

Riot Home

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Beall Phillips

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My Personal Response to BCA

Excommunication is without a doubt the most serious sentence pronounced when a church with jurisdiction over one of its own members, after patiently and carefully following biblical process, determines that the professing Christian who is under their jurisdiction refuses to turn from clear, gross sin. But when excommunication is used as a tool for retribution, for publicity, to influence a lawsuit, or to retroactively punish someone who is not even a member of that church, it is not only an aberration from the intended Biblical purpose, but also reflects the authoritarianism that has always held a presence in a dark corner of Christianity.

Today, Boerne Christian Assembly, a church with no jurisdiction over any member of my family, and with about six remaining active member families which includes the three recently elected leaders, (some of whom are personally entangled in controversies and conflicts of interest related to a highly publicized lawsuit) has chosen to dismiss BCA's historic principles of church government, ignore the Scriptures, and reject their duties to honor civil jurisdictions.

While my husband is not able to respond by direction of legal counsel, and I believe it is imprudent for me to speak to many of the substantive issues, I am prepared to give my full perspective when and if that becomes appropriate. My comments here will have to suffice for the present.

First, we are happy members in good standing of Hyde Park Baptist Church, a long established city church in Austin, Texas. Our experience at Hyde Park has been uplifting, redemptive, and a genuine blessing to Doug, to me, and to our children. Our pastor gave us the freedom to communicate that he "is supportive of [our] family and does not agree with the actions of these men."

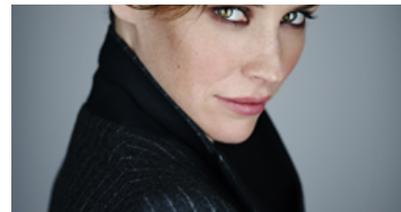
Today's announcement comes after we had been threatened with ecclesiastical sanctions if we did not submit privileged information, documents, and legal strategies for their oversight. The new BCA government has been informed of the impropriety of this. It is a significant conflict for someone who has an adverse interest to use a threat of ecclesiastical sanction to gain information and control over someone else.

Late in November, 2013, two things happened: an internet driven campaign was coordinated with demand letters for twenty million dollars, making false charges against BCA, against the leadership of another church in the area, as well as my family and our business, and threatened litigation against all of those individuals. In December, 2013, the BCA leadership was notified in writing on our behalf that legal necessity would compel our family to change church membership. The leadership readily acknowledged the probable implosion of the church in the wake of a lawsuit in which every member of the church could be directly involved. By January, 2014, the church environment began to break apart from gossip, fear, family in-fighting, and accusations against each other. With the increasing chaos and growing conflict in the church, families began to leave. Our family asked for and was granted formal permission by the BCA church leadership to stop worshipping at BCA and to look for another church to join. That is what we did. We only attended BCA for worship about three times in 2014. After visiting a number of churches, we began worshipping at Hyde Park in March and finalized our membership in the first half of May, 2014.

After our departure from BCA and our change of membership, a significant division within the BCA leadership reached a climax, and, led by the

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provisional elder, resulted in the abrupt removal of the long time ordained elder. In June, we received a series of threatening letters informing us that a new government had been established at BCA and required that we leave our church and come back to them. They threatened sanctions if we did not. It was disturbing to find that the men who wrote the letters to us, representing themselves as duly elected ordained elders to us, to the community, the internet, and the media, actually were not. When this became public, they set aside many of the historical BCA election/ordination procedures, oversaw their own election at the end of July, and assumed their present offices. Following this election, they began sending letters again. As the harassment continued, a formal offer was presented to them that disputes be resolved through an independent third party mediator like Peacemakers. That offer was rejected.

So, now we are long gone, most of the families have left the church, a new government has been installed, and a “star chamber proceeding” has convened and pronounced judgment. The idea that the leaders of one church can excommunicate a member of another orthodox church suggests a deeper problem. The disdain demonstrated for Hyde Park Baptist is a problem. The rejection of third party mediation speaks volumes. BCA’s statement has nothing to do with biblical love, with legitimate church authority, with truth, or with the Gospel. I believe it has everything to do with self interest, fear, and a mess of conflicts of interest, many related to a lawsuit.

As for my family: We are growing. We are happy. And we are pressing on, sinful Christians as we are, daily drawing on the mercy of God, trusting Him, and not intimidated by the action of today.

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