

25 July 2000

This statement is a response to an unusually large number of inquiries that have come to my office over the past two months:

Two years ago the elders of Grace Community Church issued a public statement about Growing Families International (GFI) and Gary Ezzo. In addition to several concerns about the extrabiblical content of GFI materials and divisive tendencies in the GFI program, our elders also initially voiced some rather significant concerns about Mr. Ezzo's personal character.

Specifically, we reported that he had shown a pattern of resisting accountability, and that he was not always truthful. (We had become aware of several instances in which Mr. Ezzo twisted the truth, ranging from a false claim that he held a degree he had never really earned, to the spreading of false reports about our church in a manner that appeared to be deliberately divisive.)

Mr. Ezzo subsequently met with one of our elders and expressed a desire to rectify our major concerns about his character. He assured us that he was making himself accountable to a group of men he trusted--the pastor and elders of Living Hope Evangelical Fellowship (LHEF).

In the interest of seeking peace, the elders of our church issued a revised and abbreviated version of their public statement. In that revised statement, the concerns we had raised about Mr. Ezzo's integrity and accountability were no longer expressly mentioned, pending further action on Mr. Ezzo's part to mitigate or allay those concerns. After the revised statement was issued, however, Mr. Ezzo made no further attempt to address the larger concerns we had raised about his personal character.

Recent events have greatly troubled us and reminded us of the difficult and often painful duty that is ours as overseers who must warn the flock about divisive influences (cf. Acts 20:28-32). A few weeks ago we learned that Mr. Ezzo has been excommunicated from LHEF.

Only the barest details about what led to LHEF's discipline against Mr. Ezzo have been made known. Unfortunately, LHEF's leadership have chosen to conceal key facts about the case. We have nonetheless been able to verify that LHEF's discipline of Mr. Ezzo involves the very same issues we raised in our initial public statement: Gary Ezzo's lack of truthfulness and his refusal to be held accountable. It is not without significance that the men who have excommunicated him are the same men to whom he claimed to be making himself accountable.

This has clearly become a pattern of behavior with Mr. Ezzo. LHEF is at least the third church Mr. Ezzo has left with questions pending about his character.

In light of the wide scope of his ministry's influence, I believe it is the duty of LHEF's leaders to make known at least the basic facts about Mr. Ezzo's refusal to heed their discipline (Matthew

18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20)

In the meantime, regretfully, I am convinced that it is also now our duty to state plainly that the concerns we initially raised about Mr. Ezzo's character were never satisfactorily addressed by him. It appears rather obvious on biblical grounds that Mr. Ezzo's refusal to heed his own church's discipline disqualifies him from Christian leadership or public ministry in any context. After all, the first and most important qualification for those who would lead the church is that they be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2, 10; Titus 1:6).

I am deeply saddened to have to make such a statement, but because Mr. Ezzo was once an elder in our church, I believe we have a particular duty to sound a clear warning to the church at large about an influence that continues to be divisive.

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