

Investigation Reveals Explosive Allegations Against Former Florida Megachurch Pastor

Celebration Church, a 12,000-member megachurch near Jacksonville, Florida, has released findings from an internal investigation into its founder, Pastor Stovall Weems, local media has reported.

According to , the report includes allegations of financial misconduct and fraud, among others. Weems, who resigned his position Monday night, denied the allegations in a statement provided to .

"I shall not and cannot be connected to any church in which the leadership abandons the clear biblical principles and scriptural qualifications for governance and oversight," Weems letter of resignation stated.

The church, however, paints a much different picture about how Weems led Celebration Church.

Attorneys for the church say they interviewed over 20 current and former senior leadership members, staff, former trustees, other advisors and consultants.

"The single word used most frequently to describe Stovall Weems was 'narcissist.' Nearly every witness we interviewed used that specific word," the report stated.

Witnesses described personal abuses under Weems' leadership, saying it had been "inconsistent and unbiblical."

Since at least 2019, Weems' leadership was "marked by rampant spiritual and emotional abuse, including manipulation, a

profound sense of self-importance and selfishness, superiority and entitlement, overbearing and unreasonable demands on employees' time, a lack of accountability or humility and demands of absolute loyalty," the report said.

The reported stated that Weems instructed an employee to drive to a liquor store late at night to deliver a bottle of bourbon to his house because he "did not want to be seen purchasing liquor." Another church employee, the report said, was instructed to purchase a car for Weems and deliver it to his home. After the employee delivered the car as demanded, Weems allegedly told the employee to find his own ride home.

The report said the Weemses' compensation, staff, travel and expense accounts comprised 10% of the church's total revenue.

In a statement, Weems rejected the report's findings as false. Weems and his wife, Kerri, founded the church in Jacksonville in 1998 and it grew to have multiple campuses around Florida and the world.

"This report is completely concocted by the Trustees and their lawyer as a character assassination without real basis," Weems said. "The 'charges' are as they always were—untrue and without a hard basis in fact, as a thoughtful investigation would show. Despite my numerous requests for the usual independent financial audit for 2021, as reflected in the board minutes, they have not done so, choosing instead to conduct their own misinformed 'investigation' over months without input from those most informed.

"How can they claim they conducted an investigation into improper financial transactions without a financial audit? If this is now a board-led church, where is their responsibility for the church's dismal financial performance since I allowed them to take over with a new lead pastor at the beginning of 2020? And where is the oversight? As I have said all along, I have nothing to hide. That has not changed. I shall continue a

righteous path with a new ministry despite these shameful efforts.” {eoa}

For more about this story, visit .

Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor for Charisma Media.*

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.