

Dear FBC Pulpit Committee,

I have recently had the benefit of reviewing all the Committee and Church member minutes from August 2016 to date. In the course of reviewing some of those minutes I have identified a number of items that I first wish to confirm and other items I seek to raise as concerns for future discussion.

First in order to set the context, we all agree that we are a congregational church and are governed by both our congregation coupled together with our constitution and guiding instruments. Those instruments provide that in the event of a Pastor having vacated office a Pulpit Committee is to be formed which is to have governance over the church function and administration and the duty of the election of a new Pastor.

However, both the committee and the church have agreed to assign its powers and functions over to Mansour as Vice President and myself as President. The functions and powers for each party were clearly explained to the church during a couple of member's meetings held on 11 September 2016 and 18 September 2016 respectively. The respective agreement and interim structure agreed to by the church is all in the minutes for your reference and review. It clearly provides that the Pastoral care duties and leadership functions of the church were provided to me and the administrative functions were assigned to Mansour.

Further, it outlines the limited powers that are retained by the Pulpit Committee and that such powers are limited to the following;

- Church discipline
- Financial obligations (for e.g. Bills) up to \$10K. Any discretionary transaction over \$5K.
- Any new church events (other than those previous agreed)
- Church disclosure issues
- Church legal, media or liability concerns
- Termination of members

It seems on the face of it that the Pulpit Committee has assumed powers over and above the functions allocated to it by the congregational church. However, I do not wish to make this a contentious issue but rather seek to identify it as an ongoing concern that we should consider bringing before the entire congregational church should there prove to be contention between our respective appointed functions. I am aware of the questions (concerns) posed to me by the Pulpit Committee and have addressed each of those concerns later into this response for your consideration.

Firstly, I ask that you consider and take action to the concerns I have to my satisfaction as I endeavour to provide you with the same courtesy.

## 1. CHURCH DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY

### **Church Disclosure**

I note the church has previously received advice on the legal obligation to disclose the issue between Nabeel Zaydan and victim 1. In that advice and subject to the information available brother Maroun previously advised that there is no requirement to report the offence. However, in my discussions with Maroun, I understand that he made a report nonetheless with the information available. That report was only of an infidelity of Pastor Nabeel some 27 years ago. I am advised that this was done at the same time as the report of the second perpetrator was made.

However, on 28 December 2016 I met with Victim 1 and the details she provided are very different to those previously communicated to either the Pulpit Committee or sub-committee. Without disclosing all the details in this letter, I had arranged for the victim to provide such disclosure to the sub-committee on 28 January 2017.

Further much of this information has been ratified and confirmed by a third party, namely a Pastor to whom Nabeel made a confession. This information has also been presented to the sub-committee on 28 January 2017. As part of that sub-committee I hope to present that information (in summary format and in high level) to the broader Pulpit Committee at our next meeting.

In my view the complete information we now have is more than sufficient to meet the criteria of a serious indictable offence. The obligation for reporting is a personal obligation and not merely an institutional one. Accordingly, in order to meet that obligation personally and to ensure I am personally compliant with the law, I have made such personal disclosure and report to the relevant authorities on my own personal behalf. As a side note, as president, the fulfilling of my personal obligation actually protects the church should this matter ever go before a court or a royal commission. Regardless, for me, it's doing the right thing before God in supporting sexual abuse victims, regardless of the consequences.

Regarding our obligation to report as a church, we as a sub-committee have agreed for me to seek further legal advice based on the complete information we now have. I will be meeting with the lawyer that we received the initial advice this week. Once we (the sub-committee) have finalised this advice, we will present it to the pulpit committee and act upon that advice.

### **Transparency**

In addition, it has been drawn to my attention by a number of members that the disclosure in respect of the second perpetrator was not properly presented to the church; namely;

- That there was 1 victim, though we know of 4.
- The perpetrator was not in ministry at the time though he was the Vice President.
- That the only form of church discipline is that we have suspended his membership and asked him not to attend. I pose this to clarify if this is all that we intend to do? Or is it something that is pending a broader investigation taking place by the authorities?

