

Gateway Church Issues Apology to Cindy Clemishire

Gateway Church has given an apology to Cindy Clemishire about the sexual abuse she endured as a child from former Gateway Church pastor, Robert Morris.

Gateway Elder Tra Willbanks gave the apology to the Clemishire before the start of the July 27 message at the church.

"We felt it was important to address Cindy Clemishire one more time," Willbanks said. "Cindy, in case you are watching, we want to again apologize to you on behalf of our entire church for the years of pain that you have endured. We are sorry for our initial communication which was clearly incorrect."

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Willbanks bluntly pointed out that Clemishire experienced sexual abuse, something much different than what they were originally told by Morris.

"You were a child, not a young lady. Additionally, two weeks ago Gateway released a statement saying that this was quote, 'an inappropriate relationship.' This statement was not correct either. To be clear, we believe that this was sexual abuse of a child. Any description falling short of that does not reflect our position. I'm sorry that we got that communication wrong," said Willbanks.

Willbanks further said that Gateway is not in any way trying to minimize what happened and to Clemishire and that they have no intention to cover up what happened.

"We are in no way attempting to cover up or minimize this situation. In fact, I would like to say to you, Cindy, thank

you for coming forward. As you know, because of her story we did move swiftly to bring in an independent law firm to investigate this matter fully including who knew what and when. All parties are fully cooperating and the independent inquiry as I said before will be complete and we will deliver their findings to you as they do complete," Willbanks said.

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Willbanks further addressed the step aside from ministry by pastors James and Bridgette Morris, Robert Morris' son and daughter-in-law. The two of them were further given the opportunity to share their gratitude and appreciation for Gateway Church and their dream of launching a new church on their own.

"I feel like it's the ending of one season for us and the beginning of a new one, so the Lord is giving us vision for the future, but we do grieve not being here with you," Bridgette Morris said.

"We are very excited about the future of Gateway," James Morris said. "and even for us as we now go and we pray and we seek God to plant a church. With that I will say, even though we're pastoring a different church, we are all the body of Christ and we are called to walk in unity."

Right now, both Max Lucado and Joakim Lundqvist are set to take on interim pastoral responsibilities for the next six months at Gateway while the church searches for a new senior pastor.



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"First, Pastor Max Lucado," Willbanks said, "he is going to be

stepping into an interim teaching pastor role where he'll be sharing and teaching from this platform regularly, about twice a month."

Pastor Joakim Lundqvist will also be taking on pastoral duties as well including with Gateway's staff members.

"In addition to taking on preaching responsibility, he is going to also serve in a pastoral capacity alongside the staff at Gateway," Willbanks said. "Starting next week, he is going to be in the Gateway office Mondays through Wednesdays serving alongside our staff."

Right now, the church is requesting prayer that the Lord would send the right person to be the senior pastor of Gateway Church.

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