the one Bethlehem has employed, even if

unintentionally. At this point, we would say that the elders have misused institutional authority to silence and sideline serious questions, resulting in tremendous harm to the people under their care. We're not sure where we will eventually land in terms of what terms are helpful.

## **Two Missing Pieces**

At least two key things are missing from this letter, and those are beyond the scope of our knowledge.

The first is a diagnosis. Our list is essentially a list of symptoms. But there must be some root problem(s) causing the symptoms. Though we are not equipped to diagnose, here are some things we think might help lead to a diagnosis. First, we believe a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation is crucial. Second, we hope the elders will draw on existing resources about healthy and unhealthy church dynamics (*Something's Not Right* by Wade Mullen, *A Church Called Tov* by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer, and *Redeeming Power* by Diane Langberg). Lastly, I think of what Pastor Jason shared at the March 26 downtown family meeting about prophetic visions, renouncing strongholds, and intercessory prayer. It sounds like the Lord started a good work there, and that the elders tested and approved the vision of the ship being held back by ropes. I wonder if leaning into those things could help expose and uproot some of these deep institutional problems.

The second piece missing from this letter is knowledge about key players. Not every elder is responsible for every item on this list. But it seems like there must be some key players who have power to do things like change agendas last minute or suppress the release of certain documents. I'm guessing Kurt Elting-Ballard and Tom Lutz probably have a bit more influence in their role as Elder Chair and Chair of the Downtown Council, but beyond that I have no idea. But presumably the elders know who holds power and could help change that if any change is needed. Again, this goes far beyond my knowledge.

## **Our Request**

It's been a hard year for our church, but I'd like to think there can be a happy ending where Bethlehem's leaders can repent of wrongs done and put them right. What a gift it would be to see sin acknowledged - and then rather than explained away - to see it wept over and apologized for and repented of. Genuine repentance by the elders could make all the difference here. If Bethlehem can respond well and model a right response, it could be such a powerful example for other churches.

In recent Quarterly Strategy Meetings, the elders have announced that they would be taking steps to improve communication, seek a shared vision of congregationalism, understand spiritual abuse, and other improvements. We are glad for steps forward in those areas. We really appreciate these, and we know they represent a commitment of time and energy. However, we are asking for something more serious.



## Our Main Request

Our main request is for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, independent investigation by an organization which has experience with institutional abuses (for example: [GRACE](#)). We'd like them to have full access to everything (executive documents, people who have left the church, those who have been silenced by some sort of non-disparagement agreement, etc.). We'd like the 3<sup>rd</sup> party not just to investigate a specific, narrow question controlled by the institution, but be given wide-ranging and independent scope. The process should follow best practices and incorporate the desires of people who have been harmed. Here are our reasons for requesting this type of 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation:

1. Wide-ranging scope: we hope they will examine Bryan's concerns about bullying and spiritual abuse, Ming-Jinn's concerns about unethical behavior, Jason's concerns about unity culture, people's stories of being hurt, and the broader culture at Bethlehem which has caused these things. There are so many symptoms that it's hard to diagnose (especially for those in the midst of it!), so a wide-ranging investigation seems like the best way to pin down a diagnosis.
2. Transparency - Trust in the elders has been eroding over the course of this year, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation would help restore it. A willingness to do an investigation would be an act that proclaims loudly, "We have nothing to hide."
3. Accountability – An independent investigation with a public report provides a measure of accountability for the church. Congregants, as well as elders, will know what (if anything) needs to change.
4. Impartiality - An outside investigation would help reveal blind spots of the elders. Many people raised this concern at the July 11 Downtown Q&A. The people being accused of wrongdoing shouldn't be the ones deciding if the charge is true, or if an investigation is needed. Numerous congregants have tried to point out problems, but without success. Where some people see domineering, the elders see only normative sin.
5. Specificity - The elders have stated that Bryan Pickering didn't give any credible examples of bullying and domineering among the elders. This is a wonderful chance to be given examples. It could clear up confusion (among both elders and congregants) about what Bryan was concerned about.
6. Members Pleading for This - At the July 11 Q&A, multiple people pleaded for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation. At the July 25 QSM, 159 members voted for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation. That alone is compelling. Perhaps even some elders think an investigation is warranted but don't feel free to speak.
  - a. True, 373 voted against an investigation, but we think many of those votes were based on lack of information and the fact that some elders were arguing against an investigation. We've spoken to one person who said he voted against the investigation, but had he known at the time the information in the Julie Roys article #3, he would have voted "yes." We imagine there may be many more who think the same.
7. Care - Because of how they have been treated, some people may be reluctant to share their stories with the elders. A trauma-informed 3<sup>rd</sup> party who can promise confidentiality would free these people to share their stories and enable Bethlehem to learn from them.
8. Repentance - Consultations and promises to do better are a great step for the future, but don't heal past wrongs. A 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation can properly evaluate what has happened and help define the problem, so that repentance and healing can happen.

9. [GRACE on internal vs. independent investigations](#): “While an internal investigation offers an institution the opportunity for self-protection, an independent investigation offers an institution something far more profound. It offers the institution an opportunity to understand where it failed in order to demonstrate authentic repentance to those who have been hurt, and to make the necessary changes so that the same offenses are never repeated.”

## Secondary Requests

Our main request is for the independent investigation, but we think some of these other ideas could also promote healing.

1. We would love to see public repentance and a public apology.
  - a. This would help rebuild trust in the elders.
  - b. We’d love for this to be the spirit of the elders: no fear of losing face, no fear that Bethlehem or BCS will lose their prestige, but let’s get all the junk on the table, be open about it, own it, and then we can work toward healing and restoration. At the March 26 family meeting, Pastor Jason shared that “there’s mercy for all my failures” – and there is more than enough for all of ours – so let the light shine and expose the wrong.
  - c. We acknowledge that the elders can only repent of things they are convinced are sin. Perhaps this would happen in stages: acknowledging what they see now, with more to come based on what the investigation reveals.
  - d. Repentance could be individual or collective, as needed.
  - e. We’d love to see an open apology email, not just acknowledging that things are painful or confusing (that’s true), but actively apologizing for specific wrongs.
    - i. This should happen soon. Some of the other items on this list will take longer, but this one would show good-faith intention to be totally upfront and honest.
    - ii. For instance, be willing, in an email to the whole church, to name the concerns Bryan Pickering raised (e.g. bullying, domineering, spiritual abuse) and say that you take them seriously.
2. We would like Bethlehem to encourage people who have been hurt to share their stories – not seeing Twitter and publicity as an enemy – but welcoming the sharing of people’s stories.
  - a. The problem is not, “people are saying negative things about our church.” The problem is: are those negative things true? And if so, how can we fix them and learn from them?
3. We’d like the elders or staff to reach out to those who have been hurt by Bethlehem and try to make things right. This could start with offering to hear their story, apologizing, and asking for feedback on how Bethlehem could avoid causing similar harm in future. This could be especially healing for those who were hurt and could help Bethlehem improve. (I realize this would be incredibly labor intensive and the people hurt may be reluctant to engage, so it could happen slowly and over time.)
4. We would like exit interviews and transparency when people leave Bethlehem.
  - a. We’re encouraged that the elders are now offering to meet with those leaving the church. We’d love to go beyond that and actively encourage these folks to do an exit interview. Tell them that an elder would love to meet with them in order to ask things like: “Why

are you leaving? Is there anything we need to put right? What did you like about Bethlehem? What did you not like? Is there anything we can do differently in future, to help other members have a better experience?” It would then be good to have a system to collect and incorporate this feedback.

