One church's response to SBC lawlessness and subsequent silence by the SBC EC and other leaders.

Topics Addressed: Many and Unthinkable - corruption, self-dealing, abuse of power, damage to fellow servants, failed strategy, dismantling of SBC mission ecosystem, deception to federal courts up to SCOTUS, violations of rules, SBC policies, governing docs and laws, properties, alcohol, silence and cover up, SBC Cabal, & more.

Leaders Addressed: Linton, Greear, Lewis, Scroggins, Rainer, Ezell, Thomas, Ebert, Ferrer, Moore, Hunt, Law, Floyd, Mohler, SBC Cabal

Sept. 2021
Open Letter to Current & Former SBC EC Members,

We all have come to expect **corruption, dishonesty, cover-ups, political favors and self-dealing** in US politics and even among business leaders. However, we should not expect nor tolerate the same behaviors, strategies, and tactics in Baptist leaders who claim to represent Christ. I certainly did not expect these things to be ignored by positional stewards once they became aware of the wrongs. It is sad to watch positional leaders display a lack spiritual of courage to speak truth to wrongs in the name of protecting __(you fill in the blank)__. Our higher duty is to God and truth and then to those who give the mission money. Our primary duty is not to those who are paid to steward it and benefit from it, nor can we ignore wrongs in the name of protecting an organization, as if God is not watching and involved.

While most followers of Christ are troubled by the lack of integrity and the dishonestly around current world events by some national leaders and media, I am also more deeply troubled about the **blatant unaddressed failures in character, utter lawlessness and self-dealing** that has gone unspoken publicly by the SBC Executive Committee, a majority of State Baptist executive leaders, and Baptist Press. We all recognize the human frailty that is ever with us as individuals and as organizations. However, with a duty of financial stewardship I cannot support the SBC CP in light of the public, direct and blatant self-dealing and ignoring of our own rules and public ethics by Baptist leaders. The SBC Executive Committee CEO/President's continued silence in light of his position, current duties and past roles to accelerate the corporate culture in the mid-90s is unacceptable. The feckless response by Floyd and the SBC EC to these and other troubling matters is not worthy of the tithes and offerings of the people I serve at The Island Chapel who have contributed to the SBC cooperative mission efforts for almost 30 years.

I will consider writing on these in an expanded form in the future, but let me summarize now with several troubling bulleted paragraphs that highlight incidents of lawlessness and self-

enrichment that has been tolerated without public statements from the SBC EC, the SBC EC CEO/President, or Baptist Press who is under the SBC EC's leadership. In no particular order…

- **Ed Litton** is in clear violation of the SBC governing documents to serve as SBC President and Trustee of NAMB because his wife is an employee of NAMB. His SBC Presidency MAKES him a NAMB Trustee which creates the violation. Actually by SBC policy, he has been removed as a Trustee and is to be replaced according to the SBC governing bylaws. The rules are the rules, when we like them and when we don't. The rules apply when they are good for our friends and when they are not. As well it is publicly known that Litton not only plagiarized sermons numerous times, he lied when he used illustrations and told them as if they happened to him.

- **JD Greear**, while serving as SBC President and Trustee, received multiple large direct and indirect benefits from NAMB/Ezell in clear violation of SBC governing bylaws. He too should have been replaced as SBC President. (I shared these with the SBC EC previously)

- NAMB VP (President of Send Network) **D'hati Lewis** funneled SBC mission money entrusted to NAMB to the church he pastors, Blueprint. From that money, Lewis gave a **$175,000 cashier's check to Cornerstone**, a plant connected to Blueprint church whose pastor soon afterwards publicly kissed the SBC goodbye. Conflict of interest? Of course it is! How much SBC/NAMB missions money was given to Lewis' church? Violations of IRS rules regarding non-profits? Think about it…. The NAMB VP Lewis providing leadership of the Send Network and overseeing a **$70-75 million church planting budget** is functioning as a bi-vocational pastor as the planting challenges mount. (below)

- Former LifeWay Trustee Chairman **Jimmy Scroggins** is being allowed to continue to serve as a LifeWay Trustee in spite of being in clear violation of SBC governing bylaws. The bylaws indicate he be removed and replaced in light of his having 3 book contracts with LifeWay/Rainer and other direct and indirect benefits from the entity in which he was voted on by the SBC messengers to oversee.