Although I recognise that church discipline is a function owned by the Pulpit Committee and understand that all I can do is make recommendations, it is not for the committee to decide or decree on whether full transparency ought to be provided to the congregation. I respectfully submit that is something that falls within the Pastoral care function. This also is the obligation of the president. On that basis I seek directly from the committee as to why full disclosure (obviously without the victims' names, or the nasty details of what was done) ought not to be given to the congregation of the church.

Both cases ought to be disclosed to the congregation. This will vindicate the victim as she is now been victimised because of the rumours of Nabeel Zaydan and his forever changing story. This will also bring comfort to victim 2 as each time I have counselled with her she feels that she will be blamed if she took this matter legal and that she does not feel comfortable coming to church. Further it may encourage more victims to come forward should there be any.

I respectfully submit that unless compelling reasons can be provided to sway me otherwise, I intend to call a member meeting and be completely transparent with the congregation as required by my Pastoral care function.

Brethren, I am requesting (as I have from day one) that we be honest and transparent with the church and also with the law that is ordained of God. Based on the information I have had in the past, I unhappily accepted to submit to the pulpit committee's decision to refrain from being fully transparent with the church regarding the things that have transpired. However, with the current information I am requesting (we have no choice), that I share with the church the complete events that have plagued our church. If the pulpit committee refuses me this obligation of mine, I will have no other choice but to document everything as an open letter and have it sent to the whole church. Of course, I do not want to make things difficult...I would much rather that you allow me to write something out for you all to look at before I share it with the church. A few reasons why this matter must go before the whole church.

1. As a congregational church, it is the church that has to confirm pastors' dismissal and suspension. At the moment, we have only told Nabeel verbally that he has been suspended. We need to have this in writing but we can only do this once we have brought the matter before the church.
2. Our refusal to share the events that have occurred transparently and honestly to the church have caused the severe defamation of the victim and her family. The victim will be vindicated if you allow me to share the factual events that have transpired.
3. Ultimately, it is the right thing to do before God and before the law. The law requires us to be transparent regarding child sexual abuse.

Let us learn from the mistake of the Anglican archbishop who respectfully resigned admitting that he failed to be transparent with the people of God, the victims and the law. The archbishop was not guilty of any sexual sin but rather guilty of not being transparent in his handling of the matter. See the link below.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-15/anglican-archbishop-of-perth-roger-herft-to-retire/8125640>

We also need to write a formal letter to the second Perpetrator documenting his suspension. Once again, this cannot happen without the confirmation of the church as we are a congregational church. This is another reason why the whole matter needs to go before the church.

Further in addition to the above it has been drawn to my attention by the Kouzi family that they were visited by brothers Wally Zaydan and Fred Mannah. I have been advised that during the visit, it was represented to the Kouzi family that victim 1 (they mentioned her by name) had tried to blackmail Pastor Nabeel and was threatening to bring down the church. The Kouzi family are prepared to attest to this truth before the committee if need be. They cannot remember if this was said by Fred or Wally but definitely remember that the communication was that victim 1 “blackmailed” the church etc. Does not matter said it—regardless, they should have immediately clarified and defended the sexual abuse victim as we are Christians representing Gods church and we ought to defend the oppressed and not be silent.

Fred & Wally, please feel free to clarify. I say this not so much as a reprimand against either Brother Wally or Fred, albeit they shouldn't represent such things (at least not be silent at such things), however this representation was drawn from ignorance. That is, it was said because this is the information that has been provided to us by both Mansour and Pastor Nabeel. Please don't miss the point—the point is that this information is untrue, I have a copy of the email and have the Victims permission to share it with the committee should they wish to see it. I also have a copy of the email from Nabee's chain of events. The letter is in no way a threat, nor blackmail, nor does it make any reference to the church. Should any of you wish to see it, I am more than happy to share it with you as you are a member of the pulpit committee.