- b. We would like a forum where members who leave can share their concerns with existing members. E.g. not just be a name on a page, but have the opportunity to share a departure letter stating any concerns they have. If members must vote to approve the removal of people’s names, it seems fair to know why they are leaving. Perhaps their names could be linked to an external document on a pdf in the app used for members meetings.
5. We’d like the elders to use their influence to pursue similar reforms at BCS.
- a. I know the elders don’t have control of BCS, but they have a great deal of influence. Kurt Elting-Ballard and the elders were able to ask for an investigation. Bethlehem Baptist Church paid \$25,000 for it. Grievances were shared across the two organizations. Some elders are BCS trustees or BCS faculty. BCS is hosted at Bethlehem. There are definitely some ways in which Bethlehem can pursue reforms at its church-based seminary.
6. We would like a removal of any past gag orders, non-disclosure agreements, non-disparagement agreements, and the like, along with a welcome invitation for those formerly bound by them to speak up if they are willing.
- a. We would like this to include BCS and other Bethlehem affiliates like CityJoy, Campus Outreach, etc.
7. When Bethlehem hires a new downtown campus pastor, we would like them to hire someone who sees these wrongs and has a clear, publicly articulated vision to set them right. We’d like a break with institutional protection. Pastor Jason started the process of exposing these things, and we’d like a new campus pastor who can continue that work.

Thank you for considering these requests. We appreciate all the time and effort you have spent caring for the church.

We know that the Lord will bring good out of all that has happened this year: for the elders, for congregants, for those who have been hurt, and for Bethlehem.

Sincerely,

Hannah and Mickey Sheu

## **Summary of Concerns**

### **Something's Not Right at Bethlehem**

1. Three pastors resigned
2. Many long-time committed members have left Bethlehem
3. A large number of people have been deeply hurt by Bethlehem

### **Things That Seem Morally Objectionable and Unethical**

1. March 16 vote on grievances against Andy Naselli – agenda changed last minute
2. March 16 vote – grievances dismissed without doing an investigation
3. Ming-Jinn Tong's view that the vote was unethical was used as a reason to give him two weeks to consider if he should remain an elder
4. A culture of bullying and domineering leadership (see Gretchen Spencer's resignation letter)

### **Things That Are Very Concerning and Have Started to Undermine Our Trust**

1. No repentance or admission of wrongdoing by the elders
2. Culture of protecting the brand by controlling the narrative (Elaborated in 3-9)
  3. Elders shared as little as possible about why Ming-Jinn Tong resigned
  4. Elders shared as little as possible about why Bryan Pickering resigned
  5. Elders shared as little as possible about why Jason Meyer resigned
  6. Lots of seeming half-truths or partial truths at the July 11 Q&A
  7. Examples of controlling the narrative to show "all is fine at Bethlehem"
  8. Deflection of blame
  9. Resistance to outside investigation
10. Using an elder's voice to minimize congregant voices – Andy Naselli
11. Using an elder's voice to minimize congregant voices – Kurt Elting-Ballard
12. Tom Lutz told the elders not to talk to the people with grievances until later
13. People's grievances were leaked to non-elders.
14. Ming-Jinn Tong and Bryan Pickering were pulled from the preaching and prayer rotation after what they said in April about the Atlanta shootings
15. Jason Meyer's concerns in his resignation letter and the elders' seeming non-response
16. These concerns are longstanding
17. Ethnic Harmony Taskforce concerns
18. Women's Staff Report concerns

### **People Getting Hurt**

1. A list of people who have been hurt at Bethlehem with links to their stories

### **Concerns about Bethlehem College & Seminary**

1. BCS has used non-disparagement agreements to silence former faculty and staff
2. So many highly-regarded people have resigned from BCS in recent years
3. Johnathon Bowers' experience as he advocated for institutional change
4. BCS suppressed two reports by Daniel Kleven
5. BCS suppressed Daniel Kleven's blog post responding to "The Sin of Empathy"
6. Tim Tomlinson mischaracterized the 1/31 QSM motion as a threat against BCS and academic freedom
7. BCS did not properly address concerns about Andy Naselli
8. BCS used an investigation to protect the organization rather than address concerns

## Detailed Concerns

Notes: We typically prefer to refer to people using their title, e.g. “Pastor Jason” or “Professor Naselli” but for the sake of brevity we’re using primarily first names in this document. We have a description of sources in Appendix A, but we want to note here that we are sharing people’s stories with their permission.

### ***Something’s Not Right at Bethlehem***

1. Three pastors resigned without a future plan. They each had their own reasons, but a part of each resignation was, “Something is wrong here.” Ming-Jinn Tong said that he thought the vote not to investigate Andy Naselli was unethical. Bryan Pickering said that the elders had “profoundly mistreated” congregants and other elders, that there was “domineering,” “patterns of deception,” and “bullying behavior.” Jason Meyer pointed to a “culture of charges,” as well as the pressure to conform among the elders.
2. So many people have left Bethlehem recently. In addition to the pastors, these include members who had been at Bethlehem for decades, long-time small group leaders, counselors, people who were active in ministry, and former global partners. And this is just based on the names we recognized and followed up with. Again, they each have their own reasons, but collectively they are saying, “Something is wrong here.”
3. A large number of people have been deeply hurt by Bethlehem. Some of these people tried to ask for changes and were rebuffed. There may be good reasons some of their requests were not granted. But it’s starting to seem like a pattern that when you ask for change at Bethlehem or BCS, you often get shut down. That pattern is concerning.

### ***Things That Seem Morally Objectionable and Unethical***

1. March 16 vote on grievances against Elder Andy Naselli – agenda changed last minute
  - a. Andy Naselli was being accused of spiritual abuse of students and of disparaging and sinning against members of the congregation. (Source: Daniel Kleven, Roys #3)
  - b. The initial agenda for March 16 was to pray, receive the charges, and initiate the investigation. The plan was to have 2 non-staff non-BCS elders from each campus to be over the investigation. This was communicated to multiple elders (Source: Ming-Jinn’s remarks to Daniel Kleven, Bryan Pickering’s remarks to Daniel Kleven, Jason Meyer’s resignation letter, Roys Article #3).
  - c. Confirmation of the fact that at least some elders were expecting to do a full investigation:
    - i. Brian Tabb asked some BCS alumni if they would give character references for Andy Naselli because members of Bethlehem had filed grievances against Andy. The deadline Brian gave the alumni was Friday, March 19, after the March 16 meeting. (Source: Daniel Kleven and his text from a classmate who received this request from Brian Tabb).
    1. As a side note, soliciting character references from former BCS students seems inappropriate and irrelevant to an investigation into Andy’s behavior towards congregation members, though we do agree it would be relevant toward determining if Andy should remain a professor at BCS (but that’s a different process than the grievances).

