

As Suicide Details Emerge, Isaac Hunter's Church Family Seeks Godly Wisdom

In the day following the death of Isaac Hunter, co-founder and former pastor of Summit Church in Orlando, Fla., Summit announced it will hold a special of time of prayer to honor Hunter on Thursday in place of its regular Thursday evening service at its main campus.

"We hope you will join us for a time of prayer as we walk through this season together as a family," the church wrote in a blog post Wednesday. "The Sanctuary will be open from 7-9 p.m. Please feel free to come and go as you like during that time."

Hunter died Tuesday. The *Orlando Sentinel* reports that he took his own life. According to the newspaper, Hunter sent a text message to one of his brothers in which he mentioned suicide before he shot himself to death in his Altamonte Springs, Fla., apartment.

Police officers reportedly found him around 10:45 a.m. Tuesday after his brother, alarmed by the text, called the police. Officers found him dead of "what appears to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound," department spokesperson, Officer Rob Pelton, told the *Sentinel*. "It's being investigated as a suicide.

Hunter, 36, is also a son of Northland Church Senior Pastor Joel Hunter. The church posted a blog entry titled, "When Someone You Love and Care About Takes Their Own Life."

Dan Lacich, pastor for distributed sites, wrote, "It is one of the most traumatic and disorienting times you can face. The questions are seemingly endless and unanswerable. The what ifs

become breeding grounds for regret, guilt and self-accusation.”

“The recent death of Isaac Hunter has brought all of that and more to the forefront of life at Northland and Summit churches here in Orlando,” he continues. “As a son of Northland’s pastor and a founder of Summit Church, Isaac was known and loved by countless people.”

Lacich says, “Being followers of Christ does not eliminate the grieving we do in times like this, but as Paul says, we do not grieve like those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We grieve in the light of the resurrection promised in Christ.”

The pastor then mentioned the question many ask at a time such as this: “Can you still go to heaven if you take your own life?”

He answers, “Let me say clearly and without equivocation that the answer is yes. The Bible is clear that there is only one sin that is unforgivable. In Mark 3:28-29, Jesus says this: ‘Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.’”

Lacich goes on to explain this Bible verse and to answer other questions, such as, “How can you be forgiven if you are dead and unable to ask God to forgive you?”

Lacich concludes the post, “We live in Christ now, but we do not yet have the benefit of the fullness of that relationship. The broken world is still broken. So we look to the promised day of restoration when a New Heaven and a New Earth will become one, and we will walk in the full light of God’s grace and mercy and love. It is a promised time of no more tears, no more sorrow, only joy in the Lord.

“Lord, we long for that day. Maranatha, come Lord Jesus.”

Both Northland and Summit have asked for prayers and for privacy for the Hunter family.

“I know we all want to reach out to the Hunter family, but the way we can best love them at this time is to pray for them and respect their privacy. Right now, would you please take a moment and pray for them?” pastors of both churches wrote in separate blog entries.

Hunter founded Summit Church in 2002. It has since become one of the fastest-growing churches in Central Florida, with five locations and an estimated 5,000 worshippers. The church grew out of a ministry the younger Hunter started at his father’s megachurch.

Hunter made headlines last year when he resigned after admitting to an affair with a former staffer. Hunter filed for divorce from his wife, Rhonda, earlier this year. They have three children together.