

April 21, 2021

Dear Steve and Janette,

We love you and are so thankful for your willingness to bring us your concerns. Your passion for truth is very evident, and we are eager to continue to pursue the unity of the bond of peace. We write this letter to bring clarity in love to serve the reconciliation we desire. In pursuing truth together, we believe it is very important that we acknowledge those things that we can own and also provide clarification and gentle correction where appropriate.

The elders have prayerfully and carefully reflected on your April 6 presentation to the elders, and we acknowledge five specific ways where we have sinned against you or failed to lead and care for you well.

1. Bryan Pickering responded to your November 5, 2019 email about Man Rampant by validating your concerns and creating an expectation that the elders would soon take up this matter. There were pastoral discussions about Man Rampant and individual leaders engaged with Joe Rigney and concerned members since that time, but your letter of concern was never brought before the Council of elders. Pastor Bryan recently apologized to you for his failure to bring this before the DT or All Elder Council, and for failing to circle back with you regarding your initial letter.
2. The elders did not communicate to the church membership in a timely way following your motion at the January 2021 QSM and Andy Naselli's apology letter in February 2021. The Council's lack of swift, clear communication led to some confusion and questions. Kurt Elting-Ballard apologized for this in his April 15 all-church email.
3. Individual elders have communicated to you a partial but incomplete perspective on the elders' grievance process that has fostered incorrect and unhelpful inferences.
4. Andy Naselli requested and received forgiveness from you on April 15 for sins of hasty speech at the QSM and a lack of wisdom in what he shared at a BCS staff meeting in February. Andy has also confessed his sin to the Council and BCS staff, and he plans to do so at the upcoming QSM.
5. In response to admonitions from other elders, Sam Crabtree sought forgiveness from you and the Council for his wrong and hurtful questions and comments to you following your presentation to the elders on April 6.

We desire to walk in the light of Christ and seek reconciliation without delay, and so we ask for your forgiveness for these things.

Additionally, the elders believe that you made some inaccurate claims, unfounded accusations, and uncharitable judgments in your April 6 letter to the elders. We offer four examples for your prayerful consideration.

1. Your claim that ██████████ asked Kurt Elting-Ballard five times for a QSM motion related to the Ethnic Harmony Task Force is simply not true. We understand that Pastor ██████████ has privately clarified this with you.

2. You did not accurately present the Council's engagement with Andy Naselli at the February 2021 Elder Summit, which focused on the elders' affirmations and denials and not on persuading Andy to repent of sin.
3. It is incorrect to state that "All elders were exhorted not to talk to "you after the March 16 elder meeting and that we treated you "like unbelievers." This misrepresents the response of the elder chair and DT elders, who communicated the elders decision and then sought to coordinate an appropriate shepherding response.
4. You have made sweeping charges that "elders have intentionally and craftily created confusion" and have stirred up division, slandered, gossiped, and attacked you without evidence of those serious sins. You also disparagingly present Steven Lee's comments at the QSM as "smoke and mirrors" and compare the elders' actions to the cover-ups of heinous sins of sexual abuse at organizations like RZIM and USAG. In these matters, we believe that you employ elevated language and make uncharitable judgments towards the Council, and we admonish you in love to stop making these claims because they do not serve the cause of truth or the reconciliation that we seek with you.

Such interactions like this are complex and require patience with one another, forbearance, and forthright, loving conversations. We are thankful for the reconciliation process that has already begun and desire to continue that process with you.

We are fully committed to charitable judgments of intent, and we are eager to forgive and seek forgiveness. We also believe that the public nature of the QSM motion ultimately did not serve you. We desire appropriate confidentiality for this process to protect you from further wounds from others. We believe that the uncharitable judgments made to you from congregants came as a result of common misunderstandings, and even our own failure to shepherd with clarity. In this spirit, and out of love for you, we strongly urge you to refrain from making new motions at QSMs while the reconciliation process with the elders is ongoing, in accordance with the Relational Commitments which states that we will obey God's command to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) by looking to our church for assistance and cooperating with our leaders.

In our desire to love you and serve you best, we believe the most appropriate next step is for you to meet with [REDACTED] and Kurt Elting Ballard; please receive our heart for you in their shepherding and care.

In humility and love for you,

**The Bethlehem Baptist Church Elders**