

Worker Greg Swenson steps aside

Aug 22

From: Greg Swenson <greg.swens@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Aug 21, 2023

Subject: Next steps

Dear all,

Fourteen years ago, I started in this work. For me, these have been good years, helpful years.

But now we know, for many they haven't been. People have been deeply wounded. How have so many been hurt in the name of Jesus? I'm thankful for those who have helped me see this. I've reached out to ones who I've ignorantly hurt, and I apologize to any who I've misjudged.

I'll share with you from an email I sent to our staff a month and a half ago:

The personal calling I have been feeling on my heart these days and for the foreseeable future is to attend to two important issues:

- 1. The healing of the broken-hearted (which is most of us at this point) through active listening and reassurance that victims/survivors and our friends are heard by someone who represents the ministry. The listening sessions are providing one channel for this to occur. But others are reaching out by phone too, ones who have felt isolated for many years. Survivors of abuse—some currently attending meetings and some not—are pouring out their hearts. Many have been in therapy for most of their life, but it can still be healing to hear a 'worker' acknowledge and validate the hurts they experienced.*
- 2. Ministry reform. The approach to our calling and what it means to be an apostle/minister has been pushed into a mold that doesn't seem to be working well for many. This is evidenced by the high incidence of mental health problems and burnout. This is not because of being weak or different, but many expectations which may or may not be scriptural have been thrust upon an ever-dwindling supply of workers. No one of us can singularly save the current state of things, but I am willing to continue having conversations with*

overseers, workers, elders, friends and anyone to better understand what direction to move in for sustainability.

I fully understand if you are not feeling called to these same tasks, or if you're feeling called to other tasks which I cannot do, as we are all different members of the body with differing gifts.

So this is how we've been spending our recent months. It's a start, but there is still much to do. Faith is seen through action, and if the Lord is in each step there can be benefit.

I appreciate Jim's offer to place me in a field again this fall, though I can't commit to doing that right now. In view of all that's come to light within the fellowship the past few months, I believe it's also an appropriate season to pause and consider, and take a break for well-being.

If you find it discouraging to see fewer names on a workers list, I hope your reaction is to rise to the occasion. Many of you have done that already, and some are now awakening to this. As my late mother often quoted, "Paths of usefulness surround you—need for every hand." The work of God is something anyone can be a part of if we allow him to use us.

I still feel a call to share the gospel, and I value attending fellowship gatherings and Bible studies. I'm happy to meet with anyone who has the sincere desire to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

At this time I plan to leave North Carolina at the end of September. While I travel the country and make visits, I'll continue to be available by phone, text and email, so feel free to reach out at any time.

With love in Christ and prayer for healing,

Greg Swenson

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