

NAMB/Ezell - McRaney

Extra Summary in a Page:

In summary, in the second half of 2014 the President of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) Dr. Kevin Ezell desired to cancel the existing 2012 Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware (BCMD) in favor of 2014 version of the SPA NAMB had designed to fit their desires instead of honoring the existing 2012 SPA. When Dr. Ezell's various and repeated overtures were rejected, he began lying about the BCMD Executive Director, Dr. Will McRaney to various people in writing. He then gave notice of cancellation regarding a historic agreement between NAMB and BCMD.

The notice effectively cancelled a 3 year (2015-2017) financial agreement of some \$1 million per year in partnership with BCMD for 8 staff positions and joint ministry efforts. He did so by lying and falsely accusing Dr. McRaney of repeatedly and willfully violating the SPA to BCMD Board leaders. Dr. McRaney did not violate the SPA, while in fact Dr. Ezell and NAMB leadership were widely ignoring and violating the SPA as a powerful organizational bully. When these accusations and resulting financial threats did not have the desired result of Dr. McRaney's removal in a timely fashion, Dr. Ezell then made secret threats to the President of BCMD Dr. Bill Warren regarding his threat to withhold money as long as Dr. McRaney remained as Executive Director. This threat culminated in Dr. McRaney's eventual termination on June 8, 2015. This termination happened without cause, without any poor performance review and in fact, 4 months earlier (Feb. 2015) the BCMD governing Board unanimously voted to affirm Dr. McRaney's leadership. Additionally, the BCMD Board unanimously rejected any NAMB offer that would hand additional controls of church planting to NAMB, which was a key component in the new SPA that Dr. Ezell/NAMB designed and wanted to force the BCMD to accept.

Immediately following Dr. McRaney's termination, Dr. Ezell effectively provided the equivalent of an additional \$675,000 to the BCMD. In the next BCMD Board meeting, the Board voted to accept the new NAMB favoring version of the SPA that they had previously unanimously voted to reject in Feb. 2015.

Additionally, Dr. Ezell continued to damage and interfere with Dr. McRaney's efforts to work and provide for his family by at least the following known actions: (1) NAMB leadership interfered with an October 2016 speaking engagement in Louisville MS resulting in lost wages and opportunities for additional monthly financial support for his new ministry, (2) Dr. Ezell called a Florida to interfere with a November 2016 speaking engagement in Clearwater, FL, and (3) at some point posted an 8x10 photo of Dr. McRaney at the Welcome Desk of NAMB headquarters in Alpharetta GA communicating that he was not to be trusted and public enemy #1 of NAMB. A photo of Dr. McRaney's photo was taken by an SBC national board member in August 2016 and shared with Dr. McRaney in November 2016.

21 Summarizing Vignettes from Pertinent Historical Account

1. On September 10, 2013 the General Mission Board of the Baptist Convention as the official employing agent of the Maryland/Delaware (BCMD) unanimously elected Dr. Will McRaney to serve as the Executive Director of the BCMD. Dr. McRaney's duties are wide ranging and include the setting of the ministry direction and priorities for the organization and the securing and managing of staff members of the BCMD.
2. The BCMD is one of 42 state conventions and fellowships that work with the national Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) located in Nashville, TN. The BCMD is a cooperative mission and ministry organization made up of more than 560 autonomous Baptist churches primarily in Maryland and Delaware. The BCMD is a separate autonomous body with its own governing boards, budgets and member churches. A variety of state and worldwide ministries are coordinated through its administrative offices in Columbia, Maryland principally including starting new churches and strengthening existing ones.
3. The SBC has some 50,000 fully autonomous churches that voluntarily cooperate with and affiliate with the SBC and operates with 12 boards and agencies that are organized for various ministry efforts. The churches operate separately from the SBC national and are self governing, self supporting, and not a part of a hierarchical system of governance by the SBC nor any of its agencies, state convention partners, or local association partners.
4. The North American Mission Board (NAMB), located principally in Alpharetta, GA, is one of the 12 boards and agencies of the SBC. With \$320 million in net assets and an annual budget of over \$120 million, it is the largest and financially strongest board of the SBC in North America. NAMB operates under the direction of their separate and unique Board of Trustees that are elected for multiple year terms at the Annual Meeting of the SBC. The Trustees have exclusive duties to provide oversight to the affairs and personnel of NAMB. The Trustees control the employment of their President. Dr. Kevin Ezell, was duly elected by the Trustees and has served in that role since September 2010. Dr. Ezell is responsible among other duties to assemble, manage and supervise NAMB staff members.
5. Historically the BCMD and NAMB have partnered in specific areas of ministry as separate organizations with human and financial resources collaborating at various points of mission and ministry, which each having their own separate boards and autonomy. The operating governing agreement between the two sister agencies, approved by NAMB President Ezell and the previous BCMD Executive Director David Lee on September 2012, was the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) which had no expiration date for the agreement. The President of NAMB and the Executive Director of the BCMD serve as leaders of their respective organizations without encumbrances or demands from either. The binding expectations are written exclusively in the SPA, with

neither leader being subjected to oversight, management, or obligation to the other organization or leader.

