

Thurman Williams
Michael Byrd
Darren Young
May 31, 2024

Meachum School of Haymanot
PO Box 142799
St. Louis, Missouri, 63114

Dear Jeffrey Wright:

We are writing you with much sorrow and heaviness of heart to bring to your attention a matter of utmost importance concerning Dr. Vince Bantu, who currently holds the position of “Ohene” and professor at Meachum School of Haymanot. It is with a deep sense of responsibility that we must formally present charges of inappropriate sexual conduct against Vince Bantu.

The details of these allegations are deeply concerning. It is imperative that swift and decisive action be taken to address this matter in accordance with your organization's policies and guidelines.

Historical Context

The following paragraphs are a historical narrative of the unfolding of these allegations, the process used to address the allegations, and how a conclusion was reached that these charges must be filed formally in accordance with our understanding of a biblically informed process of discipline.

In the spring of 2019, a pastoral accountability group was formed in St. Louis, MO, consisting of five local area pastors. This group prayed, supported, and held one another accountable in areas of life and doctrine and met once or twice a month as schedules permitted. The group number has fluctuated throughout the years however, the nature of Vince’s inappropriate sexual conduct was not known to all members, as Vince would only disclose these issues with Pastor Thurman and Darren when other members were not present.

In summer of 2021, Vince shared with Thurman and Darren that his relationship with C.B., a woman he had an affair with many years ago and is currently a live-in family friend, is once again becoming inappropriate. Vince mentioned that he and C.B. were engaging in sexual conversations and inappropriate touching though they did not have

sex. Both Thurman and Darren told Vince that C.B. needed to move out of the Bantu home before the intimacy escalates but Vince pushed back that it would hurt Diana (his wife) more if C.B. left as she was her best friend and is now part of the family. Vince would provide Thurman and Darren regular updates on how he was managing his feelings and actions towards C.B. to hold him accountable.

At a meeting at Buffalo Wild Wings in December 2022, Vince confesses to Thurman and Darren that he met a woman at the St. Louis Airport, an Illinois pastor's wife, and began a sexual relationship with her, which included meetings in the car for sex. Vince is encouraged to repent, confess his sin, cease this adulterous relationship, and seek help.

In the Spring of 2023, Vince confesses to Darren and Thurman that he began a sexual relationship with L.F. According to Vince, L.F. was a woman who Vince met on Facebook and invited to move to St. Louis to study at Meacham Seminary and move into Vince's home with the rest of the Bantu Family. This relationship blurred power dynamics and created a context of grooming and harm, which was not acknowledged.

On December 5, 2023 at The Drip Coffee House, Vince shares with Darren and Thurman that he and his wife Diana are considering polygamy as an appropriate step for him to deal with his loneliness and lack of connection in his marriage to Diana. Vince reported that Diana was initially struggling with the idea but is now considering it due to it being "biblically permissible." Vince said due to his studies on African Christianity and after further confirmation from the Holy Spirit, he believes polygamy is an acceptable position. Vince implores Darren and Thurman to study the scriptures from a non-westernized position. On December 12, 2023, Vince sends an article and a text message to support his views on Polygamy to Darren and Thurman. (see appendix A)

On January 18, 2024, at Ari's Ice Cream Parlor & Cafe, Vince shares with Darren and Thurman that he intends to practice polygamy. Diana and C.B. have accepted the position, and the children are struggling with the idea of having "multiple" moms and attending therapy to talk about it. When pressed on the issue, Vince confesses that he is already "married" and that he married himself and L.F. unto God in their home last summer. Vince then exclaimed it would now be a "sin" to divorce L.F. since they were already married.

On February 6, 2024 at Washington University in McKelvey Hall, a meeting with Darren, Thurman, and Vince is held to discuss disbanding the Accountability Group due to Vince's theological views and Vince's refusal to repent or confess his new sexual infidelity to his church board.

At each of the timeline events with every new disclosure of sin, it was very clearly communicated to Vince that he needed to stop his unrepentant sinful behavior or resign from his role as a pastor. Vince disagreed and expressed his belief that the only biblical responsibility he had was to confess it to his "accountability" group, not his church or organizations he represented. His rationale was "because he was accountable to his accountability group, and not his elders." However, if there was theological disagreement, Vince insisted the group simply needed to "agree to disagree" and move on. Additionally, over the course of time, Vince Bantu's inappropriate sexual conduct became reframed as a "theological" disagreement, and he denied that he needed to do anything more than openly confess to his accountability group. He has also stated that his sin is no different than any other sin committed by any believer – even noting that “his sin was far less worse than the sin of greed, racism, and forsaking the poor.” Vince’s attitude and posture toward sexual infidelity is what led to further escalation of action to promote accountability and truth.

