

Stand with Evangel

EDUCATION DOCUMENT 2 – FEBRUARY 1, 2020



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 Abstinence 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

STAND WITH EVANGEL - EDUCATION DOCUMENT 2

In just 12 short months, under the leadership of Evangel's new Senior Pastor; a beautiful thriving, 50-year church body (with numerous members who have attended for 20 to 30 years) is being destroyed. Judged on any standard: spiritual, financial, emotional, companionship, fellowship, ministries, families, kids...Evangel Church is in a significantly worsened place today then just one year ago. We do not know what is in the heart of this young man and only judge by the fruit; it's clear that serious problems exist.

Pastor Bogle Sets It Up Right!

At the core of the issue is an invalid, immoral, and improper attempt to change the church By-laws in order to convert Evangel Echos Church of the Air established May 24, 1968 by Pastor George W. Bogle, from a Member governed church to a Director governed church. Both the original Articles of Incorporation as registered by Pastor Bogle and the Church's original By-laws as adopted and signed by Pastor Bogle at conception, establish the Church as Member Governed.

Evangel Church Original Articles of Incorporation

ARTICLE 5th

The doctrine, rules and discipline shall generally be based upon those of the Evangel Church as modified and agreed upon, however, by the members of this church, and in no event shall the doctrine and business of this church be subject to or controlled by any higher church authority than the membership of this church.

Evangel Church Original Bylaws

ARTICLE VI.

GOVERNMENT:

Section 1: The government of this Church shall be vested in the congregation whose action by majority ballot (except when otherwise specified in the By-Laws) shall be decisive in all matters.

ARTICLE X.

AMENDMENTS

Section 1. Amendments. By-laws may be amended or repealed and new by-laws adopted by a majority vote of the members at any annual meeting or any special meeting called for that purpose.

Adopted: May 24, 1968.


President

ATTEST:


Secretary

They Changed the Rules

Evangel's Bylaws have been invalidly changed to take away the rights of the congregation; and then vest power with the Elder Board and Pastor who nominate & elect each other and answer only to themselves.

In fairness, the genesis of these invalid and improper Bylaw changes began in 2011 prior to Sewell; he has simply taken it to the next level including adding new Bylaw changes of his own (under the auspice of his board).

It's armed with this newly seized authority that Sewell ventured into negotiations with Triumph Church to merge and transfer Evangel Church and its \$1M in assets under the Triumph umbrella. All the prior stated activities were taking place in secret without any awareness or consent of the congregation. Immediately upon the Triumph merger strategy being made known to Evangel's congregation, strong resistance began to rise up.

Our contention is that Evangel was established as a member governed church and these rights can not be rescinded nor transferred to the Elder Board or Senior Pastor, without a qualified vote of the membership. Any attempt to do so is a violation of Michigan State Law and supported by precedence.

Their Next Move

Aware this legal exposure could foil the merger plot, Sewell paused the merger and began actively recruiting new members, disqualifying longtime Evangel Members and creating new member rolls; in order to manufacture a new Evangel membership that will grant him approval to become a Director-Directed organization. Should he be successful, he would then be able to progress forward with the merger into Triumph.

Stand with Evangel's 3 Options

The true, long standing members of Evangel Church who have attended, paid their tithes, offerings, and built this Church over 5 decades; have 3 Options to move forward:

- 1) Present our case to the Detroit Christian Community and ask for the Body's full influence, resources and support to bring significant pressure on both Sewell and the existing Elder Board to hold an honest, open and fair voting process with Evangel's true membership. This would allow the members to choose their own destiny in a Godly manner.
- 2) Ask Sewell and the current Elder Board to resign, return governance back to the members. We will negotiate a severance package for Sewell as a show of our appreciation.
- 3) Petition the Michigan State Courts and ask for their intervention to stop all activity, order a court monitored vote of Evangel's true membership, and upon success of that vote, return the governance of Evangel Church to its members.

Our preferred choice would be Option 2, understanding the likelihood of that occurring is extremely low. Our second choice would be Option 1 **where we depend on those of you who are in church leadership within Detroit to step forward to assist us.** Option 3 has a high probability of success albeit, includes a cost of approximately \$50,000 and an undetermined amount of time for the process to transpire.

