



MABTON GRACE BRETHREN CHURCH

PAUL GUAY, PASTOR

P.O. Box 216 • 428 "B" Street • Mabton, WA 98935 • Phone (509) 894-4477

March 13, 2003

Family Members of Paul Guay,

Greetings to you on behalf of the elders of Mabton Grace Brethren Church. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the actions that the elder board has taken concerning Paul. First, however, let me thank each of you who has shown so much love and concern, not only for Paul, but also for our church family. Your willingness to look beyond your own pain to reach out to others for their protection and benefit truly reflects the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ for His Church. Thank you.

In our deliberations we have spent a great deal of time in prayer and the study of the Word as it relates to sin in the lives of men and women, God's provisions for those of us who have sinned, and the requirements that He places on us as leaders. I will attempt to share some of our thoughts with you in order that you might better understand the decisions that we have made.

One of the scriptures that provides guidance on the character requirements for elders in the church is 1Tim. 3:1-7. There are several items listed there. The elder is to be "above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. He must not be a recent convert.....He must have a good reputation with outsiders." Titus 1:6-9 repeats many of these and adds "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."

These scriptures are pretty plain as they describe the character of an elder or other leader in the church. The challenge for us is to decide how these principles are to be applied. Are these things required of the one who is an elder for his entire life from childhood on? Perhaps these only apply to us after we reach adulthood? We know that before our salvation all of us were disobedient to these and many other standards having no choice since we were "dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph 2:1) before we were saved by God's grace. Since there are warnings here about being a "new convert" it is apparent that those who are recently saved may still not be able to attain these standards. With no instructions about how to apply these principles, how do we decide? When there are no plain directions, it is often helpful to examine how God applies His word to the lives of people recorded in the scriptures as examples for us to follow. We looked at the lives of a number of men including Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and Levi (Matthew).

"...that we may present every man complete in Christ."

COLOSSIANS 1:28

I would encourage you to likewise study the lives of these men, however, the most instructive passages for our situation are about the Apostle Paul, written in his own hand, to his faithful friend Timothy in the very letter from which we extracted our guidance for elders. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--**of whom I am the worst**. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, **the worst of sinners**, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life." (1 Tim 1:12-16) Here is a man who, in his life before salvation, tortured and murdered Christians for their faith. God inspires him to write that he is "the worst of sinners" and in spite of his past life uses him to be the writer of a large portion of the New Testament and the man chosen to take the gospel to the non-Jewish world. Clearly the standards for elders he writes of apply after salvation, concerning the conduct of a leader's life during the time that he holds office. This does not mean that a leader never sins or falls short of these at any time, but that his heart attitude is to be obedient to his Lord and any sins are confessed and repented of as instructed in 1 John 1:9. (You can see the Apostle's struggle with sin in his life in Rom 7:14-8:2) The over arching message that is seen over and over in the scriptures is God's amazing love for us even when we fall, and His amazing grace that reaches out to us all even when we are the most untouchable. It is plain that none of us by ourselves can meet God's perfect standards. Only through His grace provision of the righteousness of Christ, placed to our account, can we truly make the grade.

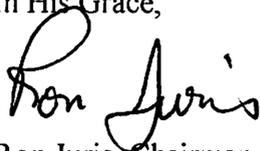
Our job as fellow elders then is to evaluate the life of Paul as he has lived it out with us for the last five years and particularly in the last few days as we have been confronted with the concerns that you, his family, have brought to our attention. It is our observation in the time he has been with us that he has met the standards in every way. He is a devoted husband, one who is self-controlled, and disciplined, yet one who is known for his gentleness, humility, love, patience, grace, and caring for all of the church family, as well as those in the community. He is, without a doubt, a dedicated student of the scriptures and a man through whom God has spoken in his teaching of the Word here in Mabton. In these last few days as we have learned of the distressing details of Paul's early life, we were able to see how he responded and answered you, his family, as he was confronted with his past sins. On Friday after meeting with you, I wondered how he would react. Would he deny his sin or become angry and defensive? Would he storm out of the room feeling betrayed by his God, his family and by me? On the contrary we saw a man who openly confessed his failure and accepted full responsibility for it. In applying the principle of "having his family under control" you are obviously all out of his home and authority, yet we saw him ready to do anything, even giving up the job that he loves so much, the teaching of the Word of God, in order to bring healing to all of you. (You may remember that Paul handed me the paper with Sunday's sermon on it during the early part of the meeting? I am not sure that you understood what he meant by that, but I was fully aware that he had just given me his resignation from the pastorate.) Through this whole ordeal we have witnessed a man who is broken over the sin, the damage that it has caused in your lives, and the offense that it has caused his Lord.