- The same Jimmy Scroggins, while chairman of the LifeWay Trustees, was allowed to GIVE the then President of LifeWay $1 million as LW President **Thom Rainer** was RESIGNING! He was NOT retiring from successful leadership. LifeWay was coming off an **annual loss of $35.5 million** and on the verge of **closing all the LifeWay stores**. Scroggins did not ask or inform the entire LifeWay Trustee board, the officers of the Trustees or even the Compensation Committee but solely approved the payment. Of note, Scroggins was on staff at Highview in Louisville under Ezell, where Rainer, Mohler, Akin and Moore were all members and in leadership as well. Is there a problem here?

- Former LifeWay President **Thom Rainer** was in leadership in 2016 and 2017 when LifeWay reported losses of $35.5 million and making plans to close its retail stores. **According to Rainer's own writing, on his own stationary, posted on his own Twitter account, he was grossing $225,000 per week in subscriber income to his**

Church Answers business in Feb. and March 2016. (below) Reports from LifeWay insiders and other sources have Rainer using LifeWay staff to build his Church Answers using LifeWay paid time and equipment in violation of LW rules. Church Answers was competing in areas of ministry that LifeWay could have operated. Did Rainer use LifeWay staff on the website or in other ways? Equipment? Knowledge gained and contacts? – for his personal gain?

- In 2018 Rainer as announced his future resignation, he remained as CEO of LifeWay and then Kevin Ezell announced that he put Rainer (his former church member) under contract to work in revitalization for NAMB. In early 2019 Rainer continued in his role as LW President, and then LW closed 170 retails stores while Rainer received among other benefits, $1 million from his friend Scroggins as the LW Trustee Chairman. Did he ever **pay that money back** when he was exposed for violating his non-compete agreement with LW, like he had done with Church Answers?

- NAMB President **Kevin Ezell** and NAMB Trustee Chairman **Eric Thomas** in June 2021 stood before the messengers of the SBC and basically told messenger Joey Hufstedler and all the SBC messengers to **KISS OFF**, "We have no intention of following the SBC Business and Financial Plan" which **requires** them to provide salary structures, income, expenditures, etc. Don't worry, it took the SBC EC and Floyd over 150 days to comply with my numerous requests for the SBC EC salary structure. This was during the time Floyd stood and falsely told the FL Baptist Convention that the SBC EC is not an SBC entity. I know, I was there. Is Ezell really making $750,000 in salary and benefits as reported? No compliance on reporting, no trust and the givers don't know. Oh, and certainly there was no favor and silenced secured in the **$62 million in housing** purchased by NAMB/Ezell.

- Is **Ezell** teaching planters to take the clergy penitent privilege like he did at Highview in a child molestation case? Is he teaching planters to threaten journalists like he/**Mike Ebert threatened respected journalist and sexual abuse survivor Joni Hannigan** who dared to write 5 sentences about his taking clergy penitent privilege while pastoring at **Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, KY**. Is that how you want a NAMB President to use power entrusted to him, to threaten a journalist with libel for telling what was contained in court records and reported accounts? Over 150 Baptist journalists were informed, (300 total people) yet refused to write on it. DEAD SILENCE... Several SBC EC members were told as well and did not speak publicly to apologize to Mrs. Hannigan or rebuke Ezell and Ebert publicly.

- Did the SBC EC authorize **NAMB staff members** to raise money from churches which is forbidden in governing documents? Or did SBC EC authorize NAMB to raise funds for Send Relief as is required by the SBC governing documents prior to raising money? Or did the SBC or SBC EC approve Ezell having a NAMB Trustee from Michigan be a NAMB staff member at the same time which is forbidden in the governing bylaws?

- **NAMB** has claimed in legal filings with federal courts from the District Court up to the US Supreme Court that NAMB: (1) is a **Supporting Organization** of a State Baptist

Convention, (2) has **absolute privileges** over a State Baptist Convention, (3) has the **right to defame**, (4) has the **right to interfere** with the employment of State Baptist Conventions and their leaders, (5)received a release when a State Baptist Convention employee **released** their employer, and (6) filed a **deceptive affidavit** by CFO **Carlos Ferrer.** These false claims by NAMB were joined in by the then ERLC President **Russell Moore** who falsely claimed in legal filings that there is a SBC hierarchy and the SBC is an umbrella for the various State Conventions and below. NAMB deceptively told SCOTUS that a State Baptist Convention Exec. Director worked for an "entity of the SBC" when no State Baptist Convention is an entity of the SBC. (Below) NAMB is claiming ascending release from a State Baptist Convention employee. Do you think there can be ascending releases without ascending responsibilities and liabilities? Can you say "more lawsuits" using NAMB's own legally filed words and those filed by the ERLC?