We Need Your Support

We are asking everyone in Christ's Body to Stand with Us. With your prayers, voice, and financial support; we will be victorious. To learn what you can do to help us, email us at support@standwithevangel.com or text us at 313-307-3700. We thank you all in advance! May God Bless Evangel Church – www.standwithevangel.com

REBUTTLES TO SEWELL'S FACT VS FICTION RESPONSE

In response to our first Education piece, Sewell is circulating a document he calls Fact Vs Fiction.

Sewell's Fact Vs Fiction responses are deceptive, evasive, and inaccurate. Any savvy reader will be able to easily sort through the key points to reach the proper conclusion. We've prepared the following rebuttals in order to assist with that process.

REBUTTALS – SEE SEWELL FACT VS FICTION RESPONSE:

- 1) TRUE: "Nearly 300 of our brothers and sisters have suspended attending services". Sewell's FACT response fails to address the accusation.
- 2) TRUE: "Most internal church ministries have been stopped including Sunday School for children". Sewell's FACT response admits this, referring to things as "paused". It also appears he sees no distinction between "bodies" and "members".
- 3) TRUE: "Church financial support has fallen to a pace under \$500,000 annually; and it continues to drop." Sewell's FACT response fails to address the accusation. FACT: Revenue has dropped from \$100K/mo to under \$40K/mo and falling. **Is he suggesting the Church savings account is increasing?**
- 4) TRUE: "Evangel had approx. \$400K in savings January 2019. Today's best estimates, under \$170,000 in savings. Sewell refuses to produce documentation on finances.
- 5) TRUE: Salary is \$105K plus housing bonus. Sewell's response acknowledges a housing increase request.
- 6) TRUE: Notice Sewell added the word "**wrongfully**" which is not in the original claim. FACT response admits the staff was terminated and confirms church revenues were approx. \$100K/mo when he took over. Response has no relevancy to the recent 2020 terminations.
- 7) TRUE: We have written proof of meeting requests plus witnesses to "oral requests to meet with Sewell and the Board". Sewell refused all such requests and will not submit himself to any oversight.
- 8) TRUE: Notice Mr. Sewell added the word "**solely**" which is not in the original claim, followed by a response that admits all Elder Board members we're replaced. This is in spite of an agreement that Pastor Chris Brooks was to remain an Elder Board member.
- 9) TRUE: Mr. Sewell's answer fails to address the accusation. Multiple members like Van Thornton and Marlin Deacons who held access to church property for 30 years have now been banned from entering the premises and are turned away at the door.
- 10) TRUE: We can produce multiple written requests dated in December 2019 by 2 Elder Board members requesting a meeting. Sewell with cooperation of the Board Secretary buried these requests, CITING PROPER PROTOCOL WAS NOT FOLLOWED?????

PLEASE STAND WITH THE CONGREGATION OF EVANGEL CHURCH - EVANGEL MINISTRIES

WE ASK YOU SUPPORT US TO RESTORE MEMBER GOVERNANCE AND REMOVE OUR PASTOR

SEWELL'S FACT VS FICTION PAPER

Dear Evangel Family,

Today, I am writing you to address several misconceptions, negative communications and direct intentional attacks on our beloved church family.

I have personally been the target of these politically motivated rants that seem to be focused on falsehoods, made up twisted stories accusing me of division, financial mismanagement, and being everything but the man of God that I am.

When the devil is at work, I was taught to take him and his ambassadors head on. I was taught to put all my faith in God and seek his direction and advise. For several weeks now, I have been in prayer, soaking in his word and waiting for power of his spirit to drive me with the strength to counter these misguided individuals. God has given me the strength, the vision, the power of forgiveness and the ability to clearly communicate with our church family fiction versus fact.

First and foremost, I bare no hostility in my heart and soul towards those who are attacking me. I love them, I pray for them and I ask God every day that He hug them with all his glory and might. That He embraces and cleanses all of the internal and external Spirits that are causing hurt, pain, discomfort and unhappiness. I want all to be healed and come back to the mission of God's glory.

I love the Lord, as I know you do. Truth is an universal topic that we all seek to know and understand. Throughout the Bible, the importance of speaking the truth is routinely emphasized in keeping a pristine relationship with God. Today, we say "the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). This is so true today as it has been over centuries.

1 John 4:6

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Fiction vs. Fact

1. **Fiction:** Since my term began as Pastor, nearly 300 members have stopped attending service.

Fact: God has allowed us to average 450-500+ weekly since January 2019 (we have a census taker weekly).

2. **Fiction:** Most internal church ministries have stopped.

