

July 23, 2014

TO: President Scott M. Wheatley
Oakton Stake
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

CC: Bishop Mark Harrison
Vienna Ward
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

President Wheatley:

I write to appeal my excommunication from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The decision to excommunicate me has had a deleterious effect on me and on my family. It has also been an extremely negative experience for thousands of other Mormons with questions and concerns about gender inequality in the Church who have felt wounded, alongside me, by your actions.

Inherent in the disciplinary process, given that an option to appeal is provided, is the possibility that mistakes can be made by Church leaders, and rectified. I hope and pray you consider my appeal with humility and openness, and take the matter to the Lord.

I have done nothing wrong. I ask you, President Wheatley, to do the right thing and reinstate me to full membership in the Church.

As you know, during my time in the Vienna Ward, Bishop Harrison literally never asked me one single question regarding my feelings about female ordination. While I met with you twice, once in December 2013 and once in May 2014 while I was moving, here are some questions you never thought to ask me:

- Do you have a testimony of the Savior Jesus Christ and in the restored gospel?
- What have your experiences in the Church been like as a woman?
- Do you feel excluded from leadership opportunities?
- Why do you think women should be ordained?
- What led to that conclusion? What experiences made you think this way?
- Do you feel the guidance of the Holy Ghost in your life?
- Did you pray about your activity with Ordain Women?
- If women were to be ordained, how do you think that would benefit our Stake and the Church as a whole?
- What can we do as leaders to make you feel more included, and loved?
- How can we minister to the many, many sisters in our Stake who feel hurt by gender inequality in the Church?
- How can we keep the droves of young sisters in our Stake and in our Church from leaving? How can we best reach out to them and to you in fellowship and love?

If you, or Bishop Harrison, truly cared about my wellbeing or eternal salvation you would have spoken to me more than twice and you would have asked me questions. You didn't. In retrospect, I now realize you met with me to complete a *pro forma* requirement of being able to say you gave me "counsel." Your "counsel" was to take down the website ordainwomen.org and to disassociate myself from the group I founded, Ordain Women. This "counsel" was not given with patience, or designed to persuade me. On May 5th you gave an ultimatum. On June 8, Bishop Harrison informed me he had decided to convene a disciplinary council *in absentia* in order to compel me to comply with that ultimatum: take down your website, or face excommunication.

However, according to Doctrine & Covenants 121: 37 when any priesthood holder attempts to "exercise control or ... or compulsion" we are instructed that, "the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man." It is my opinion that you had no authority to control my views, voice or speech and no right to compel me into silence. Therefore, Bishop Harrison had neither justification nor authority to excommunicate me, as his clear aim was compulsion, not persuasion.

I ask you to correct this egregious error and restore me to full membership, President Wheatley.

When you forced me to meet with you under duress on May 5th, 2014, despite the fact that I was in the middle of moving, I looked you in the eye and spoke with absolute candor. I told you that I am not going to take down the website ordainwomen.org and I am not going to dissociate myself from the group Ordain Women. You unperturbedly replied that you hoped I would have a "Paul on the road to Damascus" experience, and change my mind, despite all evidence to the contrary.

President Wheatley, I now implore you to reconsider your position, and even though you are my initial accuser, and you initiated the "informal probation" against me, I hope that you have the aforementioned drastic change of heart, like Paul, and not uncommon with other servants of the Lord in the scriptures.

I am, and have always been, a faithful Mormon. My only "sin" elucidated by you has been speaking my mind and pushing for gender equality in the Church. Far from being wrong, I believe I am following the pattern of revelation taught by Christ in the scriptures: ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

The entire process conducted against me was fundamentally unfair. As Bishop Harrison admitted in his June 8 letter, I had already moved, I was unable attend the disciplinary council in person. Given that you, President Wheatley, had already said to me in an email on May 6: "because you have carried your campaign for ordination far beyond the boundaries of our Stake, and have previously told the media and the public that you are a member in good standing, it may be necessary at some point in the future to correct the public record regarding your standing in the Church. For these reasons, **I cannot agree**

to the request in your email for absolute confidentiality.” (emphasis added) Your statement denying me confidentiality was shameful, and potentially actionable.

Because of your statements threatening to disclose confidential information, I did not feel that any type of video link that the Church would potentially be able to record, edit and share could truly be “secure.” Therefore, I did not trust it would not be shared against my will with others, or even with the media. Particularly since you had previously said explicitly you may feel the need to do so. So, as you can see, video link was not a realistic option for me.

Bishop Harrison indicated in an email after the decision to excommunicate me had been made that the process would have turned out “better for you” if I had been able, at my own expense, to fly back to a place thousands of miles away to a ward that I had already moved away from. However, Bishop Harrison told me in the June 8 letter that I could participate in writing, and reiterated that in a June 12 email saying, “I am open to receiving a written submission from you.” So, I did as he said, and submitted a thorough written submission. More than 1,000 letters of support, were also submitted by people from around the world as evidence on my behalf.

If indeed the result would have differed had I been able to attend in person and the result, as Bishop Harrison indicated would have been “better for you” had he not decided to convene the council *in absentia*, it highlights that the fact that convening a council in absentia was unfair to me.

In addition, I was asked to point out procedural errors for my appeal, but the trial was held *in absentia*. Bishop Harrison refused to talk with me about the process or answer any procedural questions. Bishop Harrison refused to answer the following questions about procedure, therefore damaging my appeal:

- Did President Wheatley tell you to hold the court against me?
- Did any superior or line leader tell you or President Wheatley, or hint to you, that I was in “apostasy”?
- Who participated in the Disciplinary Council? Several witnesses say that President Wheatley was there the night of my Council, did he participate?
- Did you read all of the materials I provided, including the letters of support?
- Who drafted, edited and had access to my letter of excommunication that you signed?
- Did anyone in the Church Public Affairs Department have a copy of that letter before it was release publicly?
- If so, why was Public Affairs involved in what should have been a confidential matter?
- Why was my husband not given a similar disciplinary hearing, given his parallel work with Ordain Women?
- Why did you put a move restriction on his records, and not inform him?

President Wheatley, it is not too late to do the right thing. It is not too late to undo the damage you have both done to me and to the Church. Please read the attached letter from my husband Neil Ransom, the brief my dear friend Nadine Hansen has prepared with my cooperation and on my behalf, despite having no answers to my questions about procedure, and the more than 1,000 letters submitted in support of maintaining my membership in the Church (some of which were submitted directly to Bishop Harrison, so you'll have to get copies of them from him).

Will you please do the right thing and annul the excommunication decision by Bishop Harrison and return me to full membership and fellowship in the Church?

Yours in the gospel,

Kate Kelly