



Questions & Answers on Recent Events at Calvary from Skip Heitzig

General Topics

Why did you not speak more openly to the press sooner?

It was our hope and prayer that we could meet privately with the people who are making these accusations so that all issues could be reconciled without unnecessarily causing pain or division among the congregation. I must say I am shocked that these men have chosen to publicly damage the church instead of working out these issues in an appropriate forum. I (and others) have made many attempts to reach out to these men and they have not returned our calls or e-mails.

Why would you leave Calvary Albuquerque with a substantial debt?

From a spiritual point of view, I have always lived by faith...faith in God and faith in the incredible people of this congregation. And I have seen that my confidence in them was well-founded. In addition, the church has substantial assets well beyond the debt. From a business point of view, let me say that the church has always been on a rock-solid foundation. The church had collateral to cover any debt that would be incurred.

Did Pete Nelson fail in any way? Did he need more supervision and guidance than you first anticipated?

The biggest issue I have with Pete is the way he chose to leave the church. Regardless of his feelings about me personally or his situation at Calvary, he should not have left so abruptly. I wish he had given us some time to bring in a new pastor, at least on an interim basis. The second issue I have is that I wish Pete had let the process, which he agreed to when he was hired, run its course. I don't know why he was so impatient and didn't allow the transition to run on a smooth and orderly timetable so he could be mentored and trained by the men who hired him.

Are you considering coming back to Calvary of Albuquerque?

The only thing on my mind at this moment is to care for and to protect the congregation at Ocean Hills and at Calvary Albuquerque. In order to help facilitate healing of our church community, I have submitted my resignation from the Calvary board of directors.

What has news of this issue done to Ocean Hills?



It's mostly a concern for Calvary of Albuquerque. The issue has galvanized the believers in Ocean Hills to pray for their brothers and sisters in Albuquerque.

Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently?

Who goes through even a single day and doesn't look back and wish they had done something differently? But Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). I know I need to press on.

Board Issues

Why in December, 2005 did you and Paul Saber have a board meeting without Pete?

Pete was notified and aware of the meeting and chose not to attend. New Mexico law and CCA by-laws allow a board of three members. Pete didn't notify us until the day of the meeting that he would not be joining us. I have served on many boards and it's the board member's responsibility to attend every meeting—even if by phone.

Why did the board meet in December, 2003 in a five-star hotel in California?

I had three different meetings scheduled that day in the area. Franklin Graham was already there speaking. It was the hotel he was staying at because death threats had been made against him and security was higher there. To make it convenient for him, the meeting was held there. For context, meeting in this kind of location was an exception in more than two decades of board meetings. It is important to know that no one, including Greg Zanetti, voiced any concern about the hotel location at the board meeting. That would have been the proper forum, not now more than two years later.

Pete Nelson claimed you removed all local board members who opposed you. Is that true?

First, I can't remove any board member. No one can make such a unilateral decision. That's not how any board, secular or religious, works. Everyone on the board has a vote. Secondly, after Greg Zanetti wrote his letter in 2004, it was Pete Nelson, not me, who asked Greg to resign from the board. The board unanimously accepted his resignation. Once Pete made it clear that he wanted more of his handpicked board members, the first men to resign were Franklin Graham and Greg Laurie. The reason we wound up with only three board members in December of 2005 is that for most of 2005 Pete did not nominate any board members even after I repeatedly asked him to do so.



What about the severance package you received?

This decision was made by the board when I was absent. Members of the board told me that because I had refused pay raises for three years straight and was underpaid in comparison to other churches of this size, that the severance was acceptable and standard. We were humbled and honored to receive this generous gift.

Why was Pete removed from the board in 2004?

Pete was not removed from board. It was a great concern that after only two months he sent a letter to the entire board of directors asking the national members to resign immediately so that he could appoint his own members. This was the first communication Pete made to the board and it directly contradicted the agreement that there would be no changes made to the board for the first year. This caused the board to question Pete's maturity and patience in his management style. It is one thing to speak from a pulpit, it's another thing to manage a mega-church.

Did you tell Pete Nelson on November 10, 2004 that if he did not approve of the idea of joining Calvary Albuquerque and Ocean Hills that Pete would be forced out?

No. Again, things done in the boardroom are done by vote not by pronouncement.

Pete Nelson claims that you intended to run Calvary Albuquerque while remaining pastor at Ocean Hills. Is that true?

Absolutely not. For two years Pete Nelson and the pastoral staff led the congregation of Calvary of Albuquerque. My role was that of a mentor. I served as chairman of the board to provide the oversight and guidance that Pete needed. Pete admitted from the beginning that practical administration duties were his weakest suit. Because of Pete's inexperience, we all knew that the guidance of the board was very important. The board in a meeting on Nov 29, 2004 outlined the roles for both Pete as president of the board and for me as chairman of the board. Pete's role was to manage the day-to-day operation of the church, and mine was to provide oversight. Those roles are clearly spelled out in the board minutes, which we are making available.