- ii. Further confirmation that this point is relevant: after the charges were dismissed on 3/16, Tabb told that classmate the reference was no longer needed as the charges had been dropped.
    - iii. Some of the downtown staff elders had seen many pages of documentation of the grievances against Andy. They seemed very concerned about the charges against Andy and felt like an investigation was warranted (Source: July 11 Q&A where the staff elders confirmed they had seen all the printed pages of evidence against Andy, Roys report #3).
    - iv. On Monday 3/15, Daniel Kleven urged Ming-Jinn that the Takatas (who filed one of the grievances) be present at the Tuesday meeting, but Ming-Jinn reassured him with something like, "no, no, no, this isn't the 'hearing;' this is just to start the investigation process." (Source: Daniel Kleven)
  - d. Yet hours before the meeting, the agenda was changed to "vote on whether or not to dismiss the charges."
2. Problem with March 16 vote – elders voted to dismiss the charges against Andy Naselli without doing an investigation
- a. The church bylaws require a "thorough investigation" and 13 people (including Bryan Pickering on behalf of 12 BCS students) had asked for this, yet elders didn't do any other investigating beyond discussing things behind closed doors. (Source: Daniel Kleven, Roys #3)
  - b. Andy Naselli was in the room on March 16. None of the people who brought grievances were permitted to be in the room except for Bryan Pickering (as an elder). (Source: Daniel Kleven).
  - c. The elders explained their decision not to investigate by saying things like, "we were there at the January QSM; we heard Andy speak." (Source: July 11 Q&A.) But the grievances included other things beyond what happened at the QSM.
    - i. At least 4 grievances (by Takatas, Maves, Johnsons, and Kleven) included things beyond what happened at the QSM (Source: Personal conversations with those parties).
    - ii. A summary of Daniel Kleven's grievance: In a BCS faculty meeting where they were discussing Janette Takata's motion (from the 1/31 QSM), Andy Naselli spoke disparagingly of the Takatas (claiming that they were leaving anyway, they just want to blow things up on the way out... this was a grenade, so I threw myself on the grenade). Daniel Kleven later emailed the BCS faculty present and said he was concerned that Andy had spoken negatively about the Takatas behind their back and that he was concerned some of the things weren't true. Andy never replied. But 6 or 7 people thanked Daniel for doing this, saying they shared his concerns and were glad he spoke up. This confirms it wasn't just Daniel's opinion that Andy's behavior was problematic. (Source: Daniel Kleven)
    - iii. Barb and Chris Johnson also submitted a grievance addressing Andy's behavior outside of the QSM. They were told by 4 different elders after the March meeting that those individual elders were unaware the Johnsons had filed a grievance and had not read it.
    - iv. These grievances (that referred to things outside the QSM) shouldn't have been dismissed with the logic, "We were there and we saw it." Instead, the elders should have investigated them (e.g. sought out confirming witnesses, invited the people who filed grievances to explain those other episodes, etc.).
    - v. By the elders' logic of "we were there and saw the episode" they ignore the pattern of Andy's behavior (raised in the grievances) and instead focused on a single episode.
  - d. Ming-Jinn thought the elders acted unethically on March 16. (Source: July 11 Q&A). Even if we had no other details, this alone is compelling to us.
  - e. We would be fine with the outcome if the elders had done a proper investigation (getting witnesses, clarifying details, each voting elder reading all the grievances) and then concluded

that the grievances were not substantial or not true. The problem is not that Andy is still an elder, but rather that there was no investigation.

3. When Ming-Jinn said the March 16 vote was unethical, he was told something like, “Actually, if you think this was unethical, maybe it’s not a good fit for you to be on this elder board. Why don’t we both take two weeks to consider this?”
  - a. Source: Daniel Kleven, who spoke with Ming-Jinn on 4/25 after the All-Church QSM. Here is Daniel’s account:
    - i. *When I spoke with Ming-Jinn on Sunday, April 25 after the All-Church QSM, he shared that he was in the middle of this 2 week waiting period and was trying to figure out what to do. We got breakfast a couple days later, and he elaborated more. His plan was NOT to resign, but to force the other elders to bring it to a congregational vote so that it could all be brought into the open. The elders decided to change course, and leave it to the DT elders to sort out. The DT elders decided the two-week period was a bad idea, and what they needed to do instead was have a discussion (or series of discussions) on the elders’ “philosophy of ministry” and whether or not every elder could sign on to this clarified “philosophy of ministry.” That meeting was delayed because of Covid cases among the elders, and then happened later (in May?) after Jason was already on sabbatical. Bryan Pickering also confirmed this account of events.*
  - b. Why did the elders put this kind of pressure on Ming-Jinn when they were the ones who engaged in seemingly unethical behavior?
4. A culture of bullying and domineering leadership - Gretchen Spencer’s resignation statement about how elders mistreated people
  - a. This was read at the July 11 Q&A by a member (the elders did not respond to it publicly there). We are including it here (with Gretchen’s permission) because we find it deeply concerning.

**Gretchen Spencer’s statement to the Downtown Campus of Bethlehem Baptist Church at the July 11, 2021 Family Meeting.**

Downtown Campus,

I have asked [name redacted] to read this statement on my behalf tonight. My name is Gretchen Spencer. For those of you who don't know me, I've attended Bethlehem for seven and a half years and been on staff for almost five. I was the lead admin at the Downtown Campus prior to my resignation. I've asked to be removed from membership at the July 18 QSM, and wanted you as my church family to know my reasons for resigning my job and my membership. Downtown Elders, I've already told you my reasons for resigning. In stating them again now to bring the congregation into my reasons for leaving, I want it to be another call to repentance for you, not condemnation of you.

After the January 31st QSM, I watched a predominating culture of what I believe to be bullying and domineering leadership coming to light among elders at all three campuses. In my role as a lead admin, I saw emails sent by elders on all three campuses, along with elder agendas and meeting minutes. I watched many elders choose loyalty to Bethlehem's reputation and protecting one another, rather than caring for congregants and welcoming truth and accountability. Multiple elders have talked about congregants in dismissive and even derogatory ways. I personally experienced several elders saying one thing to my face and another thing behind my back after I voiced my concerns to them. I watched many

elders direct bullying behavior towards Ming-Jinn Tong, Bryan Pickering, and Jason Meyer when they spoke up on behalf of the hurting in our congregation and at our school and spoke out against the abuse of power by various Bethlehem elders. I have the greatest respect for these three men and their integrity.

I resigned from my position on staff at the end of May. Staying on staff after all I had seen would have violated my conscience. It was also taking a significant toll on my health to watch the bullying happen.

I never envisioned needing to leave Bethlehem, especially in this way. This church has been home to me and I have been loved here by so many of you. May our good Shepherd Jesus hold you all close to himself.

Gretchen

### ***Things That Are Very Concerning and Have Started to Undermine Our Trust***

1. I haven't heard any repenting or acknowledgment of wrongdoing. I've just heard explanations of why this or that happened, how it has been a hard season for Bethlehem, and statements like "we need better communication" or "this is normative sin," but nothing admitting that specific things were wrong. It is a giant red flag when a pastor resigns without a plan in place, let alone three pastors doing so. Instead of treating the resignations as a red flag about something at Bethlehem, it seems the elders have explained away or minimized the concerns that the pastors have raised, and have sought to move on.

[Note: this next section (#2-9) is long and detailed. We are going into such detail because we are trying to document a pattern. Any one item could probably be explained away. But when there are so many instances of evasion, the pattern is what is so concerning. The things we describe here are like smoke. If there's a fire, the real problem is the fire, not the smoke, but the smoke is a warning sign that there is a fire nearby. Fittingly, smoke also obscures and covers up and makes it hard to see, and that's what we believe this style of communication has done.]

2. Culture of protecting the brand by limiting information and controlling the narrative
  - a. In the emails to the congregation, the communication around all three resignations, the seeming half-truths or partial truths given in various Q&A's, we've seen an emphasis on protecting Bethlehem's reputation at the expense of full openness and transparency. Points 3 through 9 below elaborate this.
  - b. We acknowledge that there have been reasons given for that minimal communication (e.g. "not all elders were on board with sharing everything" and "we wanted to protect the individuals who had resigned"), but we are concerned about the default pattern being to limit the information given to the congregation.
3. Elders shared as little as possible about why Ming-Jinn Tong resigned
  - a. Jared's May 19 email essentially gave no reason.
  - b. At the July 11 Q&A, Ken Currie said something like, "We don't know why Ming-Jinn left. He's said different things at different times, and we don't want to burden him by pushing him to clarify."
  - c. However, Ming-Jinn (who had initially not wanted to communicate to the congregation) had emailed the elders a draft communication for the congregation, and they pushed back on it and



told him it might invite controversy and division (Source: Paul Delahunt's email, read at the smaller Q&As).

