

Former Members Sue Vineyard Anaheim Over Fraud Allegations

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In the wake of a stunning split from the denomination it helped found, Vineyard Anaheim's senior pastors now find themselves in a lawsuit.

Co-founder of Vineyard Anaheim Carol Wimber-Wong and eight other former members of the church are suing senior pastors Alan and Kathryn Scott. They allege that the Scotts committed fraud and misappropriation of \$62 million in assets.

According to Christianity Today, Wong was an "active and tithing member" at the Anaheim church. That is until the Scotts suddenly withdrew the church from the denomination she had helped found with her late husband John Wimber.

This withdrawal came as a shock to many within the Vineyard family, as the Scotts themselves said there was no bad blood between them and those in leadership.

"We don't really understand why," Scott said one Sunday morning. "I wish I really could sit before you today and say, 'Here are the six reasons,' 'Here's our issues,' 'Here are our grievances,' or whatever. ... We don't always know what's on the other side of obedience."

Wong believes that this statement is a lie, and the motivation behind leaving was purely financial.

The church has since been renamed the Dwelling Place.

"I wish I could say to that, on, whatever day it is, April the 8th or something like this, the angel of the Lord appeared to

me and said, 'Behold, this is your new name,'" Scott explained to his congregation about the name change. "But that didn't happen."

"It reminds us that God is making everything new," he said, "that one day all of humanity and all of history ends up at the feet of Jesus and God's dwelling place is with us."

The Scott's are accused of lying about their intentions when they applied for leadership positions within the church, and had always planned on leaving Vineyard USA.

"The Scott defendants concealed their true intentions," the lawsuit asserts. "Defendant Scotts sought the position as Senior Pastors of Vineyard Anaheim with the deceitful motive of controlling tens of millions of dollars of assets and disassociating with Vineyard USA."

The lawsuit also alleges that the Scotts showed no interest in the vacant senior pastor positions until after finding out the immense valuation of the church and its assets.

"They had no intention of applying for the vacant senior pastor position[s] until learning of the Anaheim Vineyard's substantial assets," the lawsuit claims. "They misled the Anaheim Vineyard Search Committee and board of directors."

According to the chairman of the hiring committee Joe Gillentine, the Scotts were questioned about separating from the Vineyard USA denomination and he was told, "leaving the Vineyard was never even a question."

In response to the lawsuit and the accusations of intent on the part of the Scotts, they released a statement on the church's website:

"Over the last several months, we have been aware of this possibility and had hoped to avoid a public airing of ecclesiastical issues. Together, as a team, we have sought to

handle this process honorably, relationally and biblically. But our efforts have not been fruitful, and we are now on a pathway we didn't choose or desire.

"We understand that our disassociation from VUSA has caused strong emotions, but we didn't expect individuals to attribute evil intent in the hearts of Alan and Kathryn Scott during their 2018 appointment process, or to deem the board's decision to disassociate from VUSA four years later improper. The accusations in the complaint couldn't be further from the truth."

A party not involved in the lawsuit is the Vineyard denomination itself. Vineyard USA released a statement saying that they would offer pastoral care in the matter.

What is certain in this case is the need for healing and restoration among all parties involved. Even if the Scotts are guilty, tens of thousands of people will be impacted by it.

Vineyard USA, it's leadership and congregants need the prayers of Christians across the country to bring about God's will in this matter. With the hope of reconciliation and restoration, prominent Christians have the chance to demonstrate the love, grace and mercy of God to the world. In the end, believers can have faith and pray that God be glorified by this dramatic turn of events that has rocked the Vineyard denomination.
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