

## PRESS RELEASE

**From: Fairchild & Yoder, PLLC**  
**18264 Forest Rd,**  
**Forest, VA 24551**  
**Phone: 434-846-5470**  
**Fax: 434-385-1819**  
**Contact: – Rick Boyer at rick@fypllclaw.com or J.D. Fairchild at jd@fypllclaw.com**

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **RE: Judge Rules in Favor of Plaintiffs in Case Against McLean Bible Church Alleging Denial of Member Voting Rights**

FAIRFAX, Virginia. Today, the Fairfax Circuit Court gave an opening-round victory to Plaintiffs suing McLean Bible Church for alleged illegal denial of voting rights to church members.

Steve Gaskins and four other Plaintiffs, all current or former members of McLean Bible Church (MBC) filed suit in July alleging that Pastor David Platt and the Board of Elders of McLean Bible Church were illegally removing members from the church membership rolls in an effort to predetermine the outcome of Elder elections at MBC. Defendants include the church, Platt, and the other six members of the Board of Elders, the governing body of MBC. Plaintiffs noted that the MBC Constitution grants voting privileges at church business meetings to all active members over 16 years old.

Plaintiffs also allege that, after losing a June vote on their chosen candidates for Elder, Defendants ended a decades-long practice of secret ballots for Elder elections, forcing members to place their names on their ballots in order to vote, in an effort to intimidate members who worked on church staff into voting for candidates leadership supported.

Defendants filed a motion to dismiss the case, arguing that the First Amendment bars courts from considering church disputes.

Judge Thomas P. Mann today denied the motion to dismiss. Judge Mann ruled that Plaintiffs have pleaded facts sufficient to state a case that Defendants denied voting rights to members in violation of the MBC Constitution. The Court held that accordingly Plaintiffs had pleaded a valid case for breach of contract, and that disputes for violations of church constitutions can be adjudicated under “neutral principles of law” without reference to religious or doctrinal issues protected by the First Amendment.

The matter now proceeds to Defendants’ demurrer hearing on December 17 in Fairfax Circuit Court. Plaintiffs have also submitted discovery requests to Defendants pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Rick Boyer, lead attorney for the Plaintiffs, reacted to the court’s ruling. “We are pleased that the Court is allowing this case to move forward. Defendants have repeatedly violated MBC’s constitution, and trampled on the rights of their membership to have an honest vote to choose their leaders. We are pleased that the Court saw through the transparent efforts of

Defendants to use Christianized language to cloak their most unchristian efforts to prevent a free and fair vote under the MBC Constitution.”

Plaintiff Steve Gaskins said, “We as members of McLean Bible Church are grateful for the Court’s ruling today. The fight to restore free and fair elections for all members of MBC will move forward. Today is a victory for truth and transparency.”

Plaintiff Roland Smith said, “We thank God for today’s victory. Today’s ruling is a critical first step in restoring the rule of law and ensuring that critical voting rights protected by our church constitution will be preserved for all McLean Bible Church members.”