- NAMB VP President of Evangelism **Jim Law** (if he is still there as NAMB has pulled virtually all their staff off their website as they serve Baptists nationally), organized J. Law Ministries in 2015. Law in 2018 reported total revenue of $12,808 and expenses of $14,958, but showed **net assets of $688,459** ($40,048 in cash and **$648,411 in publicly traded securities**). Is any of this from NAMB?

- NAMB Senior VP **Johnny Hunt** is following or setting the path for NAMB VP Lewis by being bi or tri vocational while drawing a large unknown salary funded by Cooperative Program and mission gifts. Hunt provides leadership in several for-profit businesses. Hunt operates several non-profits as well. In 2019 on IRS Form 990s he reported re ***Johnny Hunt Ministries*** income of **$834,535 for 2019 from this ONE non-profit ministry.** Of this $835K, he reported: Speaking Engagement income of $246,957, Advance Conference income of $93,503, Spark Conference income of $52,413, and Conference Sponsorships income of $61,528. Additional income of $55,975 in royalties and net income from sales of inventory of $101,000. Mind you, all this is in addition to his NAMB salary. How much of this money is from NAMB/Ezell? Did he take time off from NAMB to conduct these events, travel and make preparations?
    - What is the relationship between all of non-profits businesses and for profit business and NAMB and other SBC entities. How much NAMB money did Hunt/**Timothy Barnabas** get from NAMB under **Reccord,** under **Hammond** (I think Timothy Barnabas was cut off), and under **Ezell**? Is that why Hunt spoke against Hammond's leadership in the only reported NAMB Trustee meeting he attended and the one where Hammond was removed as President? (remember that Litton is a NAMB Trustee with his wife and employee of NAMB)

    - What are the penalties for filing false reports to the IRS? Year after year in some of Hunt's ministries he has filed that no family members are members of his board and are not receiving compensation, when in fact multiple family members were serving on boards and receiving compensation.

    - Why in 2018 and prior years under Ezell's tenure was the principle office address of Hunt's Timothy Barnabas listed as the physical address of NAMB? Why did

the primary address of Timothy Barnabas move from NAMB to Hunt's home later in the year in the year Hunt **"GAVE" NAMB Timothy Barnabas?** What was arranged in the June 2018 Trustee officers meeting to give NAMB Timothy Barnabas? Ezell/NAMB hired Jim Law (Hunt's long-term employee) in early August 2018 and then Hunt was announced in late August 2018?

- What were the loan terms and financial arrangements between NAMB/Ezell and Hunt re The Woodstock Church at Panama City Beach when Hunt secured controls of a brand new church facility from FBC Panama City beach worth over $17 million in 2013 and a reported debt of about 2 million? FBC PCB had sold property and reportedly put **$15 million in cash** into the building in trying to finish it before Hunt took over with a merge in 2013. Jim Law signed the papers. What are Hunt's responsibilities as an employee of NAMB and a director of The Woodstock Church at Panama City Beach? What are Jim Law's responsibilities in this church to serve as an officer of The Woodstock Church at Panama City Beach in multiple years, including 2019 while a NAMB employee?

- Hunt reported 2019 travel expenses of $225,863 from just one (Johnny Hunt Ministries) of Hunt's **several** non-profit organizations. How much of that was paid by NAMB or another SBC entity? In two of Hunt's non-profits, he reported in 2017 **travel expenses of $420,000** ($120,889 from 3 H Publishers and $296,903 from "Timothy Barnabas"). Is NAMB paying the difference in the $420,000 Hunt used for travel expenses in 2017 and the $225,000 Hunt reported in 2019? In 2016 Hunt reported **travel expenses of $299,183 from Timothy Barnabas.** NAMB hired and used independent auditor and SBC conference speaker **Michael Batts** in 2014. My notes state that Hunt hired Batts as well, but I cannot locate to confirm at this point. In previous years Johnny reported travel expenses of **$15K** in 2012, **$28K** in 2013, **$51K** in 2014, and **$194K** in 2015. In 2016 Hunt also reported $101,836 in travel expenses for his **3 H Publishers**. Remarkable? Maybe expenditures of NAMB will reveal who NAMB is paying for travel agent work and if that is connected in some way to the Hunts.