Bro. Fred and Walid, I am trying to be understanding as this is a traumatic circumstance especially as it involves your family. However, I did inform the whole committee (you were both present) that this letter was not blackmail but rather a sexual abuse victim crying out to her abuser to stop his further abuse. This is coming from a person who in the same letter she called me and my wife liars. I have put that aside since I have all the information I have today. I totally understand her pain now and have totally reconciled with the victim. I trust that once you both read the letter and accept the facts of the complete events you will apologise to the victim and bring them the comfort they deserve. I am happy to give you the chain of events from Nabeels own perspective and his own chain of emails. I don't condemn you for your mistake as I was deceived for many years also. I even made this mistake when I believed everything I was being told. I have apologised appropriately. Please brothers, we need to quit condemning the victim for her character flaws as this is quite normal for certain personality traits of sexual abuse victims. Yes, they all respond differently but the response of victim 1 is not uncommon.

I make the above observation to reiterate my assertion that transparency is needed even amongst the committee itself. Only threads of truth have been shared with all the parties involved. How can the committee make informed decisions, even decisions about being transparent to the church without the entire committee being privy to all the information available? This I believe is one of the main reason I have been perceived by many in the committee as harping on the same issue. It seems that I know more of the truth than many others involved, whereas the rest have only been told one side of the story. I submit that if this is the case amongst the committee and it is causing division amongst us, how much more so will it divide amongst the congregation. The result of which we have seen with many people now

choosing to either leave or otherwise failing to attend. Brothers let me encourage you to be transparent and resolve this divisiveness once and for all.

It has been drawn to my attention that some of you are of the view that we are not called to be transparent and suggesting that many of us will not air each of our families dirty secrets publicly than why should the church do the same. May I encourage you to think of it as not something that is aired publicly but something that is aired amongst the church family itself? That is the truth is provided transparently to those within the church family and not something of a public declaration.

## 2. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

It is clear that the church disciplinary issues belong to the Pulpit Committee and as such I wish to raise a number of concerns for the Committee's consideration. Please note I have spoken to each of these men individually according to Matthew 18 and have not had a satisfactory response and accordingly now bring it before the committee for consideration.

### **Mansour Yousseff**

#### *ISSUE 1*

During the course of my discussion with Victim 1 arising from Nabeel's offence, she clearly articulated to both me and the sub-committee that she at time of disclosure provide a written statement that was signed by both her, and Mansour. Albeit I have not seen the statement, it details the number of times the Victim was abused by Nabeel (more than the one incident) and the degree of that abuse (far greater than what has been previously disclosed by either Nabeel or Mansour).

Brother Mansour has failed to make that statement available to either the committee or the sub-committee, nor was the statement provided to the independent lawyers who advised on our reporting obligations. Without speculating as to the reasons, the fact is that Mansour has failed to disclose a vital piece of evidence available to him for the church to consider in either its reporting obligations, or its decision making process regarding either Nabeel or church discipline more broadly.

Although I note that Mansour is involved in this in both his personal family capacity and also that of Vice President. Regardless he was and is acting as our intermediary with the victim and as such had a responsibility to share the whole truth with the church. The sub-committee was relying on his disclosures in both attaining advice and making decision and recommendations in respect of reporting. His failure to provide this vital piece of information suggests that he is in conflict and ought not continue in a formal church position until this is resolved. Please, I do not mean this to sound as negative as it may read, but the truth is if Mansour cannot properly discern between his duty to the church and his responsibility to his family to the detriment of either one, then for his sake he ought to consider taking a leave of absence until the church resolves this matter completely. At which point he is free to return and even candidate for Pastor if he so wishes. In the meantime, this document must be handed to the sub-committee and to the victim as she has constantly been asking Mansour for. The victim also wishes for the sub-committee to obtain the statement.

I respectfully submit that unless a compelling reason is provided by Mansour for concealing such information, particularly given his office and that it involves his sister, he ought to be subject to church discipline. Or at the very least asked to take a leave of absence until this matter is properly resolved.

He also needs to be reconciled to the victim as she has reported some disturbing things regarding Mansour and at this stage they are in conflict. I trust that God is good and I am encouraging the victim to be reconciled to Mansour and her family and she is more than willing to do so.

