

Vineyard Pastor Resigns Amidst Son's Misconduct Allegations

The senior pastor of The Vineyard Church in Duluth, Minnesota, Michael Gatlin, has resigned according to an email sent by The Special Committee of the Church Council.

Gatlin's resignation comes on the heels of an investigation into his son, Jackson Gatlin, who served as the church's young adult and online community pastor.

The Vineyard church posted an announcement regarding the matter to their website, stating that the Gatlins knew of the misconduct allegations and did not act on that knowledge. The church also revealed that police were involved with the investigation.

"His resignation comes in the context of allegations of misconduct against one of our former pastoral assistants and Michael's son, Jackson Gatlin," the statement read. "There are also allegations that Michael and Brenda Gatlin knew about this misconduct at the time and failed to act. This matter is being investigated by the police."

In the letter drafted by The Special Committee of the Church Council, Gatlin was asked to meet specific criteria by providing information relevant to the investigation.

"Immediately prior to Michael's resignation, we directed him to provide a statement to the Special Committee detailing his response and the actions he took, if any, to certain allegations of misconduct regarding Jackson Gatlin. We are Michael's supervisor, yet he missed our deadline and never provided a statement. We had also advised him that his failure or refusal to provide information we had requested or to be

interviewed by GRACE may result in the termination of his employment.”

In his resignation letter, Gatlin informed the council that he was unable to cooperate with their directives.

Addressing all potential victims in this heart-wrenching situation for the church, they made their stance of support for them known, loud and clear.

“Also, we want to again say to all survivors of abuse that we hear you and believe you. It is never your fault. And, you are not alone. We are praying for you and we call our community to a time of prayer and lament. As Jesus was always on the side of the vulnerable and the wounded, in our response to abuse the safety and care of survivors must always come first.”

While it still remains to be seen moving forward how the church acts in support of the victims, simply admitting to their existence and pledging to stand with them is a step in the right direction.

As reported by the Christian Post, “Myrissa Overfors, who claims she is one of Jackson Gatlin’s victims, said in a statement on Facebook that she was working with investigators and ‘other victims’ of his alleged misconduct.

“I am currently working with their investigators and I think this may be a long battle for me and his other victims. Send us all positive thoughts and prayers if you believe in the upcoming months. I’m sure we all will need it. If you have been a victim of this predator, you’re not alone.”

While Gatlin has resigned from his position and his future is uncertain pending the police investigation, The Vineyard Church is moving forward in obedience to the words of Paul in the New Testament. They are conducting themselves in an open, transparent manner reminiscent of the spirit in which James 5:16 is written: “Confess your faults to one another and pray

for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.”

This act of confession, and support for victims, pulls back the veil of secrecy and allows God’s healing light to shine on the situation. Victims can be healed, church members restored and the congregation may move forward grateful to the Lord for guiding them through such a perilous season. {eoa}

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