- **FINANCIAL QUESTIONS**: How much SBC Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Mission Offerings is going to pay Hunt's NAMB salary and benefits? How much NAMB employment time did Hunt use to earn this and other income, while SBC baptisms continue to hit record lows most years and NAMB has defunded joint evangelism staff. Like Rainer at LifeWay, did NAMB pay for any of Hunt's expense as he earned these incomes? Did NAMB pay businesses with employees and owners who are members of the Hunt family?

- Hunt's long-term staff member and NAMB evangelism leader **James Law** served as the President of that organization. Law serves in leadership of other organizations connected to Hunt.

- **Ronnie Floyd** is reported to have received SBC mission money from NAMB/Ezell to pay for interns for his church while serving as the pastor of Cross Church. At the same time, Floyd sought academic credit for the interns at NOBTS. How much SBC/NAMB mission money went to Floyd that was not used in evangelism and missions? Why did his church get interns with NAMB mission money, while there are 47,000 other Baptist churches who would have liked to have had them. Ronnie released a "whitewash" paper after he and the SBC EC officers listened to 12 State Baptist Executive Directors for almost 3 hours about the shocking behaviors of Ezell and NAMB and how that was impacting essential partnerships. Floyd's paper was deceptive and misrepresentation of what happened in the meeting according to several of the 12 State Execs and some SBC EC members who were in also in that video meeting. Oh, is it because Ezell is paying to beef up Floyd's staff with providing funding for 3 SBC EC staff members? SBC Banker???

- What about **book contracts** and giveaways? **Travel arrangements**? Ezell sending his new VP **alcohol as a gift** for his selection of Jeff Christopherson? And much more...

All these guys are tied together to Al Mohler and/or Kevin Ezell with Mohler serving as the primary **kingmaker** and Ezell serving as both a kingmaker and the **SBC banker** for their friends, the SBC elites and loyal allies. In fact, Floyd and Hunt performed the **wedding of Ed and Kathy Litton**. LifeWay under Rainer and prior leaders used to be able to make certain people famous and put money in their pockets with book deals and conference speaking invitations. Now, that has moved to Ezell at NAMB, he has taken over not only both the kingmaker and the banker roles, but has **added the role of ENFORCER** to the mix for anyone who steps out of line.

Too many have experienced his ruthless wrath, including the NAMB Chicago Send City coordinator who was **fired over** how he reported an actual business **meal expense of $42.37** for four people. The NAMB staff member (with a wife and four children under about age 12) was terminated by Ezell for filing the expense on a photoshopped expense receipt instead of the required reporting form in the absence of an actual receipt. It was a legitimate expense, just not reported in the correct form. Ezell shared his pitiful version without essential details in at least two live-streamed seminary chapel services, SEBTS and then NOBTS. Did the NAMB employee know too much about **Ezell and James MacDonald** matters or matters with Ron Zappia? No worries for Kevin, just put a man, his wife and his children at risk by making him jobless and then PULL OUT ANOTHER NDA for his silence. To date that has worked well for Ezell, just not well for truth, integrity, love and fellow servants. Another corporate behavior to cover up wrongs and protect the guilty.

Furthermore, Kevin Ezell is reported to have told NAMB staff members during a video meeting that he has video cameras on his children. This was interpreted as a clear warning signal to the NAMB employees that Ezell was watching. In another matter, Ezell used a NAMB paid phone, while on NAMB paid salary, to call a 30 year metro Atlanta DOM Larry Cheek to convince him to NOT to hire a faithful minister in **Dr. Bobby Gilstrap**. This occurred after Ezell interfered with Gilstrap in Michigan as the State Exec. These are just a few of the reasons NAMB is not worthy of the financial gifts from the church members of The Island Chapel through the

Cooperative Program.

Floyd, Hunt, Mohler, Akin and several celebrity pastors formed the disastrous **Great Commission Task Force** where the records of their meetings have been sealed since 2010. Why all the silence from these men? Why their **silence** on Ezell and NAMB failures in strategy, abuse of power, misuse of funds, broken partnerships, lies to courts, and record low church plants and baptisms? It is not that hard to figure out. The corruption, lawlessness, self-enrichment, mismanagement and lack of oversight have caused my church to redirect missions giving away from the SBC Cooperative Program and give to Great Commission efforts where leaders are not afraid to operate in the light and to speak the truth.

