

From the Desk of Hohn Cho

September 25, 2023

Re: ACBC “Concern or Complaint” Process

To Whom It May Concern:

At the urging of friends who appreciate ACBC, and in particular after reading an encouraging update on February 20, 2023 titled, “ACBC's Continued Commitment to Care,” I filed a “concern or complaint” form with ACBC regarding counseling practices of Bill Shannon and Grace Community Church.¹ Bill and GCC have long had certification and a close affiliation with ACBC, with Bill even serving as an ACBC fellow since 2013. A formal inquiry began, and at ACBC’s request, I ultimately catalogued and submitted many documents on my personal shared drive as supporting evidence.

At ACBC’s further request, I worked with four women out of the dozens who have contacted me since the publication in February 2023 of an investigative article detailing cases of counseling malpractice by GCC, to submit their own “concern or complaint” forms directly to ACBC. Although their identities are not known to the general public, these brave women are known to both ACBC and GCC; they certainly are not anonymous, just as I and certain others who have spoken out have never been anonymous. On May 13, two leaders of my church and I met with two leaders from ACBC, who affirmed that the complaints were very credible and that ACBC was taking them seriously.

As a result of what I understand to be Bill and GCC's refusal to substantively respond to ACBC, as of July 2023, Bill has been removed from the ACBC website list of approved counselors, and removed as a breakout speaker at the upcoming ACBC national conference in October.² I have been informed that despite repeated efforts by ACBC to engage with Bill, he ultimately decided to resign from ACBC instead, with these formal charges still pending. For reasons the women and I still do not fully understand, GCC remains on the ACBC website list of approved training centers, but we are hopeful more clarity will be forthcoming. Should GCC decide to submit to the ACBC process, certainly I remain ready and willing to interact with them, as I always have been.

While I would have much preferred to see Bill and GCC live out their own teaching by being humble in responding to, and even seeking biblical reconciliation with, women who have alleged very credible grievances, I do take some small comfort that his separation from ACBC, and the active cases against GCC, might serve as a form of biblical justice and encouragement for the women, as well as a further warning for Bill and GCC’s potential counselees. I believe

¹ For the sake of clearly stating the procedural history, my “concern or complaint” form also named Brad Klassen, Rodney Andersen, and Carey Hardy, but I was informed that ACBC had no jurisdiction over them, because they apparently had no formal ACBC certification or affiliation, despite being speakers at ACBC-affiliated events.

² This letter incorporated feedback from numerous parties over the course of time, and was completed as of the date listed above. Given the proximity to next week’s ACBC national conference, however, I am not making it available to those who have inquired occasionally about this process until after the conference is over, as I do not wish to distract either the leadership or the attendees from their time together, for which I am praying.

this warning remains important in light of the fact that GCC continues to stand wholeheartedly behind Bill, who still serves as a staff pastor/elder, leads their counseling ministry, teaches counseling classes promoted actively by GCC on its social media, and has trained many other past and present counselors. This is all in spite of many witnesses, both inside and outside of GCC, who are personally familiar with his counseling and could testify as to harm he has inflicted.

I continue to pray for GCC and its elders, the beloved congregants there, and especially for the many women who have contacted my wife and me, and for the many, many more who have not. It is their deeply grievous stories which matter so immensely, and yet sadly have been largely dismissed or ignored. I am also praying for ACBC, its leaders, and those biblical counselors -- some who I know personally and consider friends -- who are genuinely skilled and compassionate, and vigilant not to break a bruised reed or extinguish a dimly burning wick, and understand the critical role of the magistrate in dealing with crimes and certain other wrongs, rather than attempting to keep them “in-house” under cover of secrecy, as some churches have wrongly done.

As an advocate for the four women who has deep convictions about biblical justice, I should state plainly that we had various concerns relating to ACBC’s procedures. These include how the counselors and training centers that ACBC has publicly certified are held accountable, how they publicize (or decline to publicize) the removal of certification, the transparency of investigations and information, how speakers for ACBC-affiliated conferences which are listed on their own website are vetted or removed, and perhaps most importantly, how they handle potential conflicts of interests, and the care and concern offered to those willing to come forward. After receiving certain explanations from ACBC, I do trust that they recognize and have attempted to account for, to some extent, a number of these issues.

Moreover, I understand ACBC is revising their “concern or complaint” process, as well as publicly releasing new standards relating to abuse at their upcoming national conference. With no expectations, if there is any way I could serve them in any of these matters, I would be glad to do so, free of charge. I have been encouraged by a number of actions and statements from ACBC President Dale Johnson, and I pray that he and the organization will greatly improve these processes and standards so that they provide far more protection for vulnerable counselees and far more accountability for heavy-handed counselors, all for the glory of our great God, in the power of the Spirit, and in recognition of the perfect and gentle and caring example of our Savior, the ultimate Shepherd of our souls.

Respectfully Submitted,

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