

Statements and Motion BBC Jan 2021 QSM

Motion 2:

Background:

In March 2019, concerned members brought a motion to the council of elders to identify barriers to ethnic minority leadership and act to break down those barriers.

The elders voted unanimously in favor of the motion, placed a hold on those that were currently in the leadership pipeline for 6 months, and formed an 18-member Ethnic Harmony Task Force of elders and lay members from each campus, which first met in April 2019.

Over countless hours in the summer of 2019, the Ethnic Harmony Task Force

“Reviewed the process for identifying prospective leaders”,

Gathered “demographic information about Bethlehem’s three campuses”

Identified “aspects of Bethlehem’s church culture that tend to discourage ethnic minority participation and suggest[ed] positive changes to encourage greater participation”

Along with 6 other specific, actionable, and time-bound objectives.

When the task force completed their work, they presented reports to the elder board.

Since that time, there has been little publicized about the Task Force’s efforts, or Bethlehem’s actions as a result. Pastor Jason’s 20/20 Vision sermon in Feb 2020 made reference to the work of the task force but with little detail.

Problem:

Without clear, intentional sharing of information, we cannot know what to be concerned about or how to celebrate advancements in Ethnic Harmony.

Without the public release of the task force’s findings and little visible evidence of change, it makes many feel like their efforts were in vain, problems are being swept under the rug, or that findings are being intentionally concealed.

Several of the lay members of the task force no longer worship at Bethlehem.

Bethlehem’s DNA document clearly illustrates our goal as we affirm in our sixth specific priority of Ethnic Harmony.

“Bethlehem aims to display **gospel unity** in a context of **ethnic diversity**.”

And

“We want to show these biblical principles as real and important by having **corporate worship gatherings**, friendships, marriages, adoptions, evangelism, **staffing**, and other actions that practically reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of our church and community.”

Pastor Kenny said two weeks ago in his sermon at the downtown campus that some have left because we talk too much about ethnic harmony and some because we talk too little. Our DNA uses words like display, experience, model, love, show, act. I would argue that with a clear understanding of the priorities of Bethlehem, the problem does not lie in the quantity of words, but the quality of action.

Justification:

Bethlehem is one church on three campuses. We have one mission statement and one DNA document. As a member I have covenanted “to watch over one another in brotherly love” We are an elder-led, congregationally-governed church. As stated on the BBC website “We believe that **the ultimate check against sinful or unwise decisions by the Elders is ... a wise, engaged, and biblically faithful congregation.**”

I am calling on the elders for greater transparency in failure and success, struggle and victory. Please don't let the silence scream louder than the truth.

Therefore

I move that the full, unedited reports from the Ethnic Harmony Task Force be publicly released to the members of Bethlehem and by the next QSM the elder board and each campus present specific actions that have been taken as a result of the reports' findings to more “practically reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of our church and community.”

Motion 1:

Jude 1-2: Jude,^a a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James: To those who are the called,^b loved^{a c} by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.^{d 2} May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.^a

Since God is the author of faith who alone can call, and love and keep believers, as well as the author of mercy, peace and love who alone can multiply that to his people, and since Christ's church, whose members are called Beloved, are commanded to extend mercy, peace and love to other, in Jesus' name,, it is in that spirit that Steve and I are bringing two motions to the church tonight.

Whereas on October 19, 2020, Man Rampant, Season One was released on Amazon Prime. Episode 1 features Joe Rigney who announces his position as faculty at Bethlehem College and Seminary. Four days later, an elder from BBC gave the episode a 5 star review stating: "Doug Wilson's interview of Joe Rigney on the "The Sin of Empathy" (Episode 1) is thought-provoking and insightful. It applies to marriage, parenting, family relations, neighbor relations, church member relations, counseling, leading, and pastoring." The elder's profile on Amazon Prime describes him as "Professor (systematic theology, New Testament, ethics) and pastor (Bethlehem Baptist Church)."

Whereas I emailed pastors Bryan Pickering, Jason Meyer, Brian Tabb in Nov 2019, as well as then Minister for Women Samm Poteat, with my concerns regarding the Man Rampant episode. I specifically asked: "Will the elders of BBC and the faculty/upper administration at BCS please directly and publicly address the hurtful and problematic interpretation of theology in these brothers' publicly shared viewpoints?" I was asked for and granted permission for the recipients of the email to share it with a broader group of elders. To date, a public statement has not been released declaring the viewpoints expressed by Joe Rigney in the Man Rampant episode are separate from the views of BCS or BBC. Rather, the 5 star review from a BBC pastor remains the only word or response that could easily be assumed to be an endorsement from BBC.

Whereas the Bethlehem DNA, Priority 5: ADULT EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT states on page 20:

The Bible also calls for developing and equipping leaders who will be mighty in the Scriptures. These leaders may serve the flock at Bethlehem in leadership positions... Leadership development is an essential calling in the life of an elder. Elders are to take what they have heard and learned and entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2)."

32% of BBC's current elders have a connection with BCS either by place of employment, current seminary of study, former employment, former studies or as a current Board of Directors. There appears to me to be more than merely an association between BCS and BBC elders. Rather, it could be assumed that as part of leadership development, BCS is for some elders, a pipeline of leadership and theological training and for others an endorsement of their leadership and theological training.

Whereas in the QSM in July 2020, the members of BBC voted yes on the 20/20 Vision structural changes. The structural changes kept BCS under the full counsel of elders and the Lead Pastor of BBC. It is and should continue to be permissible for an individual member of BCS to write an article, a book, create a podcast episode or a video segment expressing their individual views. Further, it is and should continue to be permissible for a single member of the BBC elders who agree with the viewpoint expressed in that media to publicly endorse it. However, by attaching their credentials to BCS and BBC in their media statement and/or their endorsement of the media statement, careful attention should be paid to, at minimum, state a disclaimer that the views expressed in the media statement do not reflect the views of BBC. It is problematic to me when I expressly asked the elders to make a statement separating the views expressed in the episode from the views and teachings of the elders of BBC, but rather, no such statement has been made. It is even more disheartening when a 5 star review is attached to the episode by an elder of BBC, who calls himself a pastor. That nomenclature may be synonymous to members of BBC, but it should not be assumed that others outside BBC would differentiate between the role of an elder and a pastor. If one believes that this endorsement comes from a pastor, it could be assumed that such viewpoints may be taught and/or preached at BBC.

Whereas, on September 23, 2020, Pastor Ken Currie emailed the congregation at BBC announcing that Dr. Joe Rigney would become the second President of BCS, assuming office on June 1, 2021. Dr. Joe Rigney is neither an elder nor a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Whereas Bethlehem's written priority is to develop, equip and promote leaders who will be mighty in the Scriptures and who may serve the flock at Bethlehem in leadership positions, and whereas over 30% of Bethlehem's elder leadership has a direct connection to BCS, and whereas I have made this request privately to elders, I am making a motion and asking members of the congregation to join me in the following:

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.