Fact: Evangel Ministries just looks different than what was previously in place. Ministries were put on pause for a season to allow the pastor and the congregation to get to know each other and to allow for building a culture of prayer and soul-winning that is second to none. In terms of soul-winning, we had three outdoor services in the summer of 2019 with a total of 18 baptisms, all for the glory of God. We also started hot meals in February 2019 every 3rd Sunday of the month inviting Life Challenge to come and worship with us. Also serving hot meals before Winning Family Wednesday night Bible Study. Starting in February there will be a wide variety of ministries offered Wednesday evenings. Additionally, we will be picking up by bus at DRMM, COTS, Burns Elementary and Gardenview for Sunday Worship Experiences.

3. **Fiction:** The church's financial support has fallen to a pace under \$500,000 annually and it continues to drop.

Fact: In the start of 2019, Evangel was on track to close its doors in February 2020 with no changes being made. The church was losing nearly \$30K a month. By the grace of God, we are now financially healthy and as of September 2019, we are gaining over \$20K a month. That is a \$50K swing in the positive in less than a year.

4. **Fiction:** The church has an estimate of \$175,000 in savings, but Pastor will not discuss these savings with members.

Fact: The Budget will be available for review by good standing members and open to discussion with the Pastor and finance team. We have enough in our savings to be a financially responsible church. We believe in a metric based model of ministry that focuses on using our resources for redemption. That said, our guidelines are 50/40/10, we believe that over 50% of what we spend should be on doing the work of the ministry, up to 40% towards staff that equip the saints and 10% to deferred maintenance.

5. **Fiction:** In addition to his salary, Pastor Sewell has requested, and was granted, a 400% increase in his housing allowance.

Fact: All ministers receive a housing allowance that reflect their home needs, which is part of their total salary agreed on and voted by their Elder Board. However, if the housing allowance exceeds the amount used throughout the year and not supported by receipts, it is taxed with the rest of the total salary and owed during tax season. The increase was requested for home renovations and down payment on a house that were being saved during this current year 2020. Housing allowance was offered as part of the salary at the very beginning of Pastors start date in December 2018.

6. **Fiction:** Sewell wrongfully fired every staff member but one; most who served for more than 10 years.

Fact: At the beginning of my Pastorate there were 14 full time paid staff members. After we looked at the financials from 2018, we realized we could not support all the staff that were currently employed. A forensic accountant was brought in, to deeply examine, reconcile all books and give a financial report with his findings. We reduced staff after they were assessed by a Human Resources expert. Reducing staff in any profession is difficult but in a local church, where people worship and work, it is complex. Evangel spent \$1 million on staff with a budget of \$1.3 Million for the entire church however, the church spent \$1.6 Million and only brought in \$1.3 Million in 2018. A Pastor, let alone a new Pastor should not have to choose between making changes, and the church closing or reducing staff. These decisions hurt and all were lose-lose situations.

7. **Fiction:** Pastor Sewell has refused numerous members' requests to meet publicly with him and the Elder Board.

Fact: All members are more than welcome to meet with me as their Pastor at any time; most have my personal cell phone number. My main goal is for reconciliation and healing, I have made it very clear that I am approachable, understanding and want the best outcome for our church and community of 48227.

8. **Fiction:** Pastor Sewell solely replaced the entire existing Elder Board shortly after he took over in January 2019.

Fact: The Elder Board (before 2019) under our previous leadership recommended new Elders because the current ones were all over their term limits according to the bylaws that were in place. All old Elders also affirmed all new Elders that had to be voted on the Elder Board.

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

Fact: The church's business information is handled by all the appropriate, appointed people and our facilities manager has access to all codes. It would be inappropriate and a breach of my fiduciary

duties to allow former members or every current member to have access to sensitive information and assets. A company was hired to change the locks after staff reductions had taken place this past month and all keys were not returned.

10. **Fiction:** Since December, Sewell has refused to numerous requests by his new Elder Board members for a meeting.

Fact: Elders meet four times a year; however, we have a special meeting when needed, and have a monthly meeting for prayer and accountability. There is a protocol to have an Elder meeting which was not followed for those specific requests.

In closing, I want you to know, we are not going to allow the evils of the devil to destroy us. Fiction versus Fact is a powerful tool of reality. We know lies when they are thrown on us. We will continue to pray for those who need prayer and guidance. We have facts and truth on our side.

Praying,

Pastor Lorenzo Sewell