## *ISSUE 2*

Recently, I noticed that Mansour had taken me off the preaching roster and filled the roster until the end of April. I had agreed with Mansour that as soon as I get back from Israel I would resume my duties (end of January). Mansour agreed but has since broken his agreement. He not only filled the roster but he also took me off the roster as I had rostered myself on in February onwards. When I asked Mansour who made this decision? He told me that it was his decision. I told Mansour that this is not his decision to make and then he told me that the pulpit committee had concerns that they needed to raise with me. David Feghali and Peter Fahd have since shared these concerns and I have addressed them. I have also provided my responses to those concerns below for your consideration. In addition, I am happy to answer those concerns in more detail at the next pulpit committee meeting.

Mansour, after I confronted him, knowing what he had done was very, very wrong tried to say to me that the preaching roster he put together was just a draft. It was not a draft as he put it on the public website. I had Pastor Charlie call me asking me why I scheduled him on a certain day as he was preaching elsewhere on that day. Pastor Charlie was informed that he was preaching by another member in our church as the roster is public for all to see. Our member was just excited to have him preach etc. I told Pastor Charlie that I will adjust etc. I have had other people call me in the church asking me why I have been taken off from the preaching!

Once again, as a congregational church, the church has voted me into my current role. If there is a concern you need to address me first (which you plan to), then it needs to be taken to the church. From there you can suspend me from preaching. It is not right for Mansour to suspend me from preaching. This is a church—not a political coup. I will immediately scrap Mansours roster and will adjust until the church decides otherwise.

At the end of the day, I am not God and if the church does not want me to fulfil my roll then the church needs to decide on that. It will not be a problem and I won't take it personal. It's not Mansour's or my decision. It's the churches decision and at the moment the church voted on our current roles and unless the church decides otherwise no one can change that. It certainly is my desire to continue in my current role.

## *ISSUE 3*

Victim 1 of Nabeel's offence, together with her husband informed myself and the sub-committee that both Nabeel Zaydan and Mansour Youssef slandered me to the whole family on the night that they attempted to reconcile. That week both my wife and I noticed severe shunning from Mansour's family and I even asked Mansour about it. He played dumb. I can say that my wife and I continue to receive severe shunning. But that is beside the point, I ask that Mansour

confirm if he and pastor slandered me to his family. The victim and her husband are happy to confront him about this as they told the sub-committee what had happened.

### **Pastor Richard Hester**

Regarding Pastor Hester. Sadly, he has opposed me for my stand against the sexual abuse that has plagued our church. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, at a meeting at his house, He had given me an ultimatum of which I declined. He wanted me to retract my views regarding Nabeels qualification to pastor or “I can’t preach in our pulpit”. He followed up with an email on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November insisting that I retract my views (regarding Nabeels qualifications) to the pulpit committee and members of the church. I responded declining his offer. He did not reply, I followed through with another email requesting that he respond but he just used the method of shunning. If need be, I will forward his email as I desire for this issue to be resolved. My family and I have received enough abuse through this tormenting situation and I will no longer tolerate it. Pastor Hester, it is not right to treat my family and I the way you are treating us. You should be proud of us because we are standing for truth. I am shocked that you would attempt to cover someone who is guilty of sexual sin.

Pastor Hester, you need to know that the victim and her husband are gutted that you have not even ministered to them during this ordeal. You were her pastor when your assistant abused her. How could you not comfort them? Instead you criticised them heavily to me. I won’t tolerate that. I have not ceased to minister to both victims in this matter (victim 1 from perpetrator 1 and victim 2 from perpetrator 2). I have had a desire to minister to the other victims but none of them have made disclosures to me so I cannot violate the sacredness of their privacy.

Pastor Hester seems to be thriving on the assumption that I am in “isolation” and keeps trying to use that against me. I wish he would just ask before he makes his wild assumptions such as “I decided to be in isolation from PC meetings”. Not sure where he got that piece of information from. Pastor Hester, feel free to ask or read any of the emails.

