

**The people formerly known as.....**

## **The people formerly known as the congregation** by Bill Kinnon

Let me introduce you to The People formerly known as The Congregation. There are millions of us.

We are people – flesh and blood – image bearers of the Creator – eikons, if you will. We are not numbers.

We are the eikons who once sat in the uncomfortable pews or plush theatre seating of your preaching venues. We sat passively while you proof-texted your way through 3, 4, 5 or no point sermons – attempting to tell us how you and your reading of The Bible had a plan for our lives. Perhaps God does have a plan for us – it just doesn't seem to jive with yours.

Money was a great concern. And, for a moment, we believed you when you told us God would reward us for our tithes – or curse us if we didn't. The Law is just so much easier to preach than Grace. My goodness, if you told us that the 1st century church held everything in common – you might be accused of being a socialist – and of course, capitalism is a direct gift from God. Please further note: Malachi 3 is speaking to the priests of Israel. They weren't the cheerful givers God speaks of loving.

We grew weary from your Edifice Complex pathologies – building projects more important than the people in your neighbourhood...or in your pews. It wasn't God telling you to "enlarge the place of your tent" – it was your ego. And, by the way, a multi-million dollar, state of the art building is hardly a tent.

We no longer buy your call to be "fastest growing" church in wherever. That is your need. You want a bigger audience. We won't be part of one.

Our ears are still ringing from the volume, but...Jesus is not our boyfriend – and we will no longer sing your silly love songs that suggest He is. Happy clappy tunes bear no witness to the reality of the world we live in, the powers and principalities we confront, or are worthy of the one we proclaim King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

You offered us a myriad of programs to join – volunteer positions to assuage our desire to be connected. We could be greeters, parking lot attendants, coffee baristas, book store helpers, children's ministry workers, media ministry drones – whatever you needed to fulfil your dreams of corporate glory. Perhaps you've noticed, we aren't there anymore.

We are The People formerly known as The Congregation. We have not stopped loving the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nor do we avoid "the assembling of the saints." We just don't assemble under your supposed leadership. We meet in coffee shops, around dinner tables, in the parks and on the streets. We connect virtually across space and time – engaged in generative conversations – teaching and being taught.

We live amongst our neighbours, in their homes and they in ours. We laugh and cry and really live – without the need to have you teach us how – by reading your ridiculous books or listening to your supercilious CDs or podcasts.

We don't deny Paul's description of APEPT leadership – Ephesians 4:11. We just see it in the light of Jesus' teaching in Mark 10 and Matthew 20 – servant leadership. We truly long for the release of servant leading men and women into our gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. We believe in Peter's words that describe us all as priests. Not just some, not just one gender.

We are The People formerly known as The Congregation. We do not hate you. Though some of us bear the wounds you have inflicted. Many of you are our brothers and our sisters, misguided by the systems you inhabit, intoxicated by the power – yet still members of our family. (Though some are truly wolves in sheep's clothing.)

And, as The People formerly known as The Congregation, we invite you to join us on this great adventure. To boldly go where the Spirit leads us. To marvel at what the Father is doing in the communities where He has placed us. To live the love that Jesus shows us.



### **The women who have been known as the pastor's wife** by Lyn Hallewell

I was hesitant about writing this post, as I know that a few have followed suit of Bill Kinnon. This post has really been on my mind though. I'm writing it in celebration of a group of posts which have come under The People Formerly Known As ... banner. These are thoughts compiled by Bill Kinnon, Grace, Jamie Arpin-Ricci, John Frye, and a few others. I don't know what anyone will make of this, or indeed if anyone will read it; but these thoughts I share from the heart, from my own experiences as the Pastors Wife, and of pastors wives I know. If anything, this post is for me, so I can get this off my chest. It's also for those women out there who have been known as the pastor's wife.

We are the women who have been known as the pastor's wife. There are thousands of us all over the world. This was not a role we sought to have in life, we simply fell in love with a man who was called into ministry. Initially we were excited with our new "role", and, along with our husband, we could see all of the potential there was in the Kingdom of God. We wanted to serve God well; we wanted to sow into the Kingdom; we wanted to live the adventure; we wanted to make God proud. Faithfully we went where God led us.

Silently, over the years, we were molded into our role through the expectations of the congregation. We were expected to serve willingly throughout the church, and be an added extra for free. What a bargain you got, in no other job can a man take his wife to work for free. We worked tirelessly teaching in Sunday school classes, helping out in crèche, serving tea and coffee, flower arranging, preparing bible studies, banner making, cake baking and helping out with countless other church programs, never to gain any thanks or recognition.