We have also witnessed a man who is not what he used to be. In 1 Cor 6:11 we read "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.", and in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." We believe we are seeing in Paul a man who has been changed by God from the inside out, not by the devices of man, but by the Spirit of God who dwells within him.

Therefore, it is the unanimous decision of the Elder Board of Mabton GBC that we will not accept his resignation but will retain Paul Guay as Pastor, believing that he continues to meet the standards of scripture and of the Mabton Grace Brethren Church. However, in order to ensure the full healing of Paul and his entire family we will seek out a Christ-centered Bible-based counselor and will arrange for his regular participation in counseling until such time that we the elders, upon the advice of the counselor, determine that it is no longer necessary. Further, we will provide additional support in the form of regular accountability. In addition to the already existing daily accountability with Pastor Juan Marengo, the Pastor of La Iglesia de Los Hermanos, (the Hispanic work that is in our church) and the monthly meetings with the entire Elder board, elders Ron Juris and Gordon King will have the specific responsibility to provide weekly mutual support and mutual accountability with Pastor Paul.

Please understand that we have not come to this decision lightly. It has come as a result of much prayer, study, discussion, and soul searching. Our responsibilities and therefore priorities have been to do first what God would require of us, second what is best for the members of the Church family in Mabton, and then what is best for Paul and all of you his family. It is our heart to bring love, mercy, hope and healing, as best we are able, to everyone involved. Our prayers continue to go out for all of you and we continue to be ready and willing to respond if there is any way we can be of service or comfort to you in the future.

In His Grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Juris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "In His Grace,".

Ron Juris, Chairman, on behalf of the Mabton GBC Elder Board

The Long Arm of the Lord

A million dark alleys you can hide in
Dig a tunnel to the center of the earth
Convinced you've got nobody to confide in
Got you questioning the sum of what you're worth.
People label you the black sheep of the family
Come collect upon your prodigal reward
'Cause you can never outrun or go beyond the reaches
of the long arm of the Lord.

I've been ashamed, I've been humbled, and forgiven
I've been chastened by my Father's loving hand
But still, at times, I go on with my evil
It seems to constitute the nature of a man.
But forgiveness is as close as my confession
And my sin amputated by His sword
'Cause I can never outrun or go beyond the reaches
of the long arm of the Lord.

If He gave to me all that I deserve
This could be my final breath
But with compassion in His eyes, He's drawing me home
Into His arms--into His tender arms of rest.

There are pagans at the corners of creation
Making light of this salvation that we know
And with a small narrow mind I give them over
Into the passion of the godless seed they sow.
But, in truth, we have just as much potential
To be godly and perfected by the word
Oh 'cause no one in this world
Can slip beyond the reaches of the long arm of the Lord.
Wayne Watson

Accountability /Safety Practices for Mabton Grace Brethren Church

- ▶ All leaders or teachers will avoid being alone with small children not their own on the church campus or during any church ministry.
- ▶ All leaders or teachers will avoid being alone with any youth or adult of the opposite sex, who is not a family member, on the church campus, during any church ministry, or when driving to or from a church ministry.
- ▶ No elder or deacon will provide long term counseling to a woman. If it is necessary to provide short term crisis counseling it must be done with another woman present.
- ▶ Deaconesses will not provide counseling to a man.
- ▶ All youth workers will be screened by the church through the Washington State Patrol online service before participating in any youth ministry.
- ▶ All classrooms and offices will have windows or doors with windows that are open to view from the hallways.
- ▶ Whenever possible, office computer screens will be placed to face a window or door with a window open to view from the hallway.
- ▶ All computers with internet access shall have an internet filter program. (recent addition)