

Stand with Evangel



Evangel Echos Church of the Air – Evangel Ministries – Established May 24, 1968

The truth of how a 52yr Holy Spirit anointed Metro-Detroit church
has gone from vibrant and Holy Ghost filled in January of 2019;
to 2 steps from the grave in January 2020 under the leadership of one man.

This is an ongoing situation happening to one of Detroit Area's premier churches. In this document we do our best to state the facts as clearly and succinctly as we can as well as identify where we are presenting unconfirmed points.

What is happening to Evangel is not just about Evangel. It is happening to other churches in both Detroit and elsewhere around the nation. It could happen to your church if you are not awake and aware of something called the Ecclesiastical Abstention Doctrine and how ungodly men are welding it as a weapon to take over churches across America for personal gain.

The matter is complex with many dimensions making it easy to get lost in the details. We encourage you the reader to gather all the facts; then seek God's will as to what he wants you to do.

May God Bless His Church

Background

Most Detroit area Christians are familiar with Evangel Ministries and Pastor George Bogle. Pastor Bogle started Evangel Church through his radio ministry Evangel Echos when he moved from the suburbs into the heart of Detroit in early 1968. Pastor Bogle went into semi-retirement in 2004 and retired from preaching completely in December of 2017 at the age of 83.

Pastor Chris Brooks became Evangel's Senior Pastor in 2004 and continued a thriving work for 15 years when he turned over the Senior Pastorship to Lorenzo Sewell, effective January 1, 2019. At that time, Evangel's typical 11am Sunday service was attended by 500 members, there were many active ministries, a broad ministerial team, approximately \$400,000 in the church bank account, and an annual church budget of approximately \$1.2 million.

Under Sewell's first year of leadership:

- Nearly 300 members have stopped attending services.
- Most internal church ministries have been stopped including Sunday School for children.
- Church financial support has fallen to a pace under \$500,000 annually; and it continues to drop.
- Best estimates, the church has \$175,000 in savings. Although Sewell refuses to respond to member requests on this question.
- In addition to his salary, Sewell requested, and we believe was granted a 400% increase in his housing allowance to \$5736/mo.
- Sewell has fired every Evangel staff member but one; most who served for more than 10 years.
- Sewell has refused numerous requests by members to meet publicly with him and the Elder Board.
- Sewell replaced the entire existing Elder Board shortly after he took over in January of 2019.
- Since December, Sewell has refused numerous requests by his new Elder Board members for a meeting.

On or about January 18th Sewell organized secret Board meetings without 3 of his Elders being notified (Art Ledlie, Van Thornton, Horace Pitts) of the meeting. At one meeting, Sewell and his 3 remaining Elders (Marlin Johnson, Randall Clemons, Fred Hunter) voted to terminate the other 3 Elders.

Sewell has changed the church alarm codes, door locks, bank accounts, social media accounts and other church assets to deny any old members access to anything.

Why?

Almost from the start of his term in office, Sewell has been negotiating with Solomon Kinloch of Triumph Church to merge Evangel Church and its approximately \$1,000,000 in assets into Triumph.

What is not clear is: why does Triumph want Evangel so badly; they are willing to run-off all the old members of Evangel to accomplish their objective? Theories include: 1) Sewell and Kinloch want to sell the property and deposit \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 into Triumph's bank. 2) Triumph likes the location and believes it will be a good inner-city place to put one of their campuses. 3) Triumph wants to tear down Evangel and rebuild on the spot.

Concerning running off all of Evangel's members.

Inside opinions claim that once Triumph secures the location, they fully believe that they will be able to promote their brand, bring in name-recognized Gospel talent (a Triumph signature action) and re-establish a new congregation of their own. Evangel's current membership is a mere inconvenience.

Triumph has been actively absorbing churches for some time. Much can be read on Triumph's website; however, allow this excerpt from the Triumph website to give you a hint as to their goals:

"The Spiritual Beltway is a God-given vision of Pastor Kinloch to impact the secular population of Metro Detroit by operating between four to six community campuses that would be extensions of Triumph Church. The vision aims to accommodate current membership needs and future growth by maintaining a level of intimacy within ministries and the worship experience by offering locations within 30 minutes of the majority of the population in Metro Detroit. Instead of operating a large centralized church, Triumph would become one church in multiple locations, ensuring that members and visitors would not have to endure extensive commutes to experience a Triumph worship experience."

Regarding Evangel and Solomon Kinloch, he is in the picture one day, out of the picture the next, only to be back again the next. Kinloch attended the November 10th Evangel meeting to answer questions about the merger into Triumph. When the membership resisted at that meeting, he stepped back and told Sewell and area pastors he would not go forward without 90% support of Evangel's membership. That 90% support never appeared; however, Kinloch attended a December 24th meeting with Tim Bogle and 5 other pastors, stating "just days before he had reached an agreement with Evangel's board for the merger". After our Group's recent push-back he has disappeared again. Is he truly gone; or simply stepping into the shadows because the situation looks tumultuous? Most believe Kinloch will reappear whenever he senses a deal can get done to absorb Evangel's assets.

