



Steven Takata [REDACTED]@gmail.com>

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## Fwd: Follow-up regarding the QSM

1 message

[REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Thu, May 20, 2021 at 10:24 AM

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

[REDACTED]  
**Subject: Fwd: Follow-up regarding the QSM**

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

[REDACTED]  
**Date:** February 3, 2021 at 11:10:21 PM CST

**To:** Andy Naselli <andy.naselli@[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** Bethlehem Elders <Elders.All@[REDACTED]>

**Subject: Re: Follow-up regarding the QSM**

Bless you for doing this. The work of the elder is hard and we learn lessons often the hard way. Thanks for apologizing. It means a lot! You're a good elder.

On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 21:36 Andy Naselli <andy.naselli@[REDACTED]> wrote:

Fellow elders,

I would like to follow-up on what happened at the QSM last Sunday evening, particularly (1) to apologize and (2) to explain why I said what I did.

(I was planning to share this verbally at the elder summit, but I decided to email it to give you time to process it and follow up this weekend if you'd like.)

### **Apology**

Do you ever have an argument with someone and then afterwards rerun it several times in your mind? I've rerun Sunday night several times, and I wish I could have a do-over. There are so many other things I wish I would have said, and in the heat of the moment it was unwise to say that if the elders followed this motion

that I would resign. (It would have been better for me to share that with just the elders, not with the congregation at that point.) I didn't mean for that to sound like, "If you vote for this, I'm threatening to quit." Some people took it that way, and that's a sheep gate I failed to close. That's on me. I'm sorry for not representing you well and for complicating your already full shepherding ministries.

I didn't intend to make a threat ("a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done") or a power play ("tactics exhibiting or intended to increase a person's power or influence"). I meant to convey that I steadfastly refuse to be part of this kind of "cancel culture" and that if my fellow pastors would endorse such an approach (and I highly doubt they would!) that I would not be able to serve alongside them with a good conscience any longer.

### **Explanation**

Here's some of what was going through my mind on Sunday evening.

I have been majorly burdened for our church for the past several years regarding how we approach ethnic harmony and related issues in our culture, including partisan politics, Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, intersectionality, Black Lives Matter, etc. I feel like we have encountered wave after wave after wave and that in a good-faith effort to keep the peace and maintain some form of unity we have not spoken with sufficient clarity about what is true and what is false and instead have attempted to appease left-leaning folks who are virtually unappeasable unless we lead our church off-mission and adopt a progressive, worldly agenda. (I recognize that there is a dangerous ditch to the right as well.)

Here are some of the events I have in mind:

1. On March 5, 2019 at an all-elder meeting, [REDACTED] invited a group of people led by Jonathon Bowers and Janice Perez Evans and others to make a "call for diversity" motion. That meeting felt to me like an ambush with demands, and in retrospect I think the elders acquiesced by commissioning the Ethnic Harmony Task Force. The leaders of that group included members who were so far left that many of them have left the church by now and have made recurring divisive statements (privately and publicly). (E.g., see "[When the Faithful Flee](#)," an article published on Tuesday by Janice Perez Evans that criticizes the Bethlehem elders but without explicitly naming us.)

2. Others who are sympathetic with the above people have made recurring divisive statements—such as [this recent post by Janette Takata on Facebook](#), which includes the pronouncement, “I voted straight ticket Democrat in 2020”—as she chastises faithful men such as Al Mohler, Wayne Grudem, and John MacArthur. (She even goes after John Piper on vaccinations!)
3. It seems that Bethlehem pastors have either not been confronting members about such statements or that some may even be encouraging such statements.
4. On October 27, 2020, CityJoy hosted a panel on racial trauma that included Kyle Howard (among others). And this was after Kyle Howard had repeatedly slandered Joe Rigney and Bethlehem College & Seminary on social media.

With that (and more) in the background, as soon as Janette Takata started to make her motion, I sensed where it was going. This is her motion:

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. Such a statement shall be made by the next Quarterly Strategy Meeting of BBC or no later than May 31, 2021, the day before Dr. Joe Rigney assumes office as the President of BCS.

Once she made that motion, I resolved that we must not give in. Her motion attempts to drive a wedge between Bethlehem Baptist Church and Bethlehem College & Seminary.

That’s why in the QSM I said that if the elders decide to follow this proposal that I will resign as a pastor as a matter of principle. We haven’t publicly made such a disclaimer in other situations—for example, [REDACTED]’s comments in the benediction of the [REDACTED] sermon (“If you as a church don’t like what I said today, you will have to get another pastor—because I believe this to the back of my teeth.”) or what some pastors have posted on social media or John Piper’s DG article on voting on October 22 or Kyle Howard’s speaking at a CityJoy event on October 27. Why make such a statement now in response to Janette Takata’s motion? If we do so now in the manner Janette Takata’s motion proposes, then we would be signaling that our church is publicly distancing ourselves from Bethlehem College & Seminary and the new president.

The motion from Janette Takata is concerning to me:

1. It is not a motion that edifies the church. It is more like grenade launching.
2. The attitude undergirding the motion is too easily offended or hurt, and it turns that woundedness or offendedness into a crusade (which illustrates [the very point Rigney is making about empathy](#)).
3. The attitude undergirding the motion is disrespectful to elders, especially when the matter at hand is one that the elders have already considered.
4. Following this motion would set a bad precedent—that is, that the pastors must publicly repudiate presidents, pastors, trustees, etc. whenever they offend some people in the church. It should go without saying that opinions of pastors, faculty, etc. that are not in our authoritative documents are not necessarily the opinion of all others. (Maybe it would be worth saying that—but not in any way that would signal we are driving a wedge between our church and our school.)

I love Bethlehem Baptist Church, and I love Bethlehem College & Seminary. I celebrate our Elder Affirmation of Faith. I love our shared mission to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. I so deeply want our church to stay on mission; to cherish what is good, beautiful, and true; and to refuse to capitulate to the spirit of this age.

I love you, brothers, and I wish we all knew each other better. I'd welcome the opportunity to follow up with any of you. (You're welcome to join me for a morning workout at my home in [REDACTED]!)

Warmly,  
Andy

[REDACTED]