

Family Feud Arises Over Late Chuck Smith's Megachurch

When Pastor Chuck Smith passed away last year, few expected a family feud. But that appears to be what's going down in Orange County, California.

is reporting a family fight over control of the megachurch that has morphed into an all-out legal battle.

Smith's daughter has filed suit alleging elder abuse and neglect in connection with the pioneering pastor's last days. Smith went on to glory after a hard-fought cancer battle in October 2013.

"It's still a shock. It's almost a year later and still I can't really process it. Why didn't they help my dad?" Janette Manderson, Smith's daughter, told on behalf of her 87-year-old mother, Kay, who suffers from dementia.

The suit names Smith's son-in-law, Brian Broderson, as a defendant. Broderson is married to Cheryl, Smith's youngest daughter. According to the report, the lawsuit alleges Smith's "death was hastened" and he suffered "significant pain and anguish" the night he had trouble breathing and died from a heart attack.

"Nobody had called 911 until my nephew finally stepped in and did it. The nurse wouldn't do it and told him not to call 911," said Manderson.

Smith, who initiated the rise of Calvary Chapel movement of "Jesus People" that was featured in *Time* magazine in the 1960s, started pastoring Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in 1965 and was known for his less formal and contemporary approach to worship and church services.

Smith's ministry continued to grow until his death. In 2012, after he announced to his congregation he had been diagnosed with lung cancer, Smith established a 21-member leadership council to oversee the Calvary Chapel Association, a fellowship of more than 1,600 congregations in the United States and worldwide.

The lawsuit claims that board members took over Smith's office and computers and gained control of The Word For Today Incorporated property within 24 hours of his death. Word for Today spans books, DVDs and radio broadcasts. Manderson claims the church cut off Kay's \$10,000 monthly annuity benefit after Smith passed away.

"The board is holding on to everything of dad's and not giving it to us," said Manderson. "It makes me sad, it makes me feel that they're dishonoring my dad and disrespecting his wishes."

Let's pray that the family can reconcile any differences and move forward in unity.