Regarding Sewell: insiders claim he has been offered a handsome position on the Triumph staff should he be successful in pulling the merger off; leadership over 3 Detroit campuses. The merger was looking like a sure thing up until early November as Sewell was maneuvering Evangel into that direction.

Regretfully for Sewell, a large, strong voice began to rise up among Evangel's membership. This Group has complicated the situation and forced several changes in the course of direction. Attending Evangel members can attest that nearly every Sunday since the first of December 2019; a new plan was introduced. 1) Evangel was leaving their building January 5, 2020 to DWO's (Detroit World Outreach) location. 2) Evangel was delaying the January 5th move for several months while DWO construction was being done to accommodate them. 3) Evangel was staying in their location and House of Prayer & Praise was joining them there and a new sign saying Evangel Ministries Campus – Triumph Church. 4) Evangel is not merging with Triumph at all and we are going to remodel the church.

Sewell holds on to several claims in his defense:

- 1) He says he is being falsely accused and blames George & Tim Bogle for the cause of all the turmoil at Evangel. He gives no credence to the nearly 250 members who have joined Stand with Evangel against him. People like Van & Carolyn Thornton, Chevelle & EJ Brown, Ethel Thomas, Marlin & Regina Dinkins, Keith & Stephanie Huguley, Art Ledlie and a list so long it should shake any pastor to their knees. But not Sewell, he thinks we are all deceived and being led by the enemy; and only he is being led by the Lord.
- 2) He claims the situation is being handled in an ungodly manner quoting Matthew 18:15 – Go to your brother in private. This has been done by many, perhaps 50 times! Sewell fails to continue reading down to Vs 18:17 *If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

Sewell had a small victory in court last week; on Evangel's FB page you'll see him bragging in a video he'd been exonerated. Truth is, the lawsuit remains with a court date of April 4th. Only a pre-trial motion was dismissed because a document did not have proper form, not because of the merits of our case.

It's worth adding that Sewell has already ordered most of Evangel's records on membership, tithes, offerings and finances transferred to Triumph; and it appears new computer systems are being installed at Evangel that integrate with Triumph's systems. He is currently holding member drives, meetings and votes to posture himself as valid; and to disenfranchise the memberships of those attending for years.

How is this Happening?

There are two tools Sewell and Kinloch are using to accomplish their goals. The first is the "Director Directed Church" Vs the "Membership Directed Church".

Sewell claims that he and the Elders govern all that happens at Evangel and that we the members do not have a vote but can give our opinion (called input); then the Elders will make the ultimate decisions. What's worse, it is the Senior Pastor not the members who nominates the Elders; making it a convenient loop where members have no authority.

Our contention is, other than God, the Members are the ultimate voice and authority in the church; as there would be no church or church finances without them. The Evangel Echos Articles of Incorporation as established by Pastor George Bogle in 1968 state: **"In no event shall the doctrine or business of this church be subject to or controlled by any higher authority than the membership of this church."**

What we have today are 4 men: brother Lorenzo Sewell, brother Marlin Johnson, brother Randall Clemons, plus Triumph's Solomon Kinloch who are making the critical decisions for this church and who under Mr. Sewell's direction, have recently taken both economic and physical control of the church.

The second tool is "The Ecclesiastical Abstention Doctrine". Something that should make every congregation in America stand up to make sure their house is in order. Caution: not all churches are setup correctly; but if you have true men of God in authority, you are not in immediate danger. However you do want to get it right; not to accuse your pastor, but to protect your church when your pastor retires.

Sewell and Triumph are standing on this distorted interpretation of the "Separation between Church and State" as defined by the Supreme Court. According to Sewell's attorney "the state or a court have no legal right to take actions that infringe upon the religious liberty or free exercise of religious organizations. Furthermore, the state either through its administrative agencies or courts cannot delve into the internal affairs of a religious organization". "There is no court that could legally hear or address such claims....". In other words; 4 men can highjack a church for the benefit of another and it's the Wild-Wild-West, no court will hear the case, no court can stop them! We're not in agreement.

What Can You Do?

If you are a member of Evangel; continue to stand against this unrighteous activity and see it for what it is "the scattering of the sheep". Don't let them scatter this flock. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Do not grow weary in well doing, for you will reap if you faint not. Decide now to stand for as long as it takes.

If you are not a member of Evangel; stand with your brothers and sisters. We are all one body. If the foot is hurt, the rest of the body should move in Christ to heal it. Pray for Evangel, Spread the Word throughout Detroit's community. Help us expose these carnal actions to all. If you are able, donate to our legal fund...we are engaged in battle, send us supplies. God Bless Us All Indeed

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