- d. The elders know what was in Ming-Jinn's draft and yet they won't talk about it or summarize it. (Obviously, releasing it would have to be done with Ming-Jinn's permission.)
4. Elders shared as little as possible about why Bryan Pickering resigned:
    - a. Here's what their 6/24 email said:

“Over the last few months, the Downtown elders have taken specific steps to seek clarity and unity regarding the question of our faithfulness to biblical standards of eldership. We appreciate your patience as we have worked on this. Through this process it became clear that Bryan Pickering had a significantly different perspective than the rest of the elders. In light of these differences, he chose to resign his position as our *Pastor for Care & Counseling*.” (Source: 6/24 email from the elders sent by Jared Wass)
    - b. In reality, Bryan had accused the elders of bullying, domineering, and spiritual abuse. The minimal email above is evasive almost to the point of being dishonest.
    - c. They read a short portion of his statement at the July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting but never communicated it to the congregation as a whole.
    - d. Their given reason for this minimal communication is to protect Bryan. We appreciate that impulse, but it is possible to protect Bryan while still informing the congregation of the very serious nature of the disagreement. For example, the elders could have emailed the congregation the statement read at the 7/11 Q&A which went something like “Bryan resigned because he observed patterns of bullying and domineering among the elders. The elders didn't agree with this observation. In light of the differences, it seemed untenable for him to stay on the elder board with the others, so he resigned.”
  5. Elders shared as little as possible about why Jason Meyer resigned.
    - a. Jason Meyer gave his resignation letter to the elders on July 12.
    - b. At the July 18 goodbye service, Ken Currie tried to summarize Jason's letter. He highlighted and spent the most time on Part 1 (Bethlehem moving toward a Type A church), and even interjected his own disagreement. But he skirted over the much more concerning things Jason raises in Parts 2 and 3, that referred to charges against Jason, Ming-Jinn, and Bryan, as well as the seemingly retributive “tribunal” elder meeting on April 20 and a culture where there is tremendous pressure to conform (Unity culture).
    - c. It seems like the elders talked with some individuals only about Part 1 of Jason's letter (Type A churches) and not about Parts 2 and 3 (Culture of Charges, Unity Culture) prior to the letter being released by the Meyers. One friend was initially read only Part 1 of the letter by an elder and only heard parts 2 and 3 after pressing. Other friends we talked with prior to the whole letter coming out seemed to focus on the ideas communicated in Part 1. Parts 2 and 3 were not made clear to them.
    - d. The next plan was for the elders to host groups of 100 and read the letter aloud and field questions. (Source: email from Bud Burk, confirmed by email from Jared on 8/6). But why only read aloud? Why not plan to release the text of the letter so it can be properly weighed? Why not trust the congregation to sift and sort what they hear, without needing it filtered by the elders?
    - e. The elders only released the letter on August 7, after it had already been released by the Meyers.

6. Lots of seeming half-truths or partial truths at the July 11 Q&A
  - a. Tom Lutz categorically denied that alumni were solicited for character references for the grievances brought by the congregation. Brian Tabb, after explaining his role as Dean of BCS, affirmed Tom's statement that references were solicited for student grievances, not congregation ones. Daniel Kleven had a text message from a BCS alum that directly contradicted this – Tabb had solicited character references for Andy in relation to congregational grievances.
  - b. The way Ken Currie talked about the grievances led me to believe that they were only about what Andy Naselli said at the 1/31 QSM. Ken said something like, "We were all at the meeting, we heard Andy's outburst, we had a recording of the meeting. So we didn't feel the need to investigate." Occasionally the elders made reference to "the 1/31 QSM and its aftermath." But I was left with the strong impression that whatever was in those grievances was about what happened at the 1/31 QSM. But it wasn't until I talked to Daniel Kleven about his grievance that I realized some of the grievances had included other things too. The impression the elders gave on July 11 that the grievances were primarily focused on Andy's behavior on 1/31 was incomplete.
  - c. A congregant asked the elders if any NDAs had been used or lawyers involved at Bethlehem. The elders said there were no NDAs as far as they were aware of. That may be true on the church side, but there have in fact been some sort of non-disparagement agreements used at BCS, and they failed to mention that. BCS staff and board members were sitting right there and could have spoken. This was a good-faith question, in public, trying to make sure nothing nefarious was happening, and it didn't get a full answer.
  - d. In describing Gretchen Spencer's resignation, Tom Lutz explained that she had witnessed several sharp exchanges between elders and had "had enough of the drama." In fact she had raised concerns about the elders having a culture of "bullying and domineering leadership" and called upon them to repent. Dismissing this as "drama" seems inaccurate and unfair. (Later that the evening her resignation statement was read aloud by a member.)
  - e. The elders (either Ken or Jared) stated, "No other elder shared Bryan's views about spiritual abuse." Tom Lutz reiterated this on the phone to Mickey (saying that "all the elders downtown, to a man," didn't agree with Bryan's assessment). But prior to July 11, Bud Burk said in a call to Mickey that the elders had a spectrum of viewpoints about Bryan's accusations. Some agreed, some disagreed, many were in the middle; it wasn't two camps. So the "us against him" claim on July 11 seems inaccurate.
7. Examples of controlling the narrative to make it seem like "all is fine at Bethlehem"
  - a. The elders never shared that Ming-Jinn thought the March 16 vote was unethical. It only came out at the July 11 Q&A because a congregant asked about it. Here's Daniel Kleven's account of the July 11 Q&A after it had been revealed that Ming-Jinn thought something was unethical:
    - i. *I asked the elders "What was it specifically that MJ said was unethical?" And Ken Currie dodged the question "I don't want to speak for Ming Jinn, so I don't want to answer that question." I texted MJ on the spot "can I share with the whole church the fact that you think the elders acted unethically on March 16?" and he said "yes" so I said that at the mic.*
    - ii. This is frustrating. Ken Currie clearly knew the answer to the original question, "What did Ming-Jinn think was unethical?" and yet refused to divulge this very relevant fact to the congregation who was asking for information about the resignations.
  - b. Don Hoffert (long time elder) resigned as an elder, but this was never communicated to the congregation. I only heard about it because at the April 2021 QSM, his name was on the list of members leaving Bethlehem, and a congregant asked a question and pointed out that he had been

an elder. I think congregants should be notified when elders resign and given a reason (ideally by the former elder directly, in his words).

- c. Minimizing information about the church meetings sent out to people on the Bethlehem email list.
  - i. The summary notes of the 1/31 QSM emailed out to the congregation did not include the text of the tabled motion brought by Janette Takata about Joe Rigney and Douglas Wilson (this motion was heavily debated and finally tabled at the meeting). It included the text of the other motion, but not hers. Why not be upfront and let the people not present know what was the topic of discussion (especially since it had been tabled)? That way, people could look into what was controversial about the Sin of Empathy in the Man Rampant video and be prepared for discussion at the next meeting. ([All Church Quarterly Strategy Meeting \(January 31, 2021\)](#))
  - ii. The summary notes of the 7/25 QSM said only, “A motion was made from the floor by a member during our new business. After extensive discussion, the congregation rejected the motion by more than a two-thirds majority.” It did *not* include the text of the motion (“...to hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to look into the leadership behavior, structure, systems of Bethlehem specifically in regards to accusations of domineering, bullying, and spiritual abuse by some of the elders...”). If you’re not even going to give the text of the motion, why would you emphasize that it was shot down? The motion took most of the time at the 7/25 QSM, but was given only a few sentences in the public summary. In contrast, the minutes of the meeting (available only to members by request or at the next QSM) spend 5 pages (of 7) recording the comments on the motion. ([All-Church Quarterly Strategy Meeting \(July 25, 2021\)](#))
  - iii. We understand that the publicly posted summaries are not the same as the minutes, yet this is a regular place where congregants who weren’t able to attend the meetings get updates, and all hint of member concern/disagreement seems to have been left out.
- d. Not having an opportunity for public questions at the 9/12 downtown QSM. Instead, people were invited to come up and talk with an elder one-on-one. Usually at member meetings, there is an item on the agenda for new business, which lets members ask questions publicly.
  - i. The stated reason was that the elders don’t want people to feel intimidated coming to the microphone. That’s a great point, and as an introvert, I really appreciate the one-on-one option. But it shouldn’t come at the expense of the public questions. Those are an important opportunity for members to speak to and hear from each other and the elders corporately.
  - ii. It felt like the elders didn’t want people asking difficult questions publicly.
- e. Not including any photos of Ming-Jinn in the CityJoy video about how Bethlehem helped clean up Minneapolis after George Floyd’s death. (Source: CityJoy video shown Sunday 6/27). Ming-Jinn was one of the primary actors behind Support The Cities to mobilize the clean up and the video left him out entirely.