Ronnie was chairman of SBC EC in 1994-95 and reports from leaders then communicate that he wanted to make the SBC more corporate. Well, he succeeded. With the GCR he, a few SBC celebrity pastors and members of the SBC Cabal sought to weaken the State Conventions, Associations, State Execs, SBC EC and SBC EC President/CEO and in that, he and others succeeded. Sadly, they destroyed trust, partnership and led us to reduced CP giving of $85 million annually before inflation, and greatly dismantled the strongest voluntary, self regenerating missions eco system ever assembled. Now, SILENCE as Floyd "sings" give your money to CP and support **Vision 2025** and ignore realities of failure from his and **SBC Cabal**'s GCR. He cries for unity with eyes and ears closed to lies, failures and lawless self-dealing behavior from some celebrities while refusing to take personal or public ownership of the utter failures of the SBC cabal put on the SBC and for their personal benefit. As to Hunt, a personal witness to the encounter has a man introducing his son to Johnny Hunt at the 2010 SBC Convention. The father told his son, "*I want you to meet the man who destroyed the SBC*."

I have told you why The Island Chapel had redirected our CP giving. But, why did Floyd stop giving to CP in 2006? Floyd was SBC EC chairman in 1994-95 and according to his contemporaries set out to make Baptist life more corporate. His Cross church gave slightly above the national CP average. Yet, from 2000-2007, Cross Church reportedly contributed a dismally low **.51%, .44%, .42%, .32%, .28%, .27% a**nd when he ran for SBC President gave .86%, and **after losing the SBC Presidential election, Floyd/Cross Church gave ZERO 0% to CP**. Then when he moved toward running for SBC President again in 2014, which he won in a close vote against a mission engaged Korean pastor, he ramped up Cross Church's giving to CP to 3.69% in 2011, then 3.86%, then 4.17%, then 4.38%, then 5.58% in 2015. See a pattern? Has our SBC EC CEO/President nationally been a hollow, power-seeking politician in a religious industry or pacesetting statesman that leads with courage and truth toward the mission? We get what we tolerate, not what we expect or hope for.

You can verify most of what I have written. If you question the accuracy or truthfulness of anything I have written, let me know. If I have made an error, I will correct. The evidence on most of these are fairly easy to find and understand. If you are disturbed enough to stand unwavering in truth and the law, then you likely will have to stand alone or in a small group without the support of Floyd, Rainer, Scroggins, Ezell, Mohler, Akin, Litton, Greear, Moore, Hunt, Lewis, and other celebrity pastors and churches which are benefiting well from the current system. Seems a whole lot like the **1st century Pharisees** and **the 21st century politicians**. Sadly, not much difference. Too many religious industry leaders and too few

Christian mission statesmen, full of integrity who fear God more than most. (Neh. 7:2)

The SBC messengers voted for you, entrusted you, and empowered you to steward the SBC as members of the SBC Executive Committee. You have duties and tools as the executive entity of the SBC to bring individuals and entities into compliance with the rules and ethical behaviors on behalf of the SBC, in spite of what you have been led to believe. Some decisions are not that hard if biblical faith and courage are present. Fear makes decisions complex and paralyzes to inaction. Do what is right and scream loudly until it is done and leave the future to God. If not, we are inviting the discipline of God, which I believe we are now experiencing. Let me know if I can be of assistance or if you have information to add and pray for evil to be exposed in keeping with **Eph. 5:11** so that there can be repentance and future blessings instead of discipline and judgment from God. We cannot credibly decry corruption and evil in the world if we turn a blind eye and deaf ear to it inside the SBC, its entities, and its leaders.

Sadly, there is much more! Let's pray Baptist leaders courageously stop tolerating and leaders start humbling themselves with repentance.