In addition to the listed historical context above, the following timeline highlights the reporting process and correspondence made between Thurman, Mike, and Darren and Vince’s elder team/board members in the spirit of Matthew 18:

Matthew 18 Resolution Process

On April 19, 2024, After Darren and Thurman recognized Vince’s lack of willingness to address his misconduct, Pastor Mike, who was also a member of the accountability group, was updated on the information by Darren. Darren sought out support from Mike and Thurman to collectively address these issues with Vince one more time and encourage him to step down from active ministry.

On April 23, 2024, at Faith Community Bible Church, Thurman, Mike, and Darren confront Vince exhorting him to pursue repentance and to alter his behavior. They recommended that Vince repent, confess, and resign from his pastor leadership duties. In response, Vince tells the accountability group that both Darren and Thurman wronged him by disclosing his confessions to Mike as it was “not their story to tell.” Vince ended the meeting early by walking out as he refused to discuss it with Mike and was “upset” with Darren and Thurman.

On April 24, 2024 Vince calls Thurman, Mike, and Darren separately. Vince tells Thurman and Darren that they “misheard and misunderstood” his confessions and that currently he was “not actively practicing infidelity and polygamy.” He then tells them that if they continue to share the information and “rumors about him and his family” he will pursue legal action.

On April 27, 2024 Darren, Mike, and Thurman sent a letter to Vince Bantu (see appendix B, “Letter to Vince Bantu.”) asking for his resignation from Pastoral roles, including his confession to his church and elders. Vince did not respond to the letter

though an Elder/Bishop of Vince's church, Beloved Community Church, Paulea Mooney-McCoy responds on the same day through an email to Thurman Williams titled "Vince Bantu" (see appendix C) with a request to meet to understand where the "allegations are coming from."

On April 28, 2024 Thurman, Darren, and Mike have a first meeting with Paulea. Paulea shares that someone in the church brought "similar" allegations regarding Vince having multiple wives months ago, but they recanted what they said privately when questioned about it in front of Vince and Diana publicly. On April 30, Paulea sent an email to Thurman, Mike, and Darren stating that Vince, Diana, and "one of the women that was alluded to in your letter" have denied the allegations. (see appendix D "Concerns about Vince")

On May 11, Paulea sent an email titled "Letter of Concern," effectively resigning from her role as Bishop of Beloved Community Church, leaving no further oversight over Vince. (see appendix E)

On May 15, a second attempt to reach Vince Bantu by email was initiated by Mike Byrd entitled "Letter to Vince Bantu" representing Mike, Thurman, and Darren. This letter provided Vince with a deadline to take action. (see appendix F)

On May 17 2024, Jeff Wright, CEO of Urban Ministries, Inc. and Board Chair of Meachum School of Haymanot, sent an email requesting an in-person meeting, including that the allegations not be shared with anyone otherwise, legal action could and would be taken to prevent defamation. Thurman, Darren, and Mike communicated that scheduling a meeting for three weeks out was not an acceptable timeline given the nature of the allegations and the time that had already elapsed. (see appendix G, "Dr. Vince Bantu")

On May 24 2024, Thurman, Mike, and Darren met with Jeff Wright and Stan Long on a recorded zoom call at 4:00 PM, CST to discuss the inappropriate sexual conduct charges against Vince Bantu. Thurman, Mike, and Darren agreed to give Jeff Wright and Stan Long one week before submitting their formal letter to Vince's board and overseers.

Summary of Charges

We believe Pastor Vince has violated his pastoral office by habitually practicing unrepentant sexual immorality, justifying his sin through the misuse of Scripture, and

refusing to address his behavior in a biblically commendable manner reflecting the consistent fruit of repentance.

As members of the board entrusted with upholding the values and integrity of your organization and representatives of the gospel of Christ, we urge you to take appropriate action. Any form of sexual misconduct is a grave violation of trust and undermines the fundamental principles upon which your organizations are built, and does not cohere with a lifestyle of gospel ministry. This may include the immediate suspension of Vince Bantu from their duties pending further investigation, as well as the implementation of support services for those affected by these actions.

We understand the gravity of the situation and the potential repercussions of these allegations. However, it is essential that the welfare of the church and the reputation of Christ be prioritized by demonstrating an unwavering commitment to accountability and justice. We are prepared to stand as witnesses and provide the documentation necessary.

We stand ready to assist in any way necessary to ensure that this matter is handled with the utmost care and sensitivity. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you require any further information or assistance in this regard.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Pastor Thurman Williams,
Pastor Michael Byrd,
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