6. The terms of the SPA include several sections which specifies the responsibilities and terms of the agreement. Both NAMB and the BCMD agree to follow until that document is edited or replaced by signature of both the NAMB President and the BCMD Executive Director. Otherwise, the law of the land in the partnership exclusively resided in this one agreement. "NAMB also respects the ministry priorities as defined by each convention; therefore the following agreement sets forth mutual guidelines for defining the parameters of coordinating strategies, projects, resourcing and assistance with providing missionaries to help each (state) convention penetrate lostness." As a part of the SPA and then the 3 year budget agreement/commitment from NAMB to the BCMD (2015-2017), the BCMD and NAMB had eight jointly funded staff positions (7 slots filled) that were to be hired in accordance with the SPA and supervised as employees of the BCMD by the Executive Director, Dr. McRaney.
7. NAMB leadership designed a new SPA agreement in 2014 that they began pushing on the 25-26 state conventions which were also operating under the 2012 SPA. This new SPA was designed by NAMB and contained numerous changes that gave NAMB more controls over the financial resources and the hiring, supervising and firing of staff positions of the state conventions, and eliminated all jointly-funded staff positions. Of the 25 state conventions with SPA with NAMB, some 18 of those were small SBC state conventions that were highly reliant on NAMB financial support. As such, they all submitted to the combination of requests and financial strong-arming tactics of NAMB to accept the new NAMB-friendly SPA. However the BCMD was a mid-size state convention where the churches collectively supported NAMB with as many financial resources as NAMB returned to the BCMD. The approximate \$1 million annual money was used to jointly hire staff and conduct ministry and mission efforts. This had been true for a 10 year period.
8. Over the summer and then in the fall of 2014, NAMB began making an offer, then requested, then pressured Dr. McRaney and the BCMD to accept the newly written SPA in favor of the currently operating 2012 version. When Dr. McRaney learned of possible tensions with NAMB, he reached out to Dr. Ezell in accordance with the SPA as executive leader to executive leader. In spite of Dr. McRaney's making some 7 written requests to meet with Dr. Ezell, the offers were not only ignored, but Dr. Ezell wrote to various leaders that Dr. McRaney had refused repeatedly to meet with him. This was a provably false accusation intended to damage Dr. McRaney and undermine his leadership and standing with his BCMD Board leaders.
9. Over the fall, Dr. McRaney consistently declined to accept the new SPA which would have weakened the BCMD, making it more dependent and less self-governing. It would have also turned over controls to NAMB in one of the two primary purposes of the

BCMD, the starting of new churches, which includes the selection, assessing, training, and supporting of the planters.

Dr. McRaney's refusal to accept the new SPA was the unstated reason that directly led Dr. Ezell and NAMB VP Jeff Christopherson on December 2, 2014 to give a one-year notice of cancellation with their signatures of the historic partnership and accompanying financial resources to the BCMD. The cancellation without conversation with Dr. McRaney was in direct violation of the SPA.

