

Rhema Expels “Disobedient” Pastor For Protesting Abortion at Clinic

The Tulsa, ministry revoked Mark Holick’s ordination rather than risk lawsuits

A Wichita, Kan., pastor has been expelled from Rhema—a worldwide charismatic ministry renowned for its message of faith and biblical prosperity—because of his activism in the pro-life movement. The move has prompted a New Jersey minister who is trying to raise awareness of the pastor’s ousting to consider removing his congregation from the ministry organization.

Mark Holick had his ordination revoked last summer by the Tulsa, Rhema Ministerial Association International (RMAI), which has more than 23,000 graduates and 13 schools worldwide.

For the last two years, Holick—who with his wife, Monica, pastors 300-member Spirit One Christian Center—has joined other Wichita pastors in protesting the abortion clinic of Dr. George Tiller, a local physician called “the most infamous late-term abortionist in the world” by the Christian pro-life group Operation Save America.

“[RMAI leaders] informed me that my wife, any of our church leaders, and myself could not for any reason go to any abortion clinic ever, not even to pray,” Holick, 41, said in a letter to Barry Ross, pastor of the 100-member Word of Life Christian Church in Cologne, N.J. Ross has taken up Holick’s plight.

"They never told me specifically was wrong for me if I chose to do so," continued Holick, who was dismissed by Rhema without a hearing.

"I expressed to them that I have done nothing immoral, nothing unrighteous, nothing unbiblical, nothing unscriptural, nothing illegal, nothing sinful, but that if they felt that I had and pointed it out that I would gladly repent.

"I have made numerous requests to them for a meeting, to which they would not grant."

Rhema's Tulsa-based attorney, Tom Winters, told Charisma that "Rhema is not for abortion." Winters said he advised RMAI leaders to revoke Holick's license because his pro-life activism could cause Rhema to be "potentially sued."

"Based on my advice, they took a safe and reasonable approach to deal with this," Winters said. "I advised them that the best way to handle this situation was to sever the relationship."

Ross, a 1981 Rhema graduate, told Charisma that the Holicks have been dealt "a horrible injustice." Unsolicited by Holick, Ross said he has repeatedly tried to contact RMAI leaders about the Holicks, but his calls and letters have not generated any response.

"I'm following the biblical command—first to Rhema, second to the regional directors and third to the body of Christ," Ross, 48, said. "I've been stonewalled so far. They should own up to their decision. Why try to hide and not address it? I don't believe there is anything in our ministerial handbook or

directory that tells us we can't do [pro-life activism]. If something like abortion can't be protested, what can be protested?"

Winters declined to comment on whether RMAI has a policy against pro-life involvement in its ministerial handbook. Holick told Charisma that he had seen several women forgo abortions at the clinic and give birth to their babies, partly through the pastor's pro-life outreach. Some of them had also become Christians. Holick added that Rhema leaders had given him verbal and written warnings in the last year not to go to the clinic.

"This is the first time I've ever been disobedient to anything they asked," the 1986 Rhema graduate said. "My feeling was, I had to do this in order to obey the Word of God. I think Scripture is clear regarding what the responsibility of the church is concerning innocent blood."

Ross said his church board has "pretty much concluded it isn't a healthy thing to be part of Rhema."

"If they don't see anything wrong with this, there is something wrong in our leadership," he said.

RMAI evolved from the Rhema Bible Training Center, which was started by Kenneth Hagin Sr. and his son, Ken Jr., in 1974 in response to a demand for more teaching material from the Hagins' ministry.

Eric Tiansay