## 8. Deflection of blame

- a. “Naselli is a North campus elder and they love him up there.” (Source: 8/12 elder Q&A)
  - i. If we’re one church, what relevance does it have if he’s North or Downtown? He’s a Bethlehem elder.
  - ii. If Downtown students and congregation members are getting hurt, isn’t that an issue for him as an elder?
- b. “The person who called Jason and Bryan and Ming-Jinn ‘coddler’ wasn’t a downtown elder” Just because the person is not Downtown doesn’t absolve the seriousness of their behavior. (Source: 8/12 elder Q&A)

- c. “We don’t have control over BCS” (source: 8/12 elder Q&A). Certainly there isn’t direct control over the internal actions of BCS, but elders are on the BCS board and in faculty roles at BCS. Bethlehem paid for half of the investigation into possible workplace violations that BCS conducted. Bethlehem elders vote to confirm board members for BCS.
9. Resistance to outside investigation
    - a. Steve and Janette Takata had drafted a motion for the April 25 All Church QSM requesting a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation. They had shared it with the elders, and had vetted it with Anthony Bushnell, the parliamentarian. They were strongly recommended by the elders not to bring this motion at the April 25 QSM, and they followed this recommendation (Source: Daniel Kleven).
    - b. At the July 11 Q&A multiple people were pleading for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party review of the charges of bullying and leadership culture, and the elders seemed to drag their feet.
      - i. Tom Lutz claimed that all a third party review would do was to affirm that Bryan had a different definition of spiritual abuse than the rest of the elders.
      - ii. No other responses were made to the many other comments pleading for a third party.
    - c. At the July 25 QSM the elders (Tom Lutz, Ken Currie) seemed willing to pursue outside “trainings” or “help” but not an investigation.
      - i. Ken said something about how the word “investigation” makes him feel accused. Tom talked about how it was distracting from the mission of the church, not wanting to have to go through all the binders of papers again, and how an investigation might lead to people getting hurt.
      - ii. We’re thankful Ken Currie spoke so eloquently about wanting to pursue trainings. Trainings are great, but those are different than an investigation, which could examine the pattern of people being hurt at Bethlehem. Why is this happening? How can we keep it from happening in the future? If people already are getting hurt (and we think they are), then something is seriously wrong and helping people who have been hurt (in the name of God, at the church of God) is part and parcel to the mission of the church.
    - d. Though we like the idea of the upcoming consultations/summits (presented by Kenny Stokes at the 9/12 downtown QSM), those are not the same thing as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation, which is what multiple people have been pleading for.
  10. Using an elder’s voice to minimize congregant voices – Andy Naselli
    - a. Janette Takata brought [a motion](#) at the 1/31 QSM. It’s labeled “Motion 1” on page 3-4 of this link:  
*I move that the full council of elders make a written, public statement separating the views expressed by Dr. Joe Rigney in Man Rampant, Season 1, Episode 1 from the views and teaching of Bethlehem Baptist Church.*
    - b. At the 1/31 QSM, Andy spoke against this motion. He said something like, “If the elders were to move for the motion, I would resign out of principle.” This dramatically raised the stakes. Now the congregation is choosing between a motion and an elder’s resignation.
    - c. Later, Andy emailed all the members who had attended and apologized for the unintended consequences of his actions (we are thankful for that apology), but he also used that megaphone to double down on his views that the motion was a form of “cancel culture.”  
*I intended to convey that I steadfastly refuse to be part of what I perceived to be a kind of “cancel culture,” and that if my fellow pastors would endorse such an approach (and I highly doubt they would), I would not be able to serve alongside them with a good conscience any longer. (Source: 2/10 email from Andy Naselli to the members present at the 1/31 QSM)*

Labeling the Takatas' actions a kind of cancel culture shuts down debate and seems to attack the Takatas themselves.

- d. Andy also includes the phrase "and I highly doubt they would" – not only is he using his voice as an elder, he's conjecturing what the other elders would think.
- e. When Janette asked for similar access (e.g. to email her perspective and response), she was denied (Source: Daniel Kleven).
- f. In Andy Naselli's response to the motion (also in elder communication about the motion in smaller settings), they misinterpret "separate" as something akin to "condemn" or "censure." The intention of the motion was clarified by Steve Takata at the meeting (and in the full motion text), namely that the motion asks the elders to clarify that Joe Rigney and Andy Naselli do not speak for Bethlehem, but only for themselves. This misinterpretation is never clarified in a follow-up email from the elders, leaving people to think that the Takatas are trying to "cancel" Joe Rigney. (This concern is brought up by Daniel Kleven in an email to Kurt Elting-Ballard on 2/27.)
- g. We grant that the "back and forth" of a motion should be restricted to the QSM, yet when the elders remain silent to the congregation after Andy's email (even after requests from congregants), that communicates to the congregation that they support Andy's words. They could have clarified the text and intent of the motion. They could have asked Andy to retract the "cancel-culture" statement and affirmed that the motion was appropriately brought by a member in good standing. There were no follow up emails to the congregation concerning Andy's inappropriate words.

11. Using an elder's voice to minimize congregant voices – Kurt Elting-Ballard

- a. 10 days before the April 25 QSM, Kurt Elting-Ballard used his role as elder chair (presumably with support of the elders) to rule Janette Takata's motion out of order. (Source: April 15 email from Kurt). 10 days before means very little time for appeal.
  - i. Even if the elders felt the motion was out of order, they could have done other things to address people's concerns (acknowledge people's pain, set up a different meeting, invite feedback, say this issue is important and we'll address it in X or Y other venue, etc.)
- b. At the April 25 QSM, even while people were standing at the microphones, clearly frustrated, wanting to ask questions, Kurt abruptly adjourned the meeting.
  - i. Even if he absolutely had to adjourn so he could get to the 7 pm North campus meeting, there's so much more he could have done (e.g. apologize for having to leave, put someone else in charge, schedule a follow-up meeting so people know they'll have space to share concerns).
- c. When a congregant asked something like, "If women don't feel comfortable going to the elders, who can they talk to?" Kurt replied, "They can talk to an elder." This despite the fact that he started the meeting with an apology about how some women haven't felt very comfortable going to the elders. If he knew that's the case, why not suggest some other options for these women to pursue? (Source: April 25 QSM)

12. After the March 16 vote dismissing the grievances against Andy Naselli, Tom Lutz told the elders not to talk to the people with grievances until the elders could plan a coordinated shepherding strategy.

- a. This seems hurtful for those who brought the grievances. It's bad enough not to investigate their concerns, but then not to reach out right away and explain things seems inappropriate.
- b. Tom initially denied that he had done this. In the March 26 reconciliation meeting (between people with grievances and some elders), someone asked Tom why he had forbidden the elders

to talk to the people with grievances (this was 10 days later). Tom denied it. He denied it again after a repeated question from Ming-Jinn (!!). He only acknowledged it when Ming-Jinn showed him the email where he said it. (Source: Daniel Kleven, who was at that March 26 meeting. Daniel is happy to grant that this could have been Tom genuinely forgetting details amidst a flurry of emails.)

- c. This also raises questions about the legitimacy of the process. If everything was above board, why the need to tell people not to talk?

13. People's grievances were leaked to non-elders.

- a. Daniel Kleven – he submitted a grievance, then later a BCS staff person, who is not an elder, asked him about his grievance, indicating he knew not only that Daniel had submitted a grievance but also the contents of the grievance, even though that person should not have had access to it. A couple months later another non-elder BCS faculty reached out to him asking the same questions. And in August, a third faculty member asked similar questions. None of them should have known that Daniel had submitted this grievance nor the contents of his grievance.
- b. A member at the July 11 Q&A said certain elders had twice leaked things she told them in confidence.

