One of the priorities of the elder board, and the purpose of this family chat, is that we care deeply about all of you and feel it is important to be open in communication about matters that impact our church.

2 Corinthians 8:21 calls us to take pains to do what is right in the eyes of God and man.

So, that’s what we’re going to attempt to do right now.

You may have heard in the media, but what we’re talking about is that on Tuesday, the elders of Harvest Bible Chapel in Chicago removed Pastor James MacDonald from his roles of Senior Pastor and elder and terminated his employment as well – for conduct that is contrary and harmful to the best interests of the church.

Like many of you, the elders are going through several different emotions – frustration, sadness, and confusion.

Just like you, we are learning details as events happen.

So how does this affect us?

This affects us by church name obviously – we are Harvest Bible Chapel, Rochester. They are Harvest Bible Chapel.

This also affects us by personal relationships – James MacDonald has been a mentor to our pastor, Steve. I Many of us have listened to a podcast, or watched a message of James’, or been to Vertical Church Conference and heard James. This situation impacts us because of that. It has made us extremely grateful for the relationships and mentorship we have from others, including Pastor Ron who is here with us today and played a huge role in the discipleship and planting of Steve here in Rochester. John Dirkse in Rockford, Illinois and Brent Halverson in Maple Grove also come to mind and we treasure those relationships dearly in light of this.

Now, we also want to make clear how this does not affect us – and that is in church governance. We are an autonomous, independent church, governed locally by your board of elders. Harvest Bible Chapel in Chicago has played a role in the planting of our church – such as training Steve in the learning center and creating the Harvest Bible Fellowship. They have played a role in the culture of our church – the 4 pillars are part of the Harvest Bible Chapel DNA.

However, they do not have authority over our church – all authority over our church is first and foremost Jesus Christ and His Word, and then our elder board. We feel it is important to say that.

So now what?

Romans 12:12 encourages us to “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and be constant in prayer.” So that’s what we are going to do. We are not making decisions or changes just to make them. Your elder team has been and will continue to seek God’s direction for our church in what we believe will be healthiest for you – our church.

So, what should we do?

1. Pray – As I have examined my heart this week I have realized that I desired to spend way more time on the internet than on my knees. Unceasing prayer is one of our pillars – and prayer is the thing we most should be doing. I Corinthians 12:26 says that is one member suffers, we all suffer – and there are lots of fellow believers that are hurting right now. Pray for them. Pray for your elders and the elders of Harvest in Chicago. Pray for your pastors and for the campus pastors of Harvest in Chicago. Pray for those that are newer Christians and will struggle to understand how this can happen in a church. Which leads me to the next point.
2. Remember sin always has consequences. Always! This should remind each of us that we are sinners and in need of Christ to be a part of every moment of every day.
3. Remember that the we can mourn what is happening in this event, but we can find joy in the outcome of the event, which is that God will work all things out and that, because of the cross, the final outcome has already been determined! Keep that eternal perspective.

Thank you for listening, for your patience and understanding as we all figure this out, and for keeping your eyes on Christ – the author and perfecter of our faith.