

Dale G Bradley

13 December 2017

Mike Carter and Phill Sproul
Howick Community Church
120 Picton Street
Howick

Dear Mark and Phil

Thank you for meeting with myself and John Muir a couple of weeks ago. Both John and I felt a good foundation was laid for an ongoing dialogue.

I've given our discussion a lot of thought and considered it prayerfully. In this letter, I wish to reflect back to you what I heard and understood from our discussion. As this generation of elders have identified the importance of transparency, and because several people are affected by the matters we discussed, I will be making a copy of this letter available to any who wishes to read it. I know that many HCC members are very interested in us achieving a new unity, and want to be kept fully informed.

Could you also forward this letter to all the elders? (And please confirm that you have done this by return email?).

Because the topics discussed affect others, I will refer to "we" and "our" in this letter, although I have no authority to speak on behalf of others.

First, I'd like to review the problem of disunity that we were discussing: You suggested that the main problem seemed to be the lack of access to the Picton Centre building. I pointed out that our concern was at a much broader level and lack of access to the building was a symptom of the bigger issue. In summary, then, the broader issue of concern is:

A group of current HCC members have been involved in HCC ministry for many years. While changes have taken place in these ministries and new directions have developed, there remains a strong sense of God's calling to serve Him. These ministries have always been part of the overall ministry of HCC. However, two years ago, elders started to refer to them as being outside of HCC and this year active steps were taken by elders to strengthen that position. We don't understand why our ministries have been excluded when other, similar ministries are included in the overall life of HCC.

And we don't understand how, (as elder's state) we can be accepted as members of HCC individually, but our ministry cannot be accepted as part of HCC? This is even more strange considering they were birthed as ministries of the church.

Also we don't understand why, when we presented the proposal to reorganise the ministries, elders gave it their approval and then progressively repositioned our ministries outside of the church. Our proposal was always for the ministries to be part of HCC and to contribute to the building of the church; and in giving us the go ahead it was assumed that would be the case.

We feel rejected personally when our long-standing calling to ministry in HCC is rejected. Our calling and ministry is intrinsic to us as members of HCC.

I repeat that we appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter of conflict and trust that by listening to each other and to the guidance of the Spirit we will find a way forward in unity.

Second, I wish to review the main matter we discussed. During the last year, at least three elders have referred to serious matters of the past that today present a barrier to HCC fully embracing us as we wish.

I expressed to you that I felt this is a matter that should be dealt with as is normal and proper in any group. (It is perhaps even more important for Christ followers to deal with such matters as prescribed in Scripture) .

Several HCC members are concerned that these charges are being made and are concerned that they smear our reputation. We believe that, if there is a matter from the past, those concerned should know what it is so that we can address it once and for all. Elders have never approached us to discuss this concern but have seen fit to tell others that there is a problem from the past that is barrier to our unity today.

In our discussion you both insisted that this matter did not involve me personally and that nothing needed to be dealt with or put right by me. You also both confirmed that the same was true regarding Gary Carr. And you confirmed that there was no specific pastoral matter being referred to by these statements.

But you expressed that, as it was a matter of privacy, you couldn't divulge details of this concerning issue from the past.

On reflection, I find this troubling and can't help asking myself why this matter is being raised at all if it doesn't involve the key leaders of our ministry? And why is it being described as an impediment to our ministry being fully embraced? It seems to me that elders should either discuss the matter with those involved or refrain from referring to it.

I also raised our concern that, as members of HCC, we feel it would be more appropriate to discuss big changes with us rather than just inform us. We feel that lack of discussion about the cancellation of the Christmas Show fell below what is accepted as normal practice in any organisation. Normal respect and normal organisational procedures involve consultation and discussion – especially with those who are directly affected. Why should it be any less in the church than in other organisations? This absence of discussion shows a lack of respect to people who have been active members of the church for decades and to the Christmas Show which has also been supported and loved by so many.

The withdrawal of support for the Christmas Show is not the only example of a decision that has been presented as a *fait accompli* without any discussion.

I asked why the original proposal presented to elders, (*the CrossNet Discussion White Paper*), was never discussed? We talked about the possibility of having a proper open discussion of the White Paper, and in doing that, reach a better understanding of what aspects of the proposal were unacceptable to the HCC elders. I stated that it was always our intention to be flexible and to adjust as required by elders if possible. But we never had such a discussion. We were simply told by elders that we could proceed, and this was accompanied with 12 months financial support. It seemed from those steps that elders were supportive. What changed?

As promised, I have attached a copy of that discussion paper for your review and I trust we can, early next year, discuss it in detail so we can better understand where your reservations lie.

And finally, we had a short discussion on the direction of HCC. I emphasised that we were not criticising the directions set by elders but wondered if the church was large enough to embrace those of us who may have a different immediate focus – as ultimately our overall goal is the same.

If any of the above is not an accurate reflection of our discussion, please let me know so that the record is correct.

John summarised our discussion by saying he thought it was a good start and foundation for further meetings. We were a long way off reaching agreement, but the discussion was held in a good spirit.

There are many more questions I'd like to discuss with you in a future meeting and look forward to that opportunity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Bradley', with a stylized, cursive script.

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