For the record:

1. I had already planned to be away with my family for 2 weeks in December. I had given my holiday leave form to Mansour early in the year. I did not condemn Mansour when he went to Thailand with his family but actually was happy for him as his family is his first ministry and he has done a wonderful job with his family. In this area I have learnt a lot from him.
2. I had already planned to do my study tour for 3 weeks in January. This was no holiday; it was part of my degree in theology that I am undertaking. It was an intensive unit undertaken in Jordan and Israel. My studies at Morling were encouraged by both Pastor Nabeel and Mansour Youssef for the purpose of teaching at EastGate biblical studies that come with accreditation. I have already had to cancel two units this past semester due to this scandal costing me over \$5K. I could not afford to cancel this unit in Israel that was already planned and paid for (\$15K).
3. Regarding my time off in November, yes, I was overwhelmed and on the verge of a breakdown because of this whole situation. As I had already shared with the pulpit committee, for the past two years, I had been used and abused by Nabeel Zaydan as he covered his sin. Furthermore, I was further abused by Nabeel after the events through

his slander and also by Pastor Hester through his ultimatum. I sincerely wanted to come back on Christmas day but my wife was so discouraged because of Pastor Hester's ultimatum and his refusal to retract. My ministry to my family comes first and if my wife was about to have a breakdown because of pastor Nabeel's and pastors Hester's treatment of my family then I will be obliged to minister to her. In the letter he insisted that I accept Nabeel as pastor if he returned and wished to be pastor again. I am sorry but the bible is clear about the qualification of a bishop.

Yes, I know that no charges have been laid—this is because the victim is concerned for her mother. That does not negate the offence that the perpetrator has admitted too. I will forward Pastor Hester's ultimatum as I request that the pulpit committee deal with this as we cannot overlook Pastor Hester's insistence to accept the reinstating of someone guilty of sexual sin towards a minor.

4. When I took sick leave in November I did not resign my role as the voted president and pastoral carer of the church. As a matter of fact, I did not stop my pastoral care towards people of the church. Believe it or not, I was caring for the two victims amongst the many others. I had even communicated with Mansour via email that I was continuing to care for the many souls at the church. All that I ceased was coming to church as my wife and I were traumatised. The reason for this was the intensity of shunning I was experiencing by Pastor Hester and some of Nabeel Zaydan's family and supporters. The sad reality is that nothing was being done about it.

One example of no action being taken that caused severe shunning of me and my family. Roula Touhme was going around saying that the victim "threw herself at Nabeel". Nabeel confessed to me that she received this information from Joseline. Mansour was fully aware of this behaviour of Roula as she confessed this to us. She was also going around slandering me to members of the church. She lied about the amount of people she had told but was caught out as Eddie Haddad confronted her in the meeting we had. Nevertheless she tried to falsely accuse me of slandering Nabeel and Joseline. There was no evidence of her false accusation and she cannot provide anyone that I had said this too. She attempted to say that I said this to her but this is not true. Anyway, with the facts that Mansour had, he decided to side with her and told me that he believed her (even though he knew the facts and decided to go with hearsay).

Sad to say that when Nabeel Touhme and Roula were gossiping and criticising Mansour about why he pushed Pastor Nabeel to take this publicly (which Mansour correctly did), I was his staunchest defender because I defend the truth and what he did back then was the right thing to do. Anyway, I was happy to forgive her and even invited them to my house for lunch of which they rejected. About a month later, I walked into the office and said hello to her of which she shunned me. This was done in front David Porceddu. I don't have a problem with Roula as I realise that she has been fed a distorted version of what happened. The problem is that as a pulpit committee we need to be unified and defend one another (of course, only in truth according to the facts).

To be honest, it's one thing shunning me but another when it is towards my family. The problem was when they kept shunning my innocent wife and children.

I had to put my family first and minister to my wife as for the last 10 years I have hardly seen my wife because of ministry, work and Bible College.

On Sunday (our first day back), several families just avoided both me and my wife. I don't condemn them but I am determined to be at peace with all people and to continue to love them.

Regarding some other families, it grieved them that I was not even welcomed back. That was not wise as this caused some people to question our unity. Because of this obvious unwelcoming spirit, my wife and I felt that we were not welcomed for lunch so we didn't stay.