10. In the written notice of cancellation, Dr. Ezell explicitly blamed Dr. McRaney for the cancellation and in doing so made multiple false and libelous accusations against him. Dr. Ezell stated that Dr. McRaney willfully and repeatedly violated the SPA. This is provably false with examination of NAMB documents, BMCD official records, and a calendar. By making false accusations, Dr. McRaney's leadership was placed into question regarding his handling of a strategic partnership with such a powerful SBC and financial partner with the BCMD. This caused fear and stress among the staff, in particular related to the staff positions that could be lost without NAMB's partnership.
11. Dr. Ezell continued a pattern of not communicating with Dr. McRaney and refused to meet for a period of 4 months after Dr. Ezell cancelled the SPA. However, Dr. Ezell was in communication with the President of the BCMD. This is primarily an honorary position of one year term by a BCMD pastor which was occupied by Dr. Warren at that time. Dr. Ezell stated that he would informally place Dr. McRaney on a six month probation period and refused to meet or talk. However, on February 7, 2015 when the BMCD Board met and cast two unanimous votes after discussion (1) to unanimously affirm Dr. McRaney's leadership of the BCMD, and (2) to reject NAMB's offer of a new SPA that would give NAMB greater controls overall and in particular in church starting, which is one of the BCMD's two primary missions as an organization. Dr. Ezell then reversed his position and decided he would now be willing to meet after seeing the Board's support of Dr. McRaney and its refusal to accept the new NAMB created SPA.
12. During the Feb. 7, 2015 meeting of the GMB, Dr. Ezell sent a text message to a GMB member threatening the BCMD Executive Director and the leaders during the actual GMB meeting he knew was taking place. The text was read aloud in the GMB meeting to which it was stated aloud that it was a 'threat'. The reading of the text was audio recorded and later transcribed. After the vote affirming Dr. McRaney and rejecting the NAMB designed new SPA, Dr. Ezell worked out arrangements with Dr. Warren to meet with select leaders of the BCMD on March 11, 2015.
13. The March 11, 2015 meeting with NAMB and BCMD leaders was held. However, once again Dr. Ezell did not keep his word regarding the meeting. He sought to change the place at the last minute. He brought only one Trustee, not two NAMB Trustees as was our BCMD officers' accountability condition for meeting with him, and he changed the agenda without notice to use his time to talk about the past in opposition to the terms

he had asked us to adhere. During this meeting NAMB Chairman Chuck Herring stated that he has such trust in Dr. Ezell that “if Dr. Ezell said the sky was purple, I would believe him.”

During this meeting Dr. Ezell modified his December 2, 2014 notice of cancellation which would have resulted in the NAMB funding dropping from about \$1 million/year to \$0/year reinvested into the BCMD. He started with agreeing to restore \$350,000/year as he talked down to and behaved in what the staff later described as “petulant”. As the meeting progressed one of our BCMD officers groveled for additional money to help cover our jointly funded 8 staff positions that Dr. Ezell’s cancellation had defunded. Dr. Ezell raised his offer/commitment from NAMB to begin in 2016 from \$0 to \$350,000 to \$500,000 all in this one meeting. However, he stipulated verbally and later in writing by NAMB VP Steve Davis that none of the \$500,000 could be used for jointly funded staff. In essence, Dr. Ezell was making sure that our eight historically jointly funded staff members would be under stress. This not only was a threat to them, but also to our ministries and on our BCMD leadership as well to solve the shortfall created by Dr. Ezell’s libelous reasons given to cancel the 2012 SPA. President Warren’s repeated statement and plea in various settings was to “save the seven”, referring to the staff in jeopardy.

14. The next GMB meeting was held on May 5, 2015. During this meeting additional discussions were had, including clarifying remarks from GMB President Mark Dooley who publicly noted NAMB’s shortcoming regarding their violations. Dr. McRaney received affirmation from GMB members regarding the handling of the matters related to NAMB and the overall direction of the BCMD.
15. On June 2, 2016 Dr. McRaney had a scheduled meeting with the three BCMD officers, President Warren, GMB President Dooley, and Admin. Committee Chairman Dr. Harold Phillips to discuss budget matters for 2016. However, upon arrival to the meeting, the three BCMD offers changed the agenda to cover areas of concerns regarding Dr. McRaney’s leadership of the BCMD. In light of the many noteworthy advances of the ministry of the BCMD and the February 7, 2015 unanimous vote of affirmation for his leadership, Dr. McRaney was shocked to receive an unexamined list of six areas of concern that were full of innuendos and without substantive and cross examined claims. He was blindsided and it was not until later he discovered Dr. Ezell’s role.

Dr. McRaney was given two days to send a reply indicating he would address the six written areas given to him over the next designated two weeks. If Dr. McRaney did not agree to work on the six items, he could resign. Dr. McRaney replied as requested by email on June 4, 2015 in the afternoon agreeing to work on the six items even though he believed the areas to be bogus and/or just misunderstandings. However, hours later the same day before even a single day had passed since Dr. McRaney agreed to work on those items, Dr. Warren and Dooley were calling GMB members inviting them to a special called meeting on the following Monday. At that single GMB meeting after only

the one conversation with the BCMD officers around six areas filled with generalized innuendos, Dr. McRaney was terminated. This happened without Dr. McRaney ever having a single discussion with the Administrative Committee who was responsible for BCMD personnel matters.