Pete Nelson claims that he was not allowed to nominate board members in 2005 and that you chose a board member without his consent in December, 2005.

Not so. The parameters were that Pete would nominate board members and I would approve. I did give Pete a list of men I thought were men of integrity and spiritually sound, based on my 23 years of experience in Albuquerque. He spent time with them but



never nominated anyone. I can't speak as to why Pete didn't nominate anyone for the board positions. I do know he mentioned nominating a lawyer friend of his from Denver, but he never brought that nomination before the board.

The charge is that you packed the Calvary board with good friends, whose loyalty is to you and not necessarily to the congregation at Calvary. How do you respond to the charge that because many of these board members were from outside the state, they were unaccountable?

It's interesting that the men who have brought these accusations have brought up this word "loyalty." All of these men know that my highest priority has always been loyalty. My loyalty is not to any man or any vision or any building, but to Jesus Christ. I have always strived to surround myself with people who are loyal to Christ above all. Not only that, but when I proposed these men of national standing, Greg Zanetti and local board members encouraged it! If they did not approve of these appointments it would have been appropriate for them to bring up their reservations at that time. Accountability is also an interesting word for these men to bring up. They should know that we are all accountable to God for our actions.

What about the accusation that you wanted Calvary of Albuquerque to be combined with Ocean Hills and that a new "super board" be appointed?

The board appointed a four-member "fact-finding committee" to explore ideas for radio station management and restructuring to be presented at annual board meetings. It was agreed that the communication between these four members (Skip Heitzig, Pete Nelson, Paul Saber, and Greg Zanetti) would be honest, forthcoming, and confidential. The process consisted of tossing out ideas concerning how all three organizations could work together for the benefit of all. This idea never even made it to the proposal stage because it quickly became apparent that it would not work. For reasons I can't understand, Greg Zanetti became concerned about an idea that was presented to an investigative team of which he was a member. That's what exploratory teams do. They investigate ideas to see if they are viable.

Did the Board ever consider scaling back Calvary Connection because of the large expense it was incurring on an ongoing basis?

Most ministries lose money, such as cafés, mission organizations, concerts, and even the Easter Sunrise service. They are not "investments" in the bookkeeping sense...they don't make money. Ministries are investments in spreading the Word of God and provide encouragement and instruction to Christians. I also strongly believe that our radio ministry is one of the biggest reasons that Calvary Albuquerque has been so blessed with



such a large and faithful congregation. The radio ministry is a powerful way of keeping people connected to the church during the week when they are dealing with the destructive influences of the world. It was Pete, as president of the board, who proposed the continuation of support for Calvary Connection. The support for the ministry was to be graduated down over time. In addition, Calvary Connection is listener supported.

Radio Station

Why would you propose that Calvary Albuquerque's radio station assets be separated from the church and be given to an independent organization/company?

The issue was simply a management issue, not an ownership issue. Pete admitted he had no interest in radio except airing live services. He asked me to manage the programming. The four-member team was to explore a variety of options. We were involved in a "thinking out loud" process. The radio station assets belong to the church in Albuquerque and were always to remain Calvary of Albuquerque's assets. Again, we were simply exploring different options. That's what exploratory teams do. They investigate ideas to see if they are viable. The board put Greg Zanetti on the team to conduct this investigation. No "ideas" even made it to the proposal stage. I'm still baffled as to why Greg Zanetti became concerned by the presentation of an idea during a meeting that was designed to generate ideas. Any such ideas still require full board approval and would be handled by a lawyer. If you've watched "The Apprentice" or are part of a business or creative endeavor you know that the concept and idea phase of a project is crucial. But not every idea is adopted. Most ideas are eliminated before any one idea is accepted. Years ago M-88 (was KLYT) was gifted to the church/entity created to manage it.

Ackerman's Letter

Mr. Ackerman claims that you took church assets without permission and that the board "papered over" that. Is this true?

Absolutely not. In the transition from Calvary Albuquerque to Ocean Hills, this was brought up in a board meeting. The board was fully aware of all the transactions that were going to take place. At the next board meeting everything was made official (by both boards).

What is your response to the Ackerman letter, specifically, that you, Saber, Ries and Geraci resign?



CALVARY

Mr. Ackerman and the other men who signed the letter are ill-informed men who have resorted to unbiblical means to force a change in the church's government. I don't understand why they believe that their small group should dictate the makeup of a board that serves 14,000 people and has run smoothly for more than 20 years. We'll let the congregation decide how reasonable these men have been. They demanded an immediate change in the board, without giving us time to pray, seek God's will, or to seek spiritual counsel. Within two days they released their statement to the Albuquerque Journal without telling us. Even if the board wanted to acquiesce to their demands, it would have been impossible to reconvene the board in such a short period of time. In addition, Mr. Ackerman, as the former chairman of PNM, certainly understands that boards are well-served by men of national prominence possessing experience and expertise. Today, over half of PNM's board of directors live outside of New Mexico. I fail to see why he is so short-sighted concerning the church.