Pastor Hester, since you want to judge my "isolation from PC meetings (false accusation)"...have you ministered to any of the victims? The sad reality is that victim 1 told the sub-committee that you have been slandering them to other people. They would not tell us who so I cannot confirm but I can confirm that you have slandered them to me. What I can certainly confirm is that you have not contacted them since Nabeel confessed his abuse. That is very, very wrong! I suggest that you go and comfort them please. Nabeel Zaydan has lied to you and all of us again! She has not lied about the extent of what he done to her. He has admitted of doing something that is an indictable offence (way worse than what he has confessed to me and what you have told me he has confessed to you). Of course, he lied to most of us but confessed this to a pastor that loves him dearly. God bless this pastor as he shared this tragedy in tears and brokenness because he loves pastor Nabeel but obviously loves God and righteousness more.

5. I only requested from Mansour that he take care of the day to day concerns and fill the pulpit in January as the conference had already been organised. No one asked him to appoint himself as the one that could sack me from preaching without consulting anyone.
6. Regardless, the agreement was that I come back in February which I now have.

Now to answer some of your concerns. David Feghali and Peter Fahd gave a list of the concerns that I seek to answer now. Brothers, I have been told that these are concerns of the Pulpit committee collectively so I will answer collectively. Please do not take it personal. Many of you have been a personal blessing to me but I am just answering collectively as this is how the concern was presented.

### **1. What is my goal for FBC until 2018?**

My goal is to work for the best interest of the spiritual welfare of the church as the voted pastoral carer. I seek to continue in my interim role until a pastor has been accepted by the church. I will contribute to do what is best for the church and not for me. I have recommended from the start that I believe that Pastor Sam Joukhadar is the best candidate to be interim pastor of FBC. I don't see the role suited for me or for Mansour. That's just being honest. To be clear, I desire to be under a pastor until the end of June 2018 and would have no problem working under Pastor Sam Joukhadar. I just cannot work under Mansour or Nabeel (I will not accept pastor Hester's ultimatum to accept Nabeel if he decides he wants to be the Pastor). To be clear, I was happy to work with Mansour in our current roles. I have said that from day one, however, now I cannot

work with him at all until we resolve this grave matter regarding the statement he has hid from us.

## **2. What I believe?**

I have answered this question in the PC meeting on the 5/12/16. My answer has not changed. I know that Pastor Hester said that it is not good enough to have someone that is not resolved (to use his words). In as much respect that that answer deserves, that is the most superficial thing I have ever heard. What is he saying? That one needs to be all-knowing before he can be a pastor??? The reality is that no one is all-knowing and we are constantly learning the words of God. The greatest preachers that ever lived kept learning. On this point I must call a spade a spade and give much respect to Pastor Nabeel who admitted that the things he believed 10 years ago are not the same that he believes today.

The truth is that when I asked Pastor Hester if he has ever looked into Covenant theology and Calvinism—he told me that he has never looked into it and just ridiculed it. I prefer to look into a doctrine before I accept or reject it. I have learnt the hard way that parroting always backfires.

I think the realistic question should be that if I am in submission to our statement of faith of which I have answered in the PC meeting.

On that note, none of you have answered my question regarding your position on the KJV which is the first article of our statement of Faith. I know some of you have told me that you have no problem with the NIV or other modern translations. Answer that question for yourself as I am not interested in interrogating anyone as I have been interrogated.

Also, I know many of you, in contrary to our leadership covenant, drink Alcohol, go to the movies, and all the rest of it. Answer that question for yourself as I am not interested in interrogating anyone as I have been interrogated.

Does anyone have a problem with my preaching and teaching from the Word of God?

## **3. The church is concerned about my commitment?**

I have answered why I have taken time off in November. It has nothing to do with commitment. The real question is why none of you defended my innocent wife after I told you of all the shunning she has received. I wish any one of you defended my wife just 10% of how I defended pastor (when he deceived me saying that he was under attack by victim 1—I wish one of you would defend me in truth just 10% of how I defended Mansour when he was criticised for bringing this scandal public). I wish any of you would defend me just 10% as much as I would defend you in truth. Instead, you were all silent (except Maroun) when Nabeel falsely accused me at the infamous Monday night meeting (I understand that not all of you were present that night). Of course, you all told me after the meeting that he was wrong in what he did but were totally silent. Speak up! I wish someone would inform Pastor Hester of Nabeel's actions that resulted in that Monday night meeting.