14. Ming-Jinn and Bryan were pulled from the preaching and prayer rotation after what they said in April about the Atlanta shootings (Source: Christianity Today article)

- a. This seems like a heavy-handed response. We realize people have different views, and a robust discussion behind the scenes is fine. But pulling them from the rotation seems inappropriate, given that they were godly pastors, approved by the congregation, and had served on staff for many years. Why not take time to work through the different opinions instead of pulling them from the rotation?

15. Jason's concerns in his resignation letter and the elders' seeming non-response

- a. Jason shared fears of a unity culture (e.g. people are willing to say things one-on-one that they won't share in an all-elder meeting). The elders' response was essentially, "Most of the elders believe we have a plurality culture" (Source: Elders' response to Jason's letter emailed 8/7 by Kurt Elting-Ballard).
- b. In response to Jason's "culture of charges" they said that no formal charges were filed against Jason. (See same letter as above). That seems like a red herring. Tom Lutz, in front of all the elders, accused Jason of subordinating the gospel; it's irrelevant whether that charge was formal or not.
- c. Jason talked about how painful the April 20 "tribunal" meeting was, saying "That meeting might have been the low point for me in my time at Bethlehem." (Source: Jason's resignation letter). Tom Lutz has defended this type of discussion as normal iron-sharpening-iron, speaking the truth in love, but if multiple elders have been hurt, it seems there's a problem, and we wish the elders would address it.

16. It seems that many of these concerning dynamics (people getting hurt and limiting information to the congregation) may be longstanding problems at Bethlehem.

- a. In 2013, after David Michael (Pastor for Parenting and Family Discipleship) and Sally Michael (Minister for Resources and Program Development) resigned, a group of concerned members gathered enough votes to call a special meeting. At that meeting they sought 45 minutes to present to the congregation a list of grievances and concerns about how Bethlehem handled the whole ordeal. Instead of giving them a chance to share, the elders raised objections and used

Robert's Rules to prevent them from sharing. Nothing was shared, and the people raising concerns eventually gave up and (presumably) left the church (one was disciplined out for being "divisive"), with the elders never communicating to the congregation about what happened or what was learned from either the resignations or the fallout afterwards. To our shame, Mickey and I didn't follow up then.

- b. As some people have shared their stories online, other people from years past have chimed in saying, "we had the same experience years ago and left for similar reasons." Some names that we've recognized from our time at Bethlehem: Nick Laparra (TBI grad 2008-2012), Jill Swanson (former missionary, at Bethlehem from 1981-2010), Matt Perman (former Director of Strategy at Desiring God 2011). The challenges facing Bethlehem today are not just a recent problem due to current cultural tensions but seem to be something much deeper.

17. Ethnic Harmony Taskforce concerns (Source: Daniel Kleven, who was the scribe for the taskforce)

- a. In March 2019, the taskforce was commissioned by unanimous vote by the elders and had elders and congregants from all three campuses. While they were working, the members of the taskforce were told things like, "you're doing the Lord's work, this is great stuff, and Bethlehem will be richly blessed by your work."
- b. Yet rumors started swirling about this "radical" group at Bethlehem, so the taskforce asked the elders to be upfront and say that the elders commissioned the taskforce, to give the names of the members, to state that some elders were on the taskforce, etc. The elders never did anything to alleviate the rumors, and the minorities felt hung out to dry.
- c. Final report was completed July 2019 and submitted to the elders, though they had wanted to submit to the congregation. The elders didn't release it to the congregation for a year and a half (February 2021) and only after a congregant made a motion requesting the release of the full, unedited report. This delay again made the minorities feel their voices were being silenced and that the elders were ashamed of their work.
- d. When the elders finally did release the report to the congregation, it did not include two of the four sections that were included in the original report, compounding the silencing of the voices of those who worked so hard on it.
- e. The elders gave false reasons for not releasing the other two sections. The internal reasoning was fear of stirring up CRT controversy. (Source: taskforce discussions, 2/9/21 email from a DT elder summarizing the concern, quoted in Daniel Kleven's 4/26/21 letter to the DT elders). But this reason wasn't given publicly. Instead, there were two stated reasons given in the released report:
  - i. The first stated reason was confidentiality concerns – that people had given their interviews without expecting it to go public.
    - a. These confidentiality concerns were a red herring – Daniel offered to go through and redact all identifying info, which would have taken 10 minutes, or to email the people interviewed for permission, but the elders wouldn't do it.
  - ii. The second stated reason was outdated definitions.
    - a. This could have easily been mitigated by acknowledging it was written in 2019 and some things have changed.
- f. When the remaining members of the task force were discussing which parts of the report to release, they eventually got to the point where all members were comfortable releasing the entire, unedited report. But the elders wouldn't do it because it was "too late."
  - i. Daniel's email to the elders: *However, by the end of the process every former TF [Taskforce] member was willing to release all four reports. Here is what some of the most hesitant members said: "I will not hold the group back from deciding our preference is to*

*release the whole thing.” “Personally I am ok with either full disclosure or partial disclosure.” By this point, it was “too late” to change course, and only two reports went out. It’s ironic that sometimes the dynamics of a big organization mean that communication takes months and even years to appear (if at all), and other times communication feels rushed through to meet a deadline. I’m not sure who set that particular deadline, or why. (Source: Daniel Kleven’s 4/26/21 letter to the DT elders)*

- g. When the report was released to the congregation, language was inserted into the 2019 report in order to make it appear that the original intent had been to release only some of the report. Here is a description from Daniel Kleven:
  - i. *One additional discrepancy I want to point out in the document that was released to the congregation (Ethnic Harmony Task Force Report Congregation 02-2021). That document has two sections: (a) Kurt Elting-Ballard’s cover letter, dated February 12, 2021 (2 pages); (b) the summary (8 pages) with a cover page dated July 12, 2019. However, on page 1 of the summary (page 4 in the pdf), the rationale quoted above for only releasing two of the four documents was inserted into this page, even though it was actually written in February 2021. This gives the appearance that the original task force intentions was not to release all four reports, when in reality, the intention was to release everything, and the original summary report included all four links at the end. It seems to me that material written in 2021 should not have been inserted in a section dated 2019. (Source: Daniel Kleven’s 4/26/21 letter to the DT elders, [EHTF Report](#))*
- h. Much more could be said about the taskforce, especially about the many people who were deeply hurt. We would love for their stories to be told and for the elders to follow up, but that is beyond the scope of this letter. We raise it here primarily to point out that these partial truths (not giving the actual reasons, inserting language to make it look like a partial release was the original plan, lack of transparency) seem to fit the pattern of the other concerns we raise in this document.

18. Women’s Staff Report concerns (similar to Ethnic Harmony Taskforce).

- a. Stephanie Denzer, former Ministry Assistant, described the circumstances of the report and the failures around it in [detail](#). We find her account credible and deeply concerning, and we highly recommend reading it in full.
- b. In 2018 the elders commissioned a report to understand the experience of women on staff at Bethlehem and figure out what needed to change. After the report was shared with the elders, instead of repentance and a commitment to fix the problems described by the report, the elders thanked the women and then effectively ignored it (at least downtown).
- c. The downtown pastors neglected to repent of their own failures and follow up, and instead prioritized other things. This communicates and compounds the very culture of neglect that the report described.
- d. There were no follow-up meetings until 10 months later (initiated by the women), and they were attended by only a few pastors (some of whom left early). Eventually two concrete changes were made, but with no reference to the report and with no apology for what had happened. The congregation was never told about the Women’s Staff Report.
- e. We don’t expect that internal reports like the Women’s Staff Report be released to the public, but we do expect that when people invest their time and effort, and are willing to be vulnerable enough to explain how they’ve been harmed by the culture, the leaders should take that seriously and listen well, repent for their own contributions, and take steps forward to set things right with the people who have been harmed.



