

Last minute message from one of the original founders of McLean Bible Church

Dear MBC Church Family,

My name is Chuck Wright and I'm a founding member of McLean Bible Church. I apologize for the long message, but respectfully request that you read through all of it.

I'm urging you vote "NO" to the newly proposed MBC constitution. Voting can be done now online (if you received a voting link), but you can also vote in person tomorrow, May 28th, at any church campus or at the Tysons location in the room across from the church cafe.

Please be aware that in person voting begins Sunday at 8:30 am, and ends promptly at 1:00 pm. If anyone denies your right to vote, claiming you're not a member, you can request a provisional ballot and cast your vote that way. If you use a provisional ballot, please take a picture of it as proof before putting it in the ballot box. If you're refused a provisional ballot for any reason, please courteously document what happened by recording a video of the refusal.

HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE NO:

McLean Bible Church was established in 1961 as a congregationally-based church under the leadership of elders who get elected by the congregation. As a founding member, I feel it's of paramount importance to preserve congregational control over our elder leadership, as a safeguard to protect the church from financial corruption, scandal, and/or unbiblical teaching.

Unfortunately, over the past few years, our church elders have failed to conduct required congregational meetings in accordance with MBC's constitution. Instead of holding such meetings as it has for over 60 years, allowing motions to be made, seconded, and voted on, allowing free and open discussion of such motions, keeping minutes of the proceedings, and using a secret ballot to insure voting integrity, the elders have now eliminated the in-person congregational meeting altogether.

Instead, they've replaced it with what they call an "Online Congregational Meeting". But they provide no actual live participation by members to ask questions, state views, or vote by secret ballot, as could easily be accomplished in an online zoom meeting. Instead of holding a real congregational meeting online, the church streams a prerecorded video presentation from David Platt and the elder board chairman, telling the congregation what they want them to hear, with no provision for live interaction with members in any way.

Financial reports presented are vague, imprecise, and virtually meaningless. Instead of allowing live questions and open discussion at these meetings, the elder board now requires that any questions must be submitted in writing, well in advance of the meeting. The chairman chooses which question to read or not read, but never reveals who asked the question. This enables him to ignore difficult questions, cherry-pick easy ones, and read canned questions from the pastor, staff, and elders.

Over the past few years, many MBC church members have emailed the elder board about church finances and pastoral misconduct. Instead of receiving a response, they have been ignored, lied to, publicly maligned, unlawfully trespassed from the church, and/or arbitrarily removed from membership. As you know, many of these members have sought redress through our government's legal system, petitioning the court to require answers from the church.

Instead of providing transparent answers, church leadership has chosen to demonize those members, claiming they are sinfully violating scripture by suing the church. They falsely claim the complaints are being made "by a small group of people, most if whom are not members, who are trying to take over the church". Please know these complaints are not coming from one single small group of people, but from multiple groups of members and constituents, whose numbers are far from small. I also want you to know that, in reality, the people trying to take over the church are David Platt and his small group of illegitimate elders, who have their eyes on the church's \$100 million property in Tysons Corner.

But here's the thing. MBC was organized as a membership association under the laws of Virginia to operate as a legal entity, so our church is actually beholden to the very laws under which it was created.

Associations must provide a constitution to the state at the time of organization in order to qualify as a legal entity. The church needed to become a legal entity in order to own property, open a bank account, enter into contracts, and conduct lawful business. Virginia courts have long held that a church's constitution is a solemn contract with its members and must be followed.

McLean Bible Church must comply with Virginia law for many reasons: First, MBC enjoys legal status as a tax free entity, paying no taxes. Second, MBC is allowed to solicit tax free donations from the public. Third, MBC is given special protection under the U.S. and Virginia constitutions. Fourth, MBC received millions of dollars in government PPP assistance because of the COVID epidemic, none of which has been repaid.

Providing such benefits to a church association does not mean the state can control that church's teaching or theology; it only means the state can control the manner in which the church treats its members. MBC elders and trustees are required to follow Virginia association law requiring them to adhere to the church constitution. If they don't, the church can be sued in a court of law for breaching its contract with members.

Sadly, the reaction of the Elder Board to the pending court actions against them, suggest they may be hiding significant financial improprieties and leadership misconduct from its members and the public. McLean Bible Church has spent over a million dollars of the church's money with the Holland & Knight law firm, in order to prevent the current court actions from moving forward.

Instead of directly responding to the allegations raised by members, Holland and Knight stonewalled the court proceedings by filing multiple and repeated technical pleadings. With a myriad of arcane legal tactics, such as demurrers, pleas in bar, motions craving oyer, and frivolous motions to dismiss, each accompanied by long convoluted legal memoranda, they prevented document disclosures and the release of financial records. More telling, they've prevented the sworn depositions of David Platt and his elders.

What kind of group uses such legal tactics? A church organization like the Boston Archdiocese, for example, MBC is using the exact same legal playbook employed by the Catholic Church when it was sued for child sex abuse crimes, spending millions to delay the proceedings and bury the plaintiffs with legal expenses. MBC is also using the tactic of publicly demonizing the individuals who brought suit, and telling lies to its own congregation and constituents.

The elder board's chairman, Chuck Hollingsworth, has disingenuously stated that the suit has already been decided in MBC's favor, but the truth is that the facts of the case have not even been litigated. The elder board has never explained this to the congregation, but here's what actually happened:

A judge did dismiss the original lawsuit. But his decision was based on Holland & Knight's spurious argument that the church rendered all issues moot when it accepted resignations from three elders that an earlier judge had found guilty of "shenanigans". That questionable dismissal is currently under review by the Virginia Court of Appeals, and can either be overturned or upheld by them, or appealed by the losing side to the Virginia Supreme Court. So it was an outright lie to tell the congregation the case has already been decided. To the contrary it is far from over.

No matter what happens, the elders certainly behave as if they're corrupt, appearing to be unlawfully accepting money for their services. If such corruption exists, as many believe it does, it could only be uncovered through the legal remedy of a lawsuit forcing transparency through discovery. If the elders are above reproach, they would certainly welcome this legal process, not hide from it or try to change the constitution in order to protect themselves from oversight.

In the opinion of many long term members, who deeply love the Lord and McLean Bible Church, members should vote down the newly proposed constitution. The document appears to have been crafted by Holland & Knight for the sole purpose of keeping a handful of illegitimate elders in authoritarian control over the church, while providing no path for members to vote them out or to keep them in check. Giving the elder board unfettered control over church finances with the new constitution would be great for Holland & Knight, who will continue receiving exorbitant legal fees from the elder board, but not so great for the future of McLean Bible Church.

For all the above reasons, I ask that you please vote "NO" to this newly proposed constitution.

Sincerely in Christ,
Chuck Wright
Founding Member