

JAMES MACDONALD'S RESIGNATION STATEMENT | SHORT VERSION

Hello - I am Dr. James MacDonald, and for 30 years it has been my joy to serve as founding and Senior Pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel. During that time, we have seen many great kingdom victories that have won the lost and built up the church of Jesus Christ across Chicago land and around the world.

We have made wonderful friends that will last a lifetime, but I as the leader have also made some significant mistakes. So much of where we are as a church today flows from the compounding of errors that started in 2007 with the over-budget construction in Elgin. Following that the church made significant progress organizationally and in reducing the mortgage, which have continued right up to the present. But behind the scenes things have been gradually in decline — and by ‘things’ I mean most of all me, personally, as the Senior Pastor of Harvest. From 2007-2011, I endured a lot of trials between the church, my family, and my health, and recovered a level of health and stability. However, since the summer of 2012 and the Vertical Church Tour, I have really not known a sustained joy in ministry as I had previously. The church had become too complicated organizationally, too overwhelming, and I was unable to ever let my mind rest and be at peace.

For more than six years I've struggled to process the messages that have come to me through the online attack against Harvest. I have repented where I saw my wrong, but been too slow to see the totality and don't fully see it yet. I have felt increasingly trapped in a pattern of personal emotional decline that has increased injury to others and prevented the level of health the broader church has needed and desired. Since 2017, leading up to my resignation from Harvest Bible Fellowship (HBF), I have regressed in patterns of fear, self pity, woundedness, and anger. I have felt great shame about these things, and longed to be free from the weight of leadership, but could not see the self-imposed idolatry of needing to pay off the church mortgage, or wanting to live down the failures I do own. I have had no role in the financial matters being questioned and know of nothing in that area that is out of order. I have never seen money at Harvest spent for any purpose other than to support those who labor to get out the good news of the gospel.

I am deeply regretful of the flawed thinking that allowed me to lead our church to file the lawsuit. While possibly allowable biblically, I should have seen that it was not advisable, because it signaled to others that the progress we have made in grace and organizational health was either not real or not lasting. I am so grieved by this realization and the discouragement it causes to the many wonderful servant leaders who have given so much past and/or present to make Harvest a life-giving church.

First my sons Luke and Landon on January 14 of this year, then gradually through the Executive Committee of the Elders, I have been led to see that the best way forward for Harvest Bible Chapel is without me. Recent revelations of foolish and insensitive comments reveal a heart that is unguarded and far too raw for ministry leadership. I am so sorry for those foolish words, so insensitive and needless. I see how desperately I need to be “beside still waters” for the foreseeable future. Please pray that the issues mentioned above and my regression in these matters since 2017 especially in relation to HBF will receive the attention they need while I am away from ministry entirely.

To any former leaders or staff impacted by me, I commit to participation in the peacemaker process as requested and pray for an opportunity to hear more fully how I have impacted you, in order to express my sorrow personally and seek your forgiveness. I blame no one, and praise God for the courage of the Elders in ensuring this transition happens now. I have been asking for it and waited only for matters related to my exit and 30 years of partnership to find a path to gracious separation.

We will always love the people of Harvest and pray that in God's grace the needed focus upon my failings will, by His mercy, give way to a contentment in knowing much good has been accomplished, too, and for His glory.

You have our love and prayers and always will.

Pastor James