Regarding the night I shared the entire narrative with the pulpit committee, Some of you judged me for being judgmental simply because I shared the truth of the events that occurred. Only

Eddie Haddad, Anthony Lin, Maroun Azzi, and David Porceddu stood for the truth. Alex Helou, Peter Fahd, and David Feghali have been a personal encouragement and after that specific meeting encouraged me the next day. Paul Ayoub has also sent me encouraging texts (sorry if I missed anyone). I think all of you desire to be an encouragement but you need to speak up for the truth. You simply cannot be silent and or condemning. Don't take sides but stick with the truth regardless of the consequences.

I am very offended at this question. Name me one in the pulpit committee member that is more committed than I. Name me one wife in the pulpit committee that is more committed than my wife? That question is below the belt and sick. The truth is we should not compare ourselves amongst ourselves. I have been led to speak as a fool!

Since being saved, I have not missed not even one church service. Even when I am away, I always go to church. My wife has only missed the first Sunday each time she has a baby. There is not one service that I am not at church 1 hour before the service starts. The truth is I am at church all day Sunday. The truth is that I don't have a personal life (my whole life is consumed with God and his church).

#### **4. Are you willing to submit to the committee?**

What kind of a question is that? It sounds like a coup!

I will submit to God. According to the minutes of the PC meeting 9/9/2016 I have been nominated and accepted as the interim president (spiritual leadership) of which I am accountable to the pulpit committee and not under submission to them. The truth is we are a team and each of us has a role to play in that team. I am not a dictator—please do not dictate me by demanding submission to you. We all need to fulfil our role and submit to God and one another within our role. As the president of the church, if the pulpit committee makes a decision that is contrary to the law of God or the law of the land, I will not submit to that! I will submit to God and I expect you to do the same with me. If I am wrong, don't submit to it!

#### **5. You wanted me to clarify the emails?**

What could I say? I sided with what I understood to be the truth. I won't condemn you for your opinion, please don't condemn me. We all need to learn how to agree to disagree rather than pressuring one another to accept "popular opinion". Brothers, I am not interested in taking sides as we are all brethren. If you brothers allow me to fulfil my role, I am confident I can unify the entire church instead of driving people out over minor differences of opinion.

#### **6. When I defend the truth, you guys feel that I take it personal?**

This may be true. Please help me. How does one not take a matter personal when it is personal? I may need you to clarify this concern.

#### **7. The committee does not see any forgiveness in me?**

I have forgiven Nabeel for his actions. I hugged him after he said sorry and I have no ill feeling towards him. The fact that I need to deal with sexual abuse has nothing to do with personal forgiveness. I love him and have expressed my love to him each time I have seen him. I love Mansour and have nothing personal towards him. I love Pastor Hester and regardless of his hurtful actions I have forgiven him. I have forgiven Roula and her husband and desperately want to fellowship with them—it will happen as I believe in love and forgiveness.

I am at peace with all people.

Brethren, if a person commits a murder or rapes your loved one—you are not being condemning or unforgiving if you call the police! Say no more! (Romans 13).

### **8. Not happy about my reference that I gave to Elie Haddad?**

Why? I was not happy that Mansour overstepped his role. It's not for him to give the reference. As the president and spiritual leader of the church—I give the references. I was even doing some references as Pastor Nabeel's assistant. I am the one responsible for the references in my current role. Yes, I know, some of you are going to say that I was in "isolation" (to use Ps. Hester's words). I was not in isolation as I have explained earlier in my letter.

When Pastor Nabeel was away for several months each year, I would consult with him about references and he would do them whilst away. On some occasions he would get me to do them. The point is that I had no problem to write the reference whilst I was away as I am the president and spiritual leader.

