

I was a bit taken aback by the letter you guys gave me Sunday. Let me say this first, I have been and am very willing to work with T. I would like to respond to some of the letter and ask some questions of you to make sure my ongoing response is appropriate.

You referenced “your plan” and I am assuming you mean T’s and my plan. The plan to re-center the church on small groups was, at once, both a big and a small change at the same time for our church. It was small because we were really simply making “official” the structure we already stated we had in the church--a church of small groups. The plan was neither mine, nor T’s, nor even both of ours. It came from the leadership and was birthed and shaped within the entire leadership, a majority of which was made up of elders. In the end, the plan was, of course, primarily and finally a decision by the eldership. It was my suggestion, in an effort to keep T on staff, to move him over to administer small groups because his position as evangelism minister did not fit our ministry model.

The selling of the idea to the congregation did involve the vision of working together with complementing gifts. I agree the plan has not worked as planned, but it has not worked primarily because T has not and maybe can not administrate the small group ministry (which is his role and function on staff).

You referenced in the letter that we have a spirit of divisiveness. I know during the interviews you did with staff, I shared with you that I feel a serious disconnect with T. That was not, and is not a public position. I have publicly and, with the exception of with you, privately supported Tom and his ministry. I may be missing something, but I don’t see factions, quarreling, disunity and splits within our body. Certainly nothing that was not there long before my arrival. Further, I would say our church is seeing a unification in purpose. We are, indeed, seeing people who are engaging with Christ at a deeper level and with the church. There is a greater sense of grace and peace now than in the entire time I have been at OUR CHURCH. That has also been the evaluation I have heard on many occasions--even from you. I have worked diligently toward that unity and grace.

I am deeply hurt by the implication that my message regarding love is not self-applied in regards to T. I am even more struck by the reference to a dead branch from John 15. I treat T with love. In fact, when there was discussion of a need to cut staff to help the budget, I offered to pay a severance package out of my own salary if need be to treat him right. Last week I put my own plans aside and spent a few hours helping him make a video for his family back in Missouri (a task I volunteered for).

T and I do not work together well, but it has nothing to do with lack of love. You asked and I answered--I do not think he is well matched for the position in which he serves. He is very expensive for the services he provides. That is not lack of love, it is answer to the leadership question you asked me. If I recall correctly, you were very clear, you wanted me to not sugar coat what I thought.

Our “divisive” relationship that you reference, is not adversarial in the least. There is no hostility--not publicly, not privately, nowhere.. T does not submit to my leadership (as you are well aware), but you (as a body that dates back to the time I came) have asserted that you are the leaders and while staff answers to me, they can come to you if they want. T does.

You have asked for my resignation if I don’t come up with a plan to work well with T. I can and will work with Tom to come up with a plan. Let me push back on a couple points.

- In your letter, you referenced a “mutual lack of productivity.” Help me understand where you see my lack of productivity?
- What if the issue is not a lack of harmony but a lack of competence?
- Does the keeping of the two of us on solve the financial issue which put you on this quest?
- You confess your responsibility in allowing this to go on as long as it has and you ask our forgiveness, but you do so in a carefully drafted letter with an ultimatum attached. Is there a better way to actually accomplish the taking of responsibility and the correcting of erring behavior than this?
- T and I have two very different philosophies of ministry. I am not sure that the compromised version of those philosophies is advantageous.
- You have asked us to come up with a plan for how we can work together in reconciliation and teamwork. Can you clearly identify our roles and responsibilities so that we can structure such a document?

I don't like that our (yours and my) relationship has become the legal exchange of documents complete with response deadlines. I thought we had been working to build a relationship through which we led the church as a team--this feels like a step in the wrong direction.

Please don't understand this email as a challenge to your leadership. It is not. It is me trying to figure out what is happening and how to best navigate it.