

August 29, 2022

Network Leadership Team,

Together, the board of overseers of South Grove Church writes to urge you to swiftly commission a prompt independent investigation into the qualifications of Steve Morgan as an overseer in the church. We have carefully reviewed the claims that have been levied by former members and leaders of network churches, as well as the statements made by several individuals involved in Steve's ordination and the authorization and establishment of Vine Church when Steve planted it many years ago. It is our hope to see a thorough independent investigation from a third party exonerate Steve. Nevertheless, there are significant concerns about his qualifications that deserve independent investigation.

We believe and reaffirm that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Steve can be forgiven – and we believe that he has been forgiven – for the sin which has been publicly exposed over the last several months. Even so, an independent investigation would help to alleviate concerns, and would likely serve to gather recommendations on good, affirmative steps to assure visitors and members of our churches of their safety and the safety of children.

We still do not have a clear account of who knew about this matter, what they knew, and when they knew it. We have serious concerns about whether Steve met the level of forthrightness that members and leaders of a church should expect from an overseer. In particular, there are key differences in Steve Morgan's and Steve Nicholson's accounts, and we believe it is important to have this disparity investigated and analyzed by someone with independent judgment.

An independent investigation is necessary to evaluate whether Steve Morgan is qualified for the role of overseer in a church and to serve as a leader in the network. The network leadership team has indicated that it has been considering whether an independent investigation should be done, and if so, who should conduct the investigation. With the recent events and what appear to be troubling inconsistencies, the need for an independent investigation is both amplified and made more urgent.

To that end, we are requesting that the network leadership team promptly agree that a swift independent investigation is necessary, and within the next 10 days pledge to commission the investigation by hiring a firm to do so within 45 days. We propose that the scope of the independent investigation be to evaluate and make recommendations about whether Steve Morgan satisfies the qualifications for an overseer, with a particular emphasis on (but not a limit on) whether Steve, in the last approximately two years as this matter has developed, has met the qualification that he not be double-tongued and that he be above reproach.

We respectfully request a response to this matter within 10 days, to indicate whether the network leadership team will commission an independent investigation.

  
Bobby Malicoat

  
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