The Administrative Committee and the GMB held single, secretive special meetings under the initiative of Dr. Warren in violation of the governing documents of the BCMD. The Board operated in secret and in haste. The officers violated their 2 week agreement with Dr McRaney. The areas of note were unfounded and unexamined. The meetings were in violation and the terms to address the stated concerns were completely unrealistic and unreasonable. Later, the reasons for the procedures and termination made sense with revelations about Dr. Ezell's interference.

Even though not a single item of the six concerns could stand under testing regarding its veracity and Dr. McRaney was given a completely unreasonable timeframe of two weeks, a meeting was called the very day Dr. McRaney agreed to work on the items. Of note, the first item on the "concern list" was a requirement by Dr. Warren, who wrote the six items, was to "hit the reset button with Dr. Ezell" and to go apologize to him, even though Dr. Warren, along with Dooley and Phillip, had signed a letter refuting Dr. Ezell's claims against Dr. McRaney in the December 2, 2014 Letter of Cancellation Notice.

Nothing about the termination of Dr. McRaney made any sense until, it was discovered on June 24, 2015 that Dr. Warren was in secret conversations with Dr. Ezell regarding the withholding of money until Dr. McRaney was terminated. As a matter of note, a NAMB employee told Dr. McRaney and his wife to their faces of his surprise regarding Dr. McRaney's termination on Monday, June 15, 2015 at the SBC Annual Meeting in Columbus, OH. He also stated that in a conversation with his NAMB leadership, he was told Dr. McRaney was going to receive six weeks to work on the list of six items written by Warren. However, according to Pastor and Administrative Committee member Andrew Morgan a time period to work on those six items was not discussed at all, neither two weeks nor six weeks during the Admin. Committee's secret June 1, 2015 meeting. This meeting was in violation of BCMD policies. In this single meeting, they discussed Dr. McRaney without his required presence.

Additionally this same NAMB staff member referred to above asked his NAMB superiors when hearing of the termination, "why did you force McRaney out?" Depositions will provide the answers to these questions that seem to reflect NAMB's involvement.

16. On June 8, 2016 during a single special called meeting of the GMB, at a location separate from the normal meeting site at the offices of the BCMD, Dr. McRaney was terminated without cause without him being present during the discussions or knowing that termination would be a topic of discussion. Dr. McRaney was terminated by vote of the GMB effective immediately. He was not asked to resign in lieu of termination, but

terminated. The GMB meeting was called and orchestrated by Warren and Dooley. Dr. McRaney was later given a letter acknowledging that there was no allegation before or after his termination of any allegation of illegal, immoral, or unethical conduct.

Dr. McRaney first learned of his termination in a meeting at 8:30 PM on June 8, 2015 when he was told by Phillips and GMB member, now current GMB President and BCMD President Mike Trammell. Dr. McRaney was told he was terminated by vote of the GMB earlier in the day. Dr. McRaney inquired as to the what was the cause or allegation, to which Trammell replied, "there is none". The next morning when told, the staff was shocked as were pastors all across MD/DE. It was out of order of BCMD policies, hurried, and foggy at the time. After discovering Ezell's secret threat to Warren, many things came into focus. Also, Warren said the morning after Dr. McRaney's termination, that he believed God would have him be the next Executive Director. He later has acknowledged this to several pastors in a group setting. Depositions will add insights to determine if NAMB made promises to assist Warren in getting the position should he facilitate the termination of Dr. McRaney.

Phillips and Trammell communicated that a severance agreement would be put together in the coming days in exchange for Dr. McRaney's agreeing to the terms, namely to not litigate against the BCMD or talk negatively about the BCMD. The complete terms are located in the termination agreement which was provided to Dr. McRaney on Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at 5:05 PM, immediately following the close of the SBC Annual meeting.

Immediately after the termination of Dr. McRaney and before the next scheduled Admin Committee meeting in August 2015, several developments took place which further implicate Dr. Ezell and NAMB's involvement in Dr. McRaney's termination. (1) NAMB committed \$675,000 more in resources for 2016 than Dr. Ezell had committed to under Dr. McRaney's leadership in the March 11, 2015 meeting between the various leaders. (2) In August 2015 the Admin Committee, of which Warren, Dooley, and Phillips are on, voted to accept the new (2014) NAMB friendly version of the SPA after unanimously rejecting it in February 2015.

