

Pastor's Widow Arrested, Handcuffed in the Middle of Church

Charisse Gibert, widow of senior Pastor Ben Gibert of Detroit World Outreach church, was arrested in the middle of a church service.

"They put me in handcuffs. They put me in the back of the car and processed me like a criminal for trespassing," Charisse Gibert says.

Ben Gibert died in February. While Charisse Gibert claims she is the successor to the senior pastor position, elders disagree.

Elders at DWO say Charisse Gibert's appearance at church was a violation of a verbal contract.

"As many of you have likely observed, there has been a breakdown in the relationship between Dr. Charisse and the Elder Board that has led to disagreement and anger expressed toward us by Dr. Charisse. We acknowledge her feelings," the elders say in a statement.

"We hope that the relationship can be repaired one day. The barrage of personal attacks through social media posts are unfortunate and a poor witness for our members and non-believers. We are called to operate in a manner that is pleasing to God and with character that is consistent with our faith. That did not happen on Sunday and for that, we humbly apologize to you for the confusion," the statement continued.

Bishop IV Hilliard, who claimed Ben Gibert as a spiritual son, says Charisse Gibert is the successor to DWO's pulpit.

"It appears that Bishop Ben's successor, Pastor Charisse, was

appointed in accordance with the DWO bylaws as his successor. This matter is now before the civil courts and we trust it will be decided soon. If I thought or believed that Pastor Charisse and the Reconstituted Board of DWO were in error either spiritually or legally, I would advise them to immediately back away from this fight," Hilliard says in a statement.

However, DWO elders say Ben Gibert died without a succession plan set in place. The elders say they did not dispute Charisse's claim to the clergy role, but wanted her to follow the bylaws in achieving the senior pastor status.

Some members of DWO reportedly rejoiced at Charisse Gibert's arrest.

"Regardless of who is right in this matter, it is extremely sad and appalling to see believers respond this way to the spouse of its late pastor who had been a member of DWO for 17 years. How any believer in Christ could rejoice at this is despicable," Hilliard says.

They say the divide is affecting the congregation.

"There is a lot of discomfort on both sides of this disagreement," the elders say.

"This is not just the elders or Dr. Charisse, but the entire DWO family. Our hearts are heavy because we know that there is discord. We never thought that DWO would be involved in a disagreement like this, especially given what we have all been taught by Bishop Ben. We ask for you to pray for us, for Dr. Charisse and the entire Gibert family. Bishop Ben commissioned us to serve as the elders of our church and to ensure that DWO always meets the needs of the church family. We are here to serve, but right now it is definitely challenging. We are encouraged though because we know that He will never put more on us than we can handle." {eo}