Furthermore, I am the one that knows Elie Haddad. I was the one that has disciplined and mentored him! I know where he is at.

More so, Elie came to me asking for the reference. Why would I say no? I am the nominated president and spiritual leader of the church.

I was told that by a PC member that Toufic was not happy with me doing this (I saw Toufic on Sunday and he hugged me etc. I even invited him to meet up some time and he told me he will get back to me). I am sorry but Elie Haddad is an adult that happens to be married. I don't have to consult with his brother. Elie's dad is also of the view that Toufic cannot control his brother. Anyway, I can understand why Toufic was playing big brother and happy to chat with Toufic.

Also, Elie informed me that Mansour was concerned that Morling would confuse him and that it will teach him Calvinism and they are liberal etc. This same concern has been shared with me by Pastor Hester. The reality is that the Baptist Union takes the exact same position (the neither position) of our church. The majority of 50+ lectures are "anti-Calvinism". Technically, they are not liberal (the true sense of the word). Feel free to ask me what the word liberal means etc. If you have any questions about Morling College, please feel free to ask either me or representatives at Morling directly.

Elie also could not fathom how Mansour recommended against Morling College saying that he is not mature enough for it when Mansour's own children go to Baptist union schools (or charismatic schools—Mansour, feel free to clarify if it is a Baptist Union, Charismatic or a "liberal" school—I remember you mentioning to me that you were happy for your children to go to such schools as this teaches them to think for themselves etc). Mansour has even told me that he has no problem with sending people to Morling. Nabeel had no problem with sending people to Morling. Our church has had no problem with sending people to Morling. This is why I not only had the blessing but was encouraged to go to Morling. Pastor Nabeel even registered and commenced studies with me until he pulled out because of the work load. I have no problem with sending people to Morling. Why the sudden change?

Furthermore, I am not sure why Mansour did not send Elie back to me (or at least wait till I got back as he was only assigned to fulfil the day to day duties in my absence). Elie told me that Mansour told him that he wants Elie to pray about it first and then he is happy give him the

reference. The problem with that is Morling requires the reference to be from a senior Pastor or Assistant Pastor (someone in the pastoral team of the church). Mansour cannot give the reference as he has not been voted in by the church as a pastor. Morling also requires a mentor that is either a senior pastor or assistant pastor. Since Pastors resignation, I have discussed with the college that I will be mentoring his previous students that are currently studying at Morling.

Brethren, Just one final thing...I understand that most of the pulpit committee have good intentions and want things to just get back to normal. However, the desire of Mansour is that he wants to be the pastor and the desire of Pastor Hester is that he wants Nabeel to be the pastor (I understand that these desires change). At the end of the day, it is their prerogative that they are entitled to it, but the big problem is how they are attempting to drive me out.

Brothers, it is not time to push me out of the church. It's not time to nit-pick and fault find one another's flaws. It is time to work together and finalise this scandal that has plagued our church. It's not the time to divide over our minor biblical differences. Please be assured that I only wish and desire for this church to grow and prosper for the glory of God. I have no agenda outside of that. As you all know I have no desire to be a Pastor of FBC, nor will I undermine the church or its Statement of Faith. My desire is common with yours. I implore you to work with me in achieving this common goal.

Let's meet this Thursday night to discuss further. Like I said, I am happy for you to take your concerns to the church and I will submit to the churches decision if they want me out but until then I will continue to serve God at FBC with our current agreement.

You need to know that I will continue to clarify factual events to any member of the church (not strangers, except the relevant authorities) that tells me their distorted view of the events that are causing the vilification and defamation of the victim. I have been doing that with a clear conscience.

I resume work this Wednesday...Since both Nabeel and Neralie have resigned I don't think it is wise for me to be in the office alone with another woman as Roula and myself are the only ones employed there now (this is a good standard I learnt through both SBBC and Morling College). She is only in a few hours a week so during those hours I will either schedule my call outs or work from home as I have an office at home. All my evening counselling sessions will be at the church office. Let me know if you know of a better solution.

This Wednesday I will be preaching at Condell Park as part of our agreement with FBC.

With Love, your brother Robert.