



March 16, 2006

Skip Heitzig Addresses the Recent Events at Calvary

Since so many questions have been stirring concerning the recent events at Calvary of Albuquerque (CCA), it is incumbent upon me as the founding pastor and former chairman of the board to address them. I have spent the last few weeks in prayer and seeking godly counsel so that I may lay the events out before you in an orderly fashion. Here are the results:

Too little restriction: Pete Nelson resigned publicly from Calvary of Albuquerque, stating that he and his wife Angie were under too much restriction from me and the board of Calvary. This simply wasn't the case. Under closer examination, the facts may prove that Pete was under too little supervision.

When Pete was brought on as senior pastor, we agreed to keep the board of directors intact for one year. That move was needed to ensure a continued smooth transition for Pete into his new job. However, within that year, Pete recruited three new board members. One of the names submitted was John Ackerman, one of the men who demanded changes to the board two weeks ago. {See Pete Nelson's Letter from March 2004}

It is also important to note that one of Pete's nominees, Todd Rankin, was not a resident of Albuquerque. This action, coupled with the manner of Pete's resignation, which left the church without a pastor or a well-planned transition period, indicates that board concerns about his leadership abilities were, indeed, valid. Pete had never served as senior pastor prior to coming to Calvary of Albuquerque and, in hindsight, needed more, rather than less direction and guidance.

For further insight into Pete's claim that he was too restricted: The board minutes precisely spelled out his considerable authority and responsibilities: "The President shall have direct and total authority over the operations and ministry activities of CCA, including all operational and staffing decisions."



Pete exercised this authority in the hiring and firing of staff employees, supervision of all church events including mission trips and disaster relief, expenditure of funds without board intervention, building improvements and redecoration, teaching schedule, and guest speakers. Pete had complete control of his personal office hours and travel that was fully paid for by the church. Pete had a great deal of freedom, but no leader should function in total autonomy apart from accountability. This would be scripturally and morally wrong. It was Pete who resigned from this position as pastor and president, without warning and without counsel. My responsibility on the board was much more limited, but my ultimate goal has always been the care of this church. The church has been abandoned and I trust the board is doing its best to respond to meet that need. Twice in the months before his resignation, I wrote Pete letters of encouragement. {See December 2005 Letter and Dana Point Letter}

It is important to understand that shortly before Pete's resignation, the pastoral staff of Calvary offered to help carry out the biblical steps for addressing and resolving issues. Pete rejected their offer. The pastors were assured that the board, including myself, would be notified if Pete felt he could not continue his job. This was not done. Pete resigned without keeping his promise to the pastoral staff and resigned without prior notice to the board of directors.

Unbiblical Process: Based on the sheer volume of false or partial information released to the media and public, I conclude that the Bible's clear steps for conflict resolution have been repeatedly and chronically ignored. Utilizing mass media, public discourse, group meetings and circulating one-sided documents all contribute to an atmosphere of divisiveness. These methods do not follow scriptural guidelines for reconciliation or allow for the common courtesy of personally approaching those involved. In addition, many of the charges are either factually in error or have already been addressed in board meetings or by the pastoral staff.

As to John Ackerman's public demand for my resignation along with that of three other board members, this is totally unbiblical but also unethical and



impractical. Some of the men who signed this demand have been serving at CCA and never approached me or the board. Calvary of Albuquerque has run smoothly for over 23 years and been audited and scrutinized by outside accounting firms. It was with grief and extreme reluctance that I capitulated this style of confrontation hoping to extend an olive branch in an effort to bring peace.

Invalid information: Those involved in making these charges are unwilling to determine the validity of the information they are distributing. The information that forms the core of this public controversy comes from a letter that is 15 months old. The concerns raised in this letter, some of which were legitimate, were received by the board of directors and addressed in an ethical and biblical manner. Most of the concerns in the Zanetti letter that were repeated in the Ackerman presentation were about ideas that were merely matters for discussion and exploration which never became reality. Those directions that were found to be inadvisable have been reversed. Again, most of this controversy is based on a 15 month old letter that raised pre-mature concerns over preliminary ideas that *never came to pass*.

It is also important to know that Greg Zanetti, who is distributing allegations to the media, cast an affirming vote for the severance package. *

** In the course of a pastoral audit, it was discovered that the previous post in this paragraph said that Pete Nelson 'motioned' for the resignation of Greg Zanetti. In the review of board minutes, Pete Nelson 'mentioned' that Greg Zanetti had resigned from Calvary's board. Franklin Graham motioned that the board accept the resignation and Raul Ries seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously. This inadvertent error was discovered during the week of April 10th and revised on April 17th.*

Breakdown in relationships: A breakdown in relationships is the heart of the problem. Harmful things have occurred because a private church matter has been brought into the public discourse. I will not contribute to the creation of two camps that will divide this church I so dearly love.



I feel I have been betrayed in this process by men I have loved and trusted. As you can see in the attached documents, I believe my communications and actions with Pete did not warrant his negligent behavior or the level of animosity from a minority of disenfranchised church members.

So what is the remedy for this situation?

The work of the ministry continues to be carried on by men and women who love and shepherd the people at Calvary of Albuquerque. The pastoral staff should be recognized as those who provide local oversight of the flock. Our church and community needs to recognize that these are the people who are daily caring for the church and overseeing this church according to the Bible's guidelines.

It should be noted that the men who serve this board from elsewhere have made significant contributions to this ministry and only have its best interests at heart. They have conducted crusades, spoken in our pulpit, and provided invaluable guidance from their unique perspectives. They have come at great expense to themselves and their ministries to invest in the Great Commission of preaching the gospel throughout New Mexico. I also believe that New York is just as valid a mission field as New Guinea. Whether we use mission teams or radio programs, the goal is the same: To honor God's Word by proclaiming it to all who will hear.

Many have asked me what I've learned.

Looking back, a few salient lessons have emerged:

#1. I've learned that communicating expectations is crucial in any transition. It would have been wonderful if both Pete and I were communicating frequently and openly about our feelings throughout this leadership change.

#2. I've also learned that choices must be owned by those who make them. I nominated Pete to the position of pastor and asked the church to accept his new position and be committed to him. They did this wholeheartedly and



graciously. Pete's success would have been my success. I am heartbroken and deeply sorry for the malfunction of the process so far.

#3. I've learned something about our basic human nature. Someone once said, "A lie can make it halfway around the world while truth is still lacing up her boots." We as humans tend to react quickly, rather than respond biblically. Proverbs 18:13 tells us, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him." Some have listened, reacted, and spread that reaction to the public without fully researching the matter. Let's not follow this path.

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen"
(Ephesians 3:20-21).

Pastor Skip Heitzig