

Attention: Dominic Li, Winston Wong, Rita Hoi and Phyllis Tse,

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

For many months our church has been embroiled in a spiritual war. The mission of our church has been seriously disrupted by various conflicts. There is disharmony among the members and leaders. There are accusations against individuals and wrongful actions committed in the name of righteous indignation. A number of our pastoral staff has resigned. Many people who have been serving at church for a long time have dropped out from active ministries. Furthermore, a group of dissenters have employed unethical tactics to discredit the integrity of the current church leaders. They do not accept the decisions passed by the majority of the members at the Member's Meetings. They have attempted to persuade others to follow them by spreading rumors, making untrue statements, and sowing discord among the members.

At a joint meeting of Council and Board of Directors on October 8, we heard a rumor that a petition letter was secretly circulating around the members. Since the church does not encourage this kind of practice, the decision was that if a petition letter was formally presented, we would not respond to it. This explains why Philip immediately responded on behalf of everyone on Council and the Board of Directors to Dominic's first email on Oct 12. Philip's response was not based on his personal opinion but was a collective consensus from Council and Board of Directors.

Your petition to have six of the current leaders step down from office is based on a number of spurious accusations which we will respectfully respond to here:

Accusation #1: The release of the May 26 Member's Meeting documents by Elaine Chan was unethical.

1. The documents released were not Personnel Committee records, except for two exit interviews, of which consent to release was obtained from the two pastors. The documents were in fact records of the Joint Group comprising of the PC, Council, Deacons of English Congregation and Cantonese Congregation as commissioned by the members of the church in the November 2012 members meeting which recorded the *dialogue of a meeting set up for reconciliation* between the three pastors, Pastor Teh, Pastor Sam, and Rev. Kong, with selected members of the Joint Group as facilitators and observers. The conversation did not pertain to protected information of a personal, medical, legal, or financial nature; it merely documented the attempt to resolve a known ongoing conflict which was of direct interest to everyone in the congregation. Since (1) the nature of the current conflict at VCBC directly involves the conflict between the three pastors present at the meeting, and (2) the entire church is affected by the outcome of the meeting, the members have the right to full disclosure. In our view, there was no breach of the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) as there is nothing wrong with the membership requesting and obtaining access to the Joint Group meeting minutes in order to inform themselves as to what was happening in the Church and whether to accept the resignations of the two pastors. Furthermore, the access and use by the membership of employee personal information as defined by PIPA is sanctioned under PIPA.
2. At the May 26 Members' Meeting, more than a simple majority of members requested the full disclosure of the Joint Group minutes which Rev. Kong himself, along with Pastor Teh and Pastor Sam, did not object to.
3. At VCBC, the release of committee meeting minutes has never been a matter of contention. In fact, up until now, meetings at VCBC have operated under only one governing rule: the minutes belong to *the church members and the attendees are accountable to the church members for*

accuracy and completeness of the records. In light of the fact that there is no precedent for many of the actions taken during this current conflict, we must all depend on the grace and wisdom of God when making decisions that concern the church. When the members made the decision to release these meeting minutes, they did it in the interest of informing themselves of matters that will directly affect them. We believe this decision was made by the members out of deep concern of the matters at hand and was not done lightly.

Conclusion: As the disclosure did not violate PIPA, and the disclosure was voted by the majority by the members attending the members meeting, we deemed it both ethical and necessary for the congregation to have all the necessary information in order to make wise, fully-informed, God-centered decisions concerning the affairs of VCBC.

Accusation #2: Ken Ip, Edward Li, Betty Yuen and James Ng pressured Rev. Kong into resigning.

1. These four people (hereafter referred to as the four) were neither acting on their own, nor were interested in pressuring, extorting, or otherwise negatively influencing Rev. Kong in any way. When the four went to see Rev. Kong on June 12, they were acting as designated representatives of the Joint Group to convey a message to him based on the decision of the Joint Group meeting held on June 11 that they found Rev. Kong no longer suitable to continue to be the Senior Pastor of VCBC.
2. The four were thus fully authorized by the Joint Group to meet with Rev. Kong
3. According to VCBC polity policy, the congregation is the only body that has the power to dismiss a pastor. The four knew very well that they alone do not have the right to dismiss him or pressure him in any way. They merely

acted as spokespeople presenting to Rev. Kong with the results of the Joint Group's review of his suitability as Senior Pastor at VCBC. Their intention was to inform him in advance of the decision of the Joint Group and give him the opportunity to consider his options.

4. Far from being an “ambush”, the meeting was favorably arranged for Rev. Kong's convenience, and the four were careful to request the meeting directly from him prior to the engagement. Rev. Kong agreed to have the meeting and attended it of his own free will.

Conclusion: These four people were carrying out work that was commissioned by the Joint Group to convey a decision and not to pressure Rev. Kong to resign.

Accusation #3.a: Philip Mah acted unethically and irresponsibly by allowing a floor motion for the dismissal of a moderator.

1. Philip Mah's job as a moderator is to ensure that order and decorum is maintained throughout the proceedings of a meeting while also upholding principles of fairness and Godly behavior. To this end, he has followed the Robert's Rules of Order (the prescribed authority for meetings, which VCBC has adopted consistently throughout its history), and the Church's bylaws and practices in the facilitation of the meeting on June 9, 2013. All members should know that floor motions are allowed. In fact, as part of a moderator's terms of reference, he is *required to entertain all floor motions properly raised at meetings*.
2. VCBC allows any member to bring up a floor motion at any Members' Meeting to deal with urgent important matters. VCBC has long along this practice which is rooted in Robert's Rules. The practice of a floor motion is thus well-understood, ethical, democratic, and fully constitutional pursuant to the “spirit and intent” of the policies and practices that govern our church meetings.

3. The fact that Kelly Chan was not present to explain himself at the meeting was of his own choosing. At the previous deacons' meeting on June 8, the majority of the deacons agreed that the complicated nature of the issues being debated required further discussion, to be continued on June 9. Kelly Chan as well as Rev. Kong were fully aware of the meeting, had earlier expressed that they would attend and in fact by their elected positions should attend; but subsequently decided on their own that they would not at the disappointment of many leaders and members.

Conclusion: Philip Mah carried out his duties responsibly as the moderator by giving equal attention to all members at the meeting. By permitting a floor motion moved and seconded by members for voting, he was fully respecting the rights of members.

In closing, we strongly feel that there are more healthier and constructive ways to voicing a member's views than circulating a petition. If the intent was to help resolve the current conflict at church, we feel it is instead deepening it and impeding the church from moving forward.

Our church has always been able to deal with disputes and disagreements by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. The Bible is our foremost source of counsel. Our church also has adopted by-laws and policies to help guide us. There is an established procedure to deal with these issues. We always encourage members to seek reconciliation directly and if needed in the company of pastors, deacons, other leaders or brothers and sisters. We believe in administering grace and truth.

The spiritual battle continues to wage and has had heavy tolls on many of us. Still, as your leaders, we will continue to work for the betterment of the church in accordance with God's will. We encourage everyone to pray for the

church and us as leaders, that we will all have wisdom and discernment to do what is right in God's sight so that we can resume the work that God has intended for us as a church.

May God do as He intends, and may His grace fall on us all.

Sincerely,

Henry Cheung for the Church Council and Board of Directors