

To the Elders:

I appreciate the leadership and guidance the McKnight Eldership has shown over the 30 years that I have been at McKnight. It is a difficult job. It is with deep concern and care that I write this letter as I am deeply invested in this church.

It is my own humble opinion that we are at a crossroads. We have come out of a pandemic and have the chance to refocus our ministries to be more effective. We are losing many families for different reasons. My last straw came when the Hannel family let us know that they are taking a break. I would like to present the problem and then possible solutions.

First, let me say that Michalie is doing a Fantastic job! The youth program (not Nextgen) is going great and growing with teens coming in from the outside. Michalie has a passion for ministry and good instincts.

From a church leadership conference that several went to, you never blame volunteers. The problem is always systems and leadership. We too often blame volunteers. We are not operating at our best. From my own experience, conversations with others and some information from a book "Autopsy of a Deceased Church" by Thom S. Rainer, here are our opportunities for change and growth:

- We stated that we wanted to be known for our Next Gen ministries. While there is much time spent on discussion, I see nothing much being accomplished. I have initiated a Super Sunday idea to get the 1st – 5th graders some outside-the-church activity. Other than that, we have not done much. It is a source of continued frustration for me that we employ two ministers for children and not much is accomplished.
- Our worship is stale and needs more variety in volunteers and style. We use the same participants and don't work to develop that participation from a variety of people. It seems that we always push the easy button.
- We lack a number of ministries such as a women's ministry (the reason many women have left and complain about, ask your wives), men's ministry, divorce care, grief share, and senior ministries. Some of our ministries tend to be inwardly focused such as VBS. We need more of an emphasis on ministries to reach out to the community.
- We do not appreciate our volunteers. There is no plan or system to get them involved and rotate out. Jeremy is not gifted at recruiting and supporting volunteers. I have heard from many their frustration about volunteering for Jeremy.
- In the short term, we need to figure out what we are doing with masks and the tape. I would strongly suggest that we drop all mask mandates or remove the tape, but not both. If we have masks, then we don't need tape. If we have tape, then we don't need masks.
- We also need to define the process of appointing Elders and recruit and develop younger Elders to join the current group.

From Thom Rainer's book, McKnight is not connecting to our local community, our focus has drifted inward. There is less focus on the Great Commission, and we have no clear direction.

Possible Solutions from the drastic to the more doable:

- Eliminate Heather and Jeannie's positions and move Jeremy to a Technology and Families Minister. Then hire a Worship and Children's Minister preferably an African-American person.
- Keep the staff we have but with clear boundaries on responsibilities and redefine our structure. Such as:

The Elders need to be more in control of the leadership of the church. We have been a staff led church and I would suggest we need to be Elder led.

I would suggest a structure with an Elder and a Ministry Leader over each area of ministry to partner with a staff member instead of letting the staff drive the agenda and ministries. We could have 6 areas of focus: Men's ministry, Women's ministry, NextGen ministry, Worship and Technology ministry, Community Outreach ministry, and Missions ministry.

For example, under Community Outreach, Jeannie could run the Divorce Care and Grief Share ministries. They are media heavy with structured discussions. Those two programs are tremendous outreach opportunities. I would be willing to partner with someone to oversee the Women's ministry. We desperately need to help the women connect.

Steve A and Stephen W. and Louis W. could oversee the Men's Ministry. Lane could oversee NextGen. Brett and Don could oversee Worship and Technology. Dave and Glenn could oversee Missions. Brad, Steve H. and Keaton could oversee Community Outreach.

These are only my opinions and suggestions to get the ball rolling. In my humble opinion, we need to do something now to focus the church on moving forward before we lose more families. I have lost too many over my 30 years.

Sincerely,

Eric McPherson