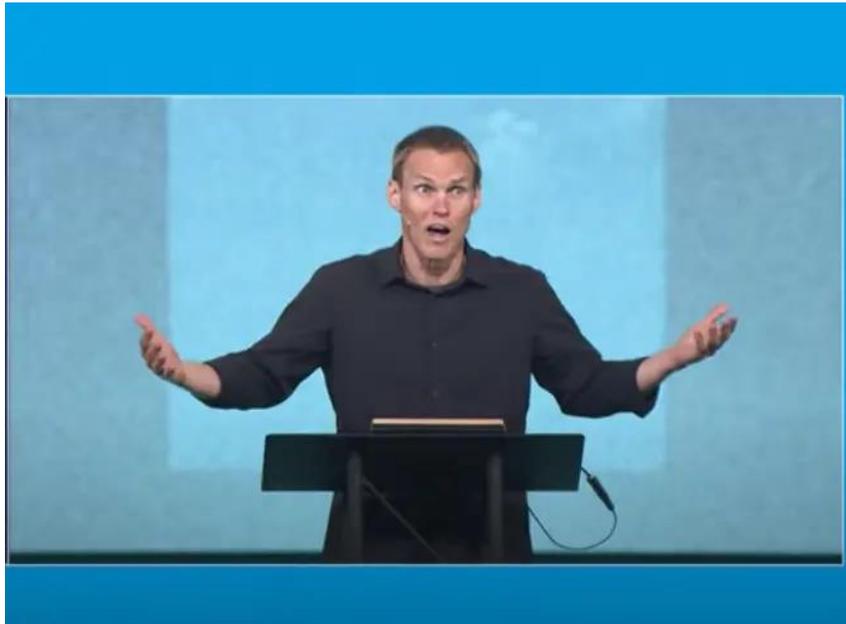


McLean Bible Church sued for ‘Breach of Contract’ over SBC ties

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David Platt’s McLean Bible Church violated constitution, retaliated against members who raised financial questions about inappropriate spending, according to new lawsuit against the church and elders. McLean Bible Church gave at least \$375,000 to the SBC new bombshell lawsuit claims and used millions to subsidize a planting network led by the SBC.

Six members of McLean Bible Church (MBC) are suing MBC and its elders over the church’s unconstitutional association with the Southern Baptist Convention. The lawsuit filed in Virginia claims the elders inappropriately transferred at least \$375,000 to the Southern Baptist Convention. The lawsuit also alleges the church disciplined members who raised questions about the financial issues at the church. The church was served with the amended complaint last week.

The lawsuit cites several facts to prove that McLean Bible Church joined the SBC including MBC being given a church ID number by the SBC, annual donations to the

SBC, and subsidizing a church-planting network planting exclusively churches doctrinally affiliated with the SBC.

“Upon information and belief, the Church’s total support from 2017-2021 of ‘New City Network,’ which was headed by an SBC employee named Clint Clifton, was in the millions of dollars,” the new lawsuit claims.

Also, the church members claim other mysterious financial transfers.

“Upon information and belief, the Church made additional transfers of large amounts of funds to SBC entities and agencies, in amounts specifically unknown to Plaintiffs at this time,” according to the complaint against McLean Bible Church. “That is one of the reasons for this case.”

And all of this association with the SBC was explicitly banned in the church’s constitution.

According to the lawsuit, “Per the Constitution, ‘this Church shall not, and cannot, be affiliated with any denomination, but shall remain independent[.]’ Exh. A at Article I, Section 2. This prohibition cannot be altered by amending the Constitution. Id. at Article III, Section 1 (‘Article I, Section 2 [. . .] cannot be changed or amended in any way in [the Church].’)”

Censured for raising financial questions

David Platt’s and the elders refused to answer questions about the church’s association with the SBC. The lawsuit details how some members tried to get Platt on the record; however, Platt would give slippery answers.

One family (Jeremiah and Laura Burke) challenged Platt during an open Q&A session and was later charged with trespassing.

The lawsuit details, “At the quarterly congregational meeting held on March 31, 2021, Mrs. Burke specifically asked Mr. Platt multiple times if the Church was ‘affiliated’ with the SBC. In response, Mr. Platt refused to answer the question directly. Mr. Platt denied that the Church is affiliated with the SBC, but conceded that the Church worked together with SBC entities and agencies.”

And in response, “The Burkes were later censured by the Church for their actions and even summoned to the Fairfax County General District Court for criminal trespass charges for appearing at a Member Forum on November 29, 2021, after they had been censured. Those charges were later *nollo prosequied*.”

Caroline and Michael Hiban received a Matthew 18 letter for raising questions about the church's financial issues. Notice here how one day after submitting an email question, the Hibans were put on a Matthew 18 notice.

According to the lawsuit, "On December 12, 2021, Mrs. Hiban submitted her budget related questions online, which included questions relating to the Church's financing of SBC-related missions. On the following day, December 13, 2021, instead of receiving answers to her questions, Mrs. Hiban received an email titled 'Request for Personal Meeting – Matthew 18 Restoration.' A copy of the said email is attached hereto as Exhibit E. The stated purpose of the requested meeting was to "restore" the Church's relationship with the Hibans as a result of their 'recent communications to [the Church] and online activity[.]' Exh. E."

Salvador Cordova ran afoul of McLean Bible Church leaders like David Platt because Cordova started counting attendance. Cordova wanted to document the damage Platt had done to the once thriving church.

According to the lawsuit, "The notice prohibited Mr. Cordova from entering the Church's properties based on his 'observed behavior at McLean Bible Church on multiple occasions[,] however did not specify any further details.'" The church later claimed the trespassing order was issued over "doctrinal issues."

Judith Strover submitted financial questions online and a few days later received a Matthew 18 notice from the church.

According to the filing, "On December 4, 2021, Ms. Strother submitted her finance questions online as directed by the Church. The crux of Ms. Strother's questions directly addressed the Church's transfer of funds to SBC entities and agencies. Ms. Strother did not receive answers to her questions. Instead on December 13, 2021, she received an email titled 'Request for Personal Meeting – Matthew 18 Restoration' identical to the one the Hibans received on the same date."

Notice the trend? David Platt and his elders refuse to be held accountable and they punish anyone asking questions using pseudo-biblical methods to silence legitimate questions.

The lawsuit lists other causes of action including McLean Bible Church's failure to hold congregational meetings as required by the church constitution and the church's failure to publish meeting minutes and its efforts to prevent members from viewing the church's financial books.

The heart of the claim is that the Constitution is a binding contract between the Church and the people. Since the elders violated that contract, it is a matter for Virginia courts to adjudicate.

According to the lawsuit, “Plaintiffs made offerings to the Church, with the binding assurance that these funds would go to the Church’s independent promotion of faith unrelated to other denominational organizations...This misuse of Plaintiffs’ charitable donations, in violation of the Constitution, is a breach of the contract between the Church and Plaintiffs. The only remedy is to fully disclose this information to the membership of the Church so that they can review the information and make, as needed, any necessary changes to the Church and its leadership.”