Check Details

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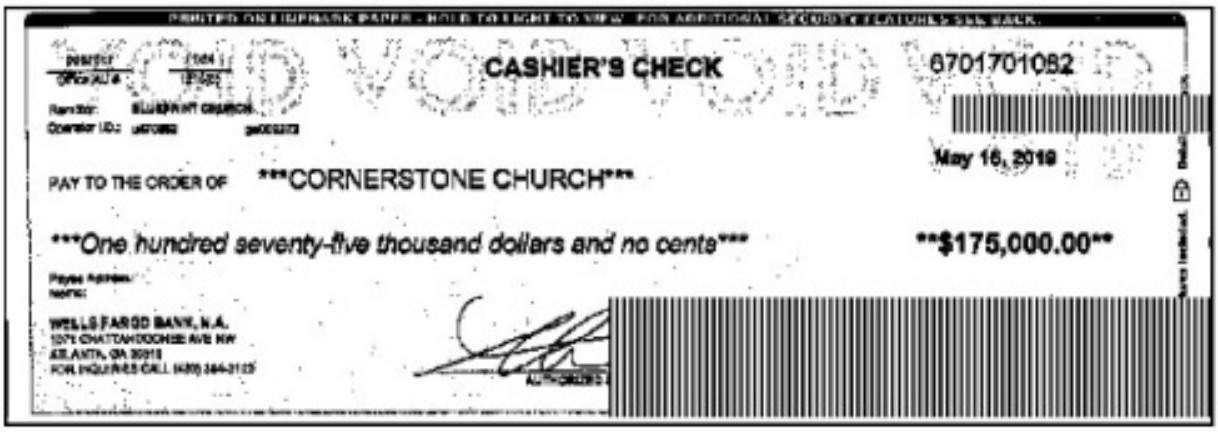

For your security, information like account numbers, signatures, and the ability to view the backs of checks have been removed from the images.
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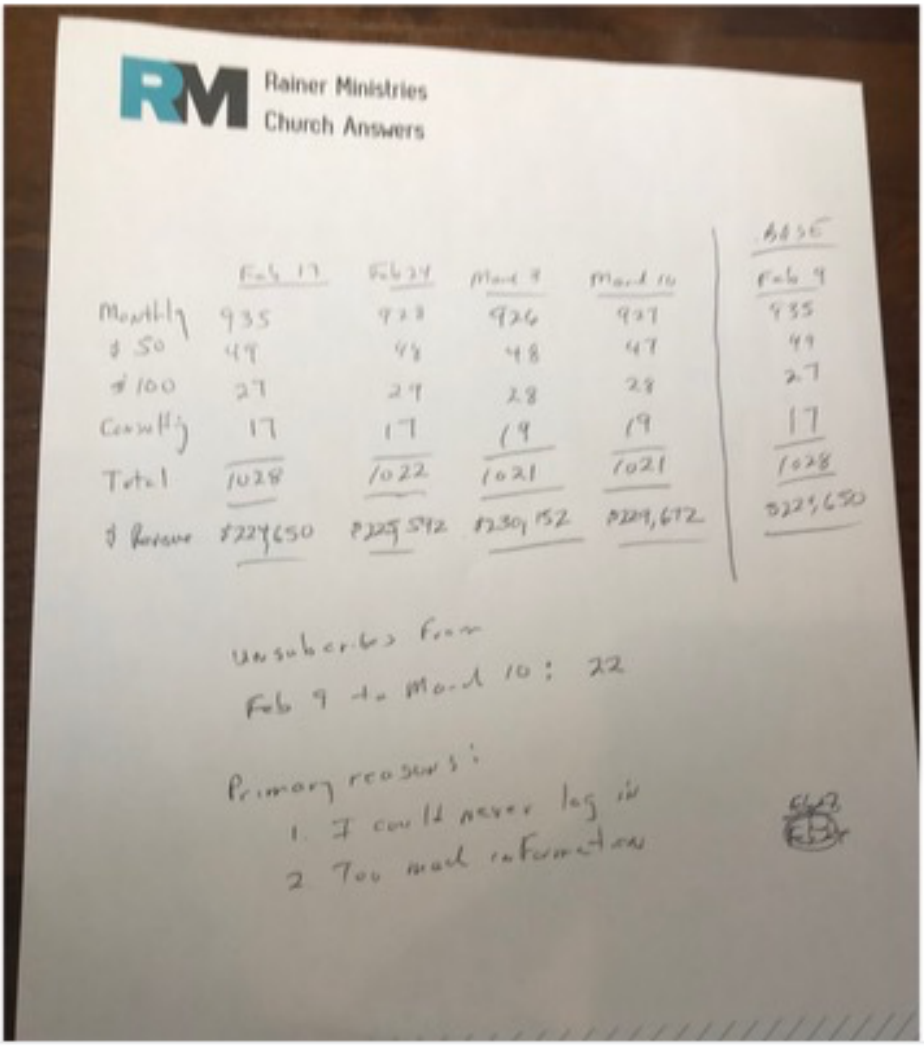