## ***People Getting Hurt***

One reason the institutional protection described above is so concerning is that behind the scenes, so many people are getting hurt by Bethlehem. We know many who have been deeply wounded at Bethlehem and don't feel comfortable sharing publicly. The list below is a sampling of stories that have been shared publicly about experiences at Bethlehem. We realize each story gives only one perspective. While we have not personally vetted the details of the stories, apart from confirming that they are connected to Bethlehem or BCS, they seem credible and deeply concerning.

Each name is hyperlinked to that person's story. We are linking to them here to emphasize the need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation. It seems there is something about the Bethlehem culture that is hurting people, and we believe a 3<sup>rd</sup> party investigation could help reveal blind spots, point to a diagnosis, suggest needed changes, etc.

A few requests: please do not dismiss these stories because they're shared publicly, e.g. "oh they should have brought their concerns to the elders first. They shouldn't be airing out church issues in public." Many of these people did try to bring things up to church leaders, often multiple times. Sharing things publicly is often a last resort. Also, please do not dismiss someone's story because you believe they are misusing a term and falling into "concept creep." They may not use terms or language that you agree with, but we hope you will still listen to their story.

The titles given are our best understanding of each person's role while they were still at Bethlehem. They are given alphabetically by last name.

1. [Lydia Arant](#) – Bethlehem Librarian
2. [Crystal Bowers](#) – Bethlehem Member and Wife of BCS Professor
3. [Stephanie Denzer](#) – Bethlehem Ministry Assistant
4. [Hilary Engel](#) – Bethlehem Worship Team
5. [Janice Evans](#) – Ethnic Harmony Taskforce Member
6. [Wanja Kuria](#) – BCS College Student and Ethnic Harmony Taskforce Member
7. [Benjamin Lantzer](#) – BCS Seminary Student
8. [Nick Laparra](#) – TBI Student 2008-2012
9. [Jodi and Darin Matheson](#) – Bethlehem Members
10. [Ann Mekela](#) – Campus Outreach Staff
11. [Cara Meyer](#) – Member and Pastor's Wife
12. [Leah Moreno](#) – Bethlehem Member
13. [Matt Perman](#) – Director of Strategy, Desiring God 2011
14. [Debby Pickering](#) – Bethlehem Member and Pastor's Wife
15. [Jill Swanson](#) – Bethlehem Member 1981-2010
16. [Steve Takata](#) – Bethlehem Member
17. [Brenda Thorsen](#) – Disability Coordinator, South Campus, 2016

## ***Concerns about Bethlehem College & Seminary***

Note: the playbook here seems similar to the church side. People raise concerns. They get silenced by institutional might. Instead of trying to fix problems, the institution protects the brand and suppresses disagreeing voices.

1. BCS has used some sort of non-disparagement agreements to silence former faculty and staff. In addition to preventing anything negative from coming out, this isolates hurting people and keeps them from being able to seek the help they may need.
2. So many highly-regarded people have resigned from BCS in recent years.
  - a. Johnathon Bowers (Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Theology)
  - b. Ryan Griffith (Assistant Professor of Church History and Humanities, Director of Integrated Curriculum)
  - c. Daniel Kleven (Director of Admissions)
  - d. Jason Meyer (Associate Professor of Preaching, Board of Trustees)
  - e. Travis Myers (Assistant Professor of Church History and Mission Studies)
  - f. Bryan Pickering (Instructor of Biblical Counseling)
  - g. Barb Waldemar (Dean of Women)
3. Johnathon Bowers' experience as he advocated for institutional change
  - a. In his resignation, he says that "key leaders among the Bethlehem College & Seminary Board of Trustees, administration, and faculty have engaged in patterns of behavior that are emotionally and spiritually abusive. These include, but are not limited to, using Scripture or Christian vocabulary to dismiss employee and student complaints, silencing or shaming those that would challenge unhealthy aspects of the school's culture, isolating those who have been mistreated or who have concerns about the institution, redirecting sympathy toward those who have caused harm instead of toward those who have suffered it, and prioritizing the image and survival of the institution over the well-being of its members."
  - b. Further details on Johnathon's experience:
    - i. [Clarifying comments on his resignation, with link to resignation letter](#)
    - ii. [John Piper's response to his resignation](#)
    - iii. [Response to Abigail Dodds' criticism](#)
4. BCS suppressed two reports by Daniel Kleven.
  - a. In his role as Director of Admissions, Daniel researched why it has been hard to recruit minority students to BCS. He compiled two reports. First was a survey of minority experiences at BCS. Second was a report on Bethlehem's connection to Douglas Wilson. (Daniel hadn't initially planned to do the second report, but after so many minorities in the survey mentioned this as problematic, he looked into it).
  - b. He planned to email the reports to the faculty, to be discussed in an all-faculty meeting. But when he first sent them to the President's Committee, he was told not to show them to anyone (he had already shared it with Kenny Stokes, his mentor).
  - c. Even when he asked permission to share them with Jason Meyer or Sam Crabtree (Chair of the BCS board), he was forbidden. It would have been bad enough to say "this is unimportant, or we don't have time for this, or we have other priorities." But to forbid him to show them to anyone, especially his pastor or the BCS Board Chair, seems indicting.

- d. Daniel's full story is on [his blog](#), which includes one of the reports.
5. BCS suppressed Daniel Kleven's blog post responding to "The Sin of Empathy."
- a. Daniel wrote a response to Joe Rigney's "The Sin of Empathy" and wanted to post it on his personal blog. As a courtesy, he let Joe Rigney and Rick Segal (Vice President of Advancement at BCS) know that he planned to post it. This was shared with Daniel's supervisor, Jason Abell, who forbade him from posting it. Isn't the university supposed to be a place where you wrestle with different ideas and viewpoints? Why was this seen as so threatening? (Source: [Daniel Kleven](#))
6. Tim Tomlinson (then President of BCS) mischaracterized the 1/31 QSM motion (regarding Joe Rigney and Douglas Wilson) as a threat against BCS and academic freedom.
- a. A few days after the QSM he led an all-faculty-and-staff meeting, where he claimed the motion opposed academic freedom. But many of the staff hadn't been at the QSM. He didn't even give them the text of the motion and its preface (which was long and specific and intentionally included language about how elders and faculty are free to hold their own opinions). This seems counter to thoughtful, dispassionate discussion of truth.
  - b. It seems hypocritical to claim that the motion (that asked Bethlehem to clarify its position regarding the "sin of empathy") opposed academic freedom, while suppressing Daniel Kleven's personal blog posts about the "sin of empathy."
7. BCS did not properly address concerns about Andy Naselli
- a. Many of the concerns about Andy Naselli have been well-documented elsewhere (See Julie Roys #3 and stories from BCS linked above). We don't think it's necessarily problematic for BCS to have a forceful professor, so long as there are guardrails to protect people (e.g. having a supervisor work with him on certain things, encouraging repentance, good reconciliation with people hurt, etc).
  - b. But if people who raise concerns don't have them adequately addressed (See Pickering's resignation letter linked in Roys #3 and the clear frustration by students in their stories), those guardrails are not working and it becomes an institutional problem, not just a problem with a specific professor.
8. BCS used an investigation to protect the organization rather than address concerns.
- a. When people raised concerns about the work environment and culture, BCS hired an outside law firm, rather than try and listen to the concerns and change the culture.
  - b. The law firm investigated primarily the legal aspect ("Were BCS's employment decisions, practices, or policies illegal?"), rather than the serious concerns about culture.
  - c. [Johnathon Bowers](#), one of the people who had raised these concerns, describes in detail the investigation and how it served to protect the institution rather than addressing the concerns themselves.

## Conclusion

Something's not right. Three pastors resigned without a job lined up, speaking about unethical behavior, bullying, and a pressure to conform. Concerns raised by congregants were not properly followed up on by the elders. Individuals at Bethlehem have been hurt by the leadership, some of them years ago. In this context, the elders have not responded with repentance and a desire to bring things into the light, but rather seem to have minimized their own responsibility and limited information to the congregation, deflected blame, and given half truths or partial truths.