17. Unbeknownst to Dr. McRaney until June 24, 2015 several weeks after his termination, at some point during the spring Dr. Ezell had communications with Dr. Warren in which it was communicated by Dr. Ezell to Dr. Warren privately that as long as Dr. McRaney remained as Executive Director, NAMB would not be supporting the BCMD. Dr. Warren repeated this same message to multiple pastors individually, including Clint Scott and Steve Wolverton and in several group settings as well (Phillips, Trammell, James Pope in 1 setting among other settings), one of which was in his only meeting with Dr. McRaney on September 10, 2015. In this meeting in front of 5 others Dr. Warren was confronted regarding his statement of Dr. Ezell's threat. After some attempts to deny, he relented and agreed, as at least two of the pastors present he had told personally in other settings. One of those pastors took verbatim notes from his conversation with Warren

and sent the remarks back to Dr. Warren on June 24, 2015 to verify and prevent him from changing his story in the future. Reports have been given by pastors that this same or similar message was given as the reason for the hasty termination of Dr. McRaney. It was reported by BCMD officers that they had to quickly remove Dr. McRaney in order to not lose NAMB funding.

18. Dr. McRaney was scheduled to speak at a large mission emphasis event in Louisville, MS on October 23, 2016 after an invitation by Pastor Rob Paul who had tried for over two years to schedule Dr. McRaney to speak at the missions emphasis. In June 2016 at the SBC Annual meeting in St. Louis, Paul directly uninvited Dr. McRaney in person and in front of Dr. McRaney's wife Sandy. Paul shared personally because of his 25 plus year relationship with Dr. McRaney and Mrs. McRaney and his acknowledgement of his regret to have uninvited Dr. McRaney. Paul is closely connected to a NAMB trustee and had a NAMB trustee speak at the event. By words and evidence of factors, it is apparent that some NAMB leader or representative interfered in this speaking engagement for Dr. McRaney.
19. FL Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference President approached Dr. McRaney on Nov. 1, 2016 to inform him that Dr. Ezell had called to interfere with Dr. McRaney being scheduled to speak at the November 14, 2016 Pastor's Conference. He kept Dr. McRaney on the program, but expressed such anger about Dr. Ezell's seeking to involve himself, that he was considering taking the matter into public view. According to the Conference President, Dr. Ezell called an influential FL pastor who at Dr. Ezell's urging then called the Pastors Conference President to interfere with Dr. McRaney's speaking at the event.
20. On November 15, 2016, a national SBC agency board member shared a photo he took of Dr. McRaney's photo posted at NAMB headquarters in Alpharetta GA. The photo was posted in public view at NAMB's Welcome Desk by NAMB leadership. The posted photo of Dr. McRaney communicates that he was not to be trusted and public enemy #1 of NAMB. This 8x10 photo is evidence of the additional efforts to damage Dr. McRaney who is innocent in these matters and is actually the victim of Dr. Ezell's intentional, repeated, and widely damaging actions. This photo has caused additional damage and is a result of Dr. Ezell's defamation and continued interference with Dr. McRaney's work relationships.
21. All the above matters have been further complicated by the NAMB Trustees publicly issuing their satisfaction with a "thorough examination and review" without having a single conversation with Dr. McRaney or MD/DE pastor witnesses who would testify in support of Dr. McRaney's claims.

This public information release by NAMB Trustees and related June 13, 2016 article "NAMB Trustees End Investigation of Dealings with Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network" drew a response from a BCMC pastor who wrote to both Dr. Ezell and then NAMB Trustee

Board Chairman Chuck Herring. To Dr. Ezell he wrote, "The vote yesterday to consider this reviewed and resolved is a charade. I believe you know this. I am asking you in Jesus' name to do the right thing." To Herring he wrote, "I want you to know that Dr. McRaney is telling the truth. Dr. Ezell has personally signed threat letters. Dr. Warren, MABN President personally told me that Dr. Ezell was going to withhold funds... Please don't continue to sweep this under the rug. Voting yesterday to call this reviewed and settled is a charade. I ask you in Jesus name to have an independent investigation and to do the right thing by Dr. McRaney."

Summary Documents Available:

3 Versions of the Timeline (all in one large document or separately)

- Stages of Pressures by NAMB/Ezell on MD/DE Convention
2 pages describing the stages of increased pressure and threats by Ezell/NAMB and briefs on MD/DE Convention actions
- Narrative Sequential Summary of Events– NAMB & MD/DE Conv.
1.5 page narrative describing the major events in sequential order
- Detailed and Dated Version NAMB Actions Toward MD/DE Convention
7 page detailed outline of events involving NAMB and MD/DE Conv.
- Original 5 page letter of concern to NAMB Trustees.