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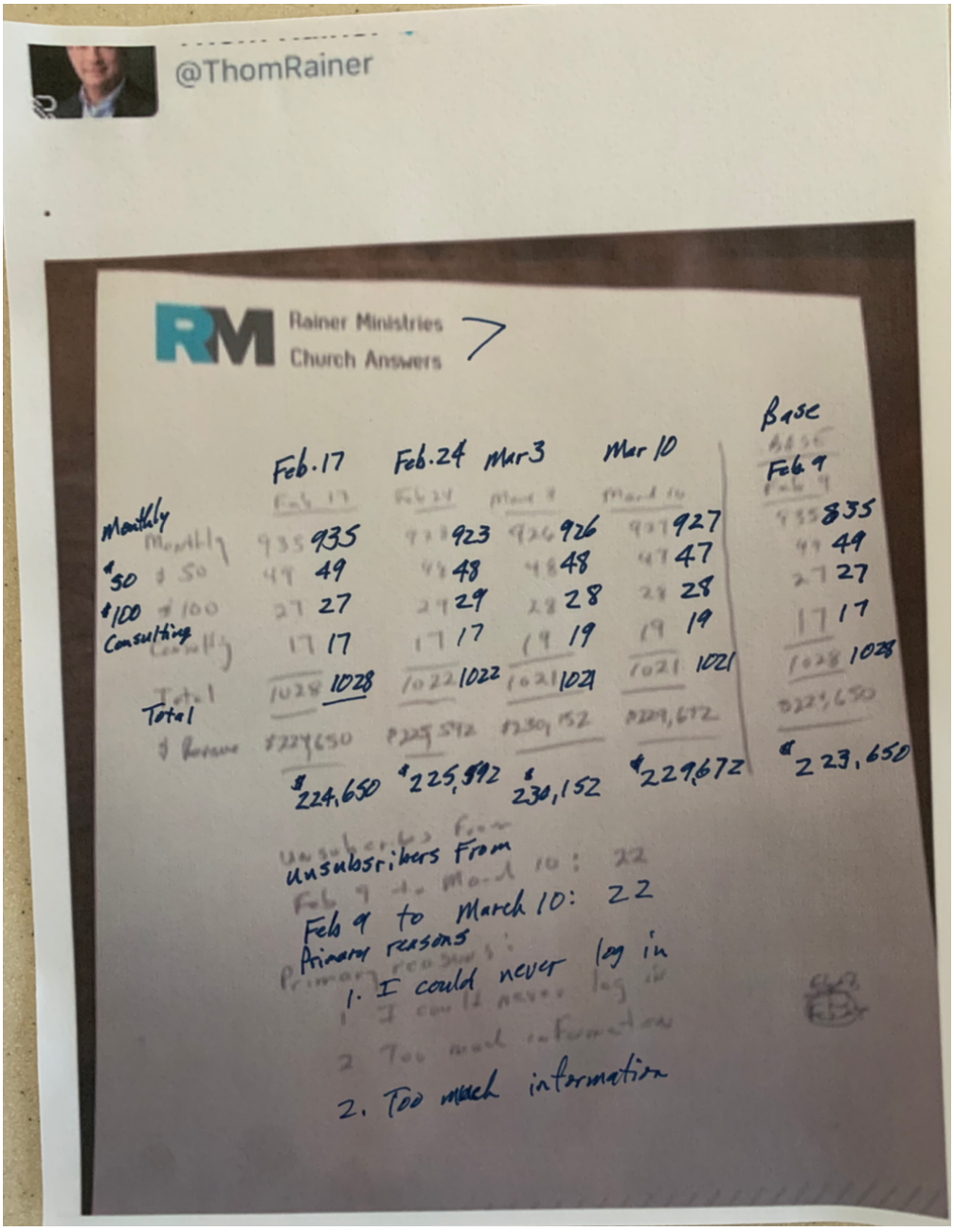
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Rainer Ministries
Church Answers
Feb. 17
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$230,152
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Unsubscribers From Feb 9 to March 10: 22
Primary reasons:
1. I could never log in
2. Too much information

No. 20-1158

IN THE

Supreme Court of the United States

THE NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, INC.,
Petitioner,

v.

WILL MCRANEY,
Respondent.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

REPLY BRIEF FOR PETITIONER

Reverend McRaney attempts to avoid certiorari by emphasizing that, though he was employed by one Southern Baptist entity, he was never employed by the particular Southern Baptist entity that he sued, namely the SBC Mission Board. *See, e.g.*, Opp. 1. But the