These are very heavy concerns. They bring to mind what a Bethlehem elder once shared with us, paraphrasing a John Piper quote, "The only thing worse than having your sin exposed is not having it exposed." We think this is true for Bethlehem. As ugly as it is to see all this on paper, it would be worse if it goes unaddressed and Bethlehem continues pretending like everything is fine.

The *Christianity Today* article said that one Bethlehem pastor said "his congregation...has been encouraged by the frankness of the discussion and is ready to move forward." We don't fault this pastor for reporting what he is observing, but we are speaking up about what we've observed. We're concerned that moving forward without addressing the root issues will ultimately do more harm for the cause of Christ and the people of God.

These deep problems need to be addressed. The gospel frees us to bring our sin into the light and repent. We plead with the elders to do that now. As Pastor Jason shared, "there's mercy for all my failures, so let the light shine." We would love for the elders to bring things into the light so that the church can move toward healing.

## Appendix A – Comments on a Few Sources

1. We had a 4-hour conversation with Daniel and Ellen Kleven on 8/24. Daniel was a very helpful source because he had a front row seat to many aspects of this story:
  - a. He was scribe for the ethnic harmony task force
  - b. He was on staff at BCS as Director of Admissions (he did this concurrently with being a seminary student)
    - i. He had his two reports suppressed, as well as his post disagreeing with “The Sin of Empathy.”
    - ii. He was at the staff/faculty meeting where Tim Tomlinson spoke negatively about Janette Takata’s motion and how it was a threat to academic freedom
    - iii. At that same meeting, he heard Andy Naselli speak negatively about the Takatas to the whole group.
  - c. He was one of 13 Bethlehem members who filed grievances against Andy Naselli and was thus at the 3/26 reconciliation meeting.
  - d. He was part of the Bethlehem Seminary Class of 2020
    - i. A friend from his cohort texted Daniel because he was puzzled about why Brian Tabb was soliciting character references for Andy Naselli. This gave Daniel evidence that the elders were planning for some sort of investigation of Naselli.
  - e. He had personal conversations with Ming-Jinn Tong and Bryan Pickering while everything was happening.
2. Julie Roys Articles
  - a. [Article #1](#) *John Piper’s Successor Latest to Resign as Allegations of Abusive Leadership Mount at Bethlehem Baptist* – First article by Julie Roys, highlighting the resignations and the poor response to the ethnic harmony taskforce and revealing that Bryan Pickering resigned in protest over a pattern of abuse and domineering behavior among the elders. Raises other concerns (connection to Joe Rigney, poor care of people due to Piper's position that Christians should not remarry except in cases of death of the spouse). As a side note, this was the first point where anything substantive had been said publicly. Up until then, communication to the congregation as a whole had been extremely limited (though we do appreciate how smaller gatherings had been set up, like the July 11 Q&A, and elder willingness to answer questions).
  - b. [Article #2](#) *Former Bethlehem Baptist Pastors Say Church’s Culture Breeds Fear, Tolerates Abuse* – Summarizes and goes deeper into Bryan Pickering's concerns about domineering and abuse. Also unpacks more of what was behind the concerns about Douglas Wilson and Joe Rigney. Includes Jason Meyer's resignation letter, full text of Steve and Janette Takata's motions, and starts to share some other stories of people who have felt abused at Bethlehem.
  - c. [Article #3](#) *Former Pastor: Bethlehem Baptist Dismissed Abuse Allegations Without Proper Investigation* – Detailing some of the actions that elders took to dismiss the grievances against Andy Naselli, as well as recounting one of the student grievances against Naselli. Includes Bryan Pickering’s resignation letter from BCS. Personally, we found this article by far the most indicting and concerning.

3. Blog posts by Daniel Kleven
  - a. [Bethlehem College & Seminary, Ethnic Harmony, and Douglas Wilson](#) – A recounting of Daniel’s report on BCS (and Bethlehem)’s relationship with Douglas Wilson and BCS actions to silence the report.
  - b. [Why I Spoke with Julie Roys](#) – An explanation of why Daniel spoke with Julie Roys.
  - c. [Some Guys Need to Learn How to Take a Punch](#) – Describes one of the perspectives given by a professor at BCS that “some guys need to learn how to take a punch,” (in line with Andy Naselli’s teaching pedagogy) and expression of Daniel’s disagreement.
  - d. [Regarding Bryan Pickering’s reliability](#) as a primary source for the Julie Roys articles, Daniel Kleven pointed out the careful note-taking that Pickering did, compared to the half-truths from the elders.
4. [Christianity Today](#) *Bethlehem Baptist Leaders Clash Over ‘Coddling’ and ‘Cancel Culture’* – Describes some of the events at Bethlehem and highlights the various issues that have come up. Also highlighted a few new stories or other people speaking up with concerns, but according to many who were interviewed (see the Twitter aggregation below), emphasized the church's perspective and focused on theological or philosophical issues rather than the actual allegations of abuse.
5. [World Magazine](#) *Breach of Trust* – The first (and so far only) extended article that interviewed Andy Naselli at length. Goes into depth on the interactions between Andy Naselli and the Takatas and students and the elder investigation into the grievances, the charges of “subordinating the gospel,” and Andy’s own words describing how he reacted and what he thought in the circumstances.
6. Twitter Aggregations (Includes the stories linked earlier, but also has other stories from people connected with Bethlehem church plants and reflections on the Christianity Today article)
  - a. [Collection 1](#)
  - b. [Collection 2](#)

## Appendix B – A Timeline of Mentioned Events

2019 March	Ethnic Harmony Task Force formed with unanimous approval by elders. It has members and elders from all three campuses. Report completed July 2019
2021 January 31	January Quarterly Strategy Meeting (QSM) – Motions from Steve and Janette Takata – please release the full text of the ethnic harmony task force and please make a statement separating the views of Bethlehem from that of Joe Rigney and Douglas Wilson espoused in “The Sin of Empathy.” Andy Naselli stands up and says (in effect) “If this passes, I will resign from being an elder”
Feb. 10	Andy Naselli emails the Bethlehem members who attended the 1/31 QSM, apologizing for his actions, but also doubling down on saying that he refuses to participate in “cancel culture.”
March 16	All-elder meeting to review formal charges against Andy Naselli (all charges dismissed)
March 26	Downtown Campus night of prayer. Jason Meyer shares about writing a resignation letter in his head as well as prophetic visions. The group of people who had submitted grievances against Andy Naselli meet separately with some elders for a reconciliation meeting.
April 20	All-Elder meeting at South Campus. Called the “tribunal” in Meyer’s resignation letter
April 24	DT family meeting
April 25	April QSM – Andy apologizes. Kurt Elting-Ballard abruptly closes meeting, frustrating and upsetting people with concerns/questions
May 15	Ming-Jinn shares initial resignation letter with the DT Elders
May 19	Ming-Jinn’s resignation shared with congregation
June 18	Bryan Pickering resigns
June 24	Mickey phone call w/ Bud Burk
July 12	Jason Meyer resigns
July 18	All-church family meeting. Jason and Cara Meyer say goodbye. Ken Currie summarizes their resignation letter.
July 25	July QSM at North campus. Motion to seek out a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party investigation fails. Tom Lutz shares his perspective on how the three who had resigned (Ming-Jinn, Bryan, Jason) had “subordinated the gospel” in prayers, welcomes, and preaching.
July 31	Mickey phone call with Tom Lutz on “subordinating the gospel” and the three resignations.
August 4	Jason and Cara Meyer release their resignation letter
August 7	Jason Meyer’s resignation letter officially released with elder commentary
August 11-16	Smaller Q&As with elders and congregants
September 12	Downtown QSM. Elders describe proposal for consultations to improve shepherding and communication. No time given for public questions.