

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