We were expected to look and act in a certain manner, and always had to put on a smile. None of you were really concerned if we were struggling, had questions about church or life in general. You told us countless times, through your actions and words, that we were not there to receive, but to serve. After all we were seen as a Godly lady, and you expected no less. We felt your rebuke.

We were expected to be a hostess, and have an immaculate home, just in case a parishioner should drop by. You didn't care how late into the night or on what day of the week you telephoned or called

by. It was almost as if we were not allowed to have any private time. We soon learnt, and got caller display, so that you could leave countless messages on the answer machine instead. Aren't you lucky, that unlike most jobs, the pastor is not paid for unsocial hours.

We were expected to be the perfect mothers and never to raise our voice. We were not perceived to have any parenting struggles, and were expected to mentor parents around us. Really though, we were working it all out alone, and thinking that we were making a mess of it. We hoped the latest Christian parenting handbook would give us some advice, which we could then pass on to you. Our children were expected to be seen and not heard, always following the ways of the Lord. When our children fell away, many of you just tut-tutted, and raised your eye brows.

We watched helplessly as our husbands confidence was destroyed, as you tore away at him week after week with your endless complaints about the sermon, the music and the length of the service. We watched you draw him further and further into the ground, until he reached depressive levels. What had started as a joy to be in ministry, was now turning into a misery. The demands on our husbands grew, which caused friction at home, as we wanted to try and have some quality family time together. For years we have supported and encouraged our husbands. We have cried so many tears – more tears than you will ever realize.

For years we've struggled on a pastors wage, trying to make ends meet. We watched as you all went on your luxury holidays, whilst you lent us your caravan by the sea for free. We know that your heart was in the right place, but it didn't mean that we didn't wish we were at some luxury resort instead.

We are humbled, and very grateful, to know that many of you have prayed for us over the years. Know too, that we have prayed for you. You shared your confidences in us, we were not able to share ours with you, having been burned by people too many times in the past.

Gradually we started to withdraw from church life. We realised that relationship wasn't what you really wanted. We yearned for close Christian friends to share our hearts and dreams with. We wanted to be known for who we were, not as the pastors wife. We have a unique identity. Our conversations with you were impersonal, quite often just to ask us to give a quick message to our husbands.

Along with our husbands we saw so much potential in the church. Over the years we came to realize that we were being turned into people pleasers, not necessarily God pleasers. Church had become a corporate business, which was gradually becoming corrupted from within. The adventurers in us started to die. We realized over time that the potential in the Kingdom of God is outside of the four walls, in the community. We are still trying to work out exactly how that will look, but we are on a journey again, at the beginning of another adventure with God. Sadly, we have realized, that many of you will not be coming on this journey with us. But we have to shake the dust off our feet.

We are the women who have been known as the pastors wife. We are hurting, and bruised. We desperately need building up again. We don't really know where we fit into all of this anymore. We really want to serve still, but don't know what we have left within us. There are many of us around, when you meet one of us, get to know us, show an interest in us, after all, we are people too. We are the women who have been known as the pastors wife.

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## The People Formerly Known As "The Pastor" by John Frye

The following post is a polemic. It is meant to provoke conversation in line with Bill Kinnon's, "Grace's" and Jamie Arpin-Ricci's posts mentioned in the last entry. These comments are a composite of my own experiences and those of disillusioned church leaders.

There are thousands of us. You probably know many of us now as insurance sales agents, real estate agents, or doing anything besides "church." We started with idealism about being voices for the kingdom of God and soon realized we became mutated forms of US American business leaders. Even Jesus became a CEO. We traded immersion in the Bible for hyped-up seminars and books about good management, strong leadership and slick public relations. We learned that the size of our church parking lot mattered more than the size of your hearts for God. Be Thou My Vision got altered to "What is your vision statement?"

