

Pastor Brian Houston Apologizes 'Unreservedly' for Hillsong NYC's 'Failings,' Promises Way Forward

Brian Houston, the founder of Hillsong, apologized Thursday, March 4, for the leadership crisis at the global evangelical church's New York outpost resulting from an adulterous affair carried on by its now former pastor, Carl Lentz.

In a document that accompanied his letter of apology, Hillsong promised to institute sexual harassment training and a mechanism for anonymous reporting of misconduct.

"We know that Hillsong East Coast has failed to be the kind of church it should be. On behalf of the Global Board and as Global Senior Pastor, I accept responsibility for these failings and apologize unreservedly," Houston wrote in an email addressed to "Dear Church."

It is the first time that Houston, who started Hillsong in Australia in the 1980s with his wife, Bobbie, has apologized for a culture at the New York church that former volunteers have described as starstruck, catering to celebrity attendees—such as Selena Gomez; Justin Bieber and his wife, Hailey Baldwin Bieber; Kevin Durant; Chris Pratt; and the Jenner sisters—who were treated "like royalty."

Another letter, from the New York law firm Zukerman Gore Brandeis & Crossman that conducted an investigation into what went wrong at Hillsong East Coast, was included in Houston's email, explaining that "detailed report of Zukerman Gore will not be released to the public to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved."

In February, Houston announced that the investigation had been completed and had found “significant ways” the New York City megachurch “failed to reflect Hillsong global culture.”

In mid-November of last year, Lentz, 42, who had trained at Hillsong’s Sydney headquarters and founded Hillsong East Coast with Houston’s son, Joel, was ousted for “moral failures,” which were later revealed to include an extramarital affair with a Brooklyn jewelry designer. {eoa}

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