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor discovered somewhere in "doing church" that they were being paid as surrogates for the congregation's spirituality. You know, the old saw, "Pastors are paid to be good; the people are good for nothing." People seem to tell others more about their pastor(s) than about Jesus, their Saviour. Of course, this made pastors feel good and loved and valued. Then it dawned on us, we were feeling good for all the wrong reasons. We were dynamic communicators, we awed people with exegetical biblical wonders, we spoke notebooks full of outlines with cute stories and precise principles and timely applications. We "rightly handled the word of truth" as a magician handles his tricks. What a one-man show. Little did we realize that all our song-and-dance additions overshadowed the eternal Word itself. For all our proclamation about the "sufficiency of Scripture," we communicated as if that Word needed our 2 cents worth. And our razzle-dazzle knowledge of Hebrew and Greek helped us create messages that made you feel totally inadequate to do serious Bible study on your own. So, you either read a fluffy devotional snippet each day or ran off to Bible Study Fellowship to really learn the Word.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor wrestled with conflicting ego issues. Some felt the rush of power over people. Some even said that in order to get to God, you had to go through us. We were your covering (a term never used in pastoral ministry until the 1970s). We were "the Lord's anointed." Don't touch us. Being charged with the eternal well-being of souls is heady stuff. And, sadly, it went to our heads. We became commanders rather than servants. We liked the feeling of bossing people around...in the name of the Lord, of course. When you confronted us with our spiritual abuse of you, we were quick and smooth, savvy and cunning, and we made you feel like it was all your fault. On the other hand, others of us were scared to death of you. You gave us our paycheck. You gave us benefits. Unknown to us, you called us to your church in order to get your way. We thought we were authentically praying to God, "Your will be done...", but it became apparent that the will of God was the will of those who had the money. We became people-pleasers at the cost of our own dreams. Eventually the commanders among us got kicked out of the church and the fearful among us got scared out. Selling shoes looked mighty appealing.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor ran up school bills, too, going to college and seminary. It's costly learning Hebrew and Greek these days. Our peers in the "market place" were making twice, sometimes 3 and 4 times the salary we were offered. We were told to live by faith. We saw the

rampant materialism permeate the church and we baptized it with "being relevant with the culture." We officiated at very high-priced weddings and worried how we would get our own kids married. Spring Break meant Disney-World for you and your kids and a trip to see relatives for us. We tried to remember the thing about "treasures laid up in heaven" while realizing that tithing was the rich person's easy way out. Yes, we made you give to our grandiose building projects, our need for bigger this and newer that "for the Lord." We made you pledge to this idea and that effort. All the while we told you, "You can't serve both God and money." When some of us ventured to speak about simplicity, you thought we were anti-capitalists, unAmerican.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor loved the idea of spiritual gifts and gift inventory tools. Now we could recruit you with this slick saying, "You will find your deepest joy when you become a Sunday School teacher, a financial council member, an evangelistic campaign organizer." We loved the idea of "recruiting." We could build our religious empire footnoted with Bible verses. More people serving possibly meant a bigger church. We could go to Pastors Conferences armed and ready to shoot off our mouths about "the hand of God's blessing on my church." Note that many pastors really do say, "My church." Our worries at night about problems and struggles in "my church" were the signal that we truly had taken ownership of what is God's. When we overlooked 20 compliments and ruminated angrily over one negative comment, we knew it was "all about us." Some of us needed counselling.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor were angry people. Not that you would know it. Our spouses and children knew it. We lived in glass houses. Our kids had to be angels while yours were smoking pot and having sex. And, God forbid, that anyone in the church say anything negative about your kid(s). When you "dedicated" them to God on that Sunday morning, the church committed to helping you raise your child. But, watch out if someone corrected your child while at church. You lost it. You left. You were living under some crazy belief that being born a sinner didn't apply to your children. You wanted to drop them off in a very safe environment with very safe people and then you could forget all about them and do your church thing. You would listen to "Focus on the Family" and then pay church staff to focus on your kids. It was really a crazy environment.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor began to smell something rotting in the whole "church" thing. Only once in the New Testament is the term for the service of pastor used as a noun (Ephesians 4:11-12). All the rest of the times "pastoring/shepherding" is used as a verbal form, except when used of Jesus. Having accepted a corrupted image and Christendom model of "the pastor," we finally began to see that corruption infiltrating the church. Apostles and prophets and deacons and elders/overseers are mentioned far more than "the pastor." Why did this one term and office (!) gain supremacy? In its current expression, "the pastor" certainly isn't biblical. And don't get some of us started on the injustice of limiting the equal status of women in ministry.

The People Formerly Known As The Pastor are still serving in the places once populated by The People Formerly Known As The Congregation. At least some of us are. We are not seeking to command and control. We are not jittery about what people think. We are not afraid of the seismic shift caused by TPFKATC. We sense that something magnificent is afoot. We are intrigued by the chaos. We, TPFKATP, are willing to risk significant change with TPFKATC in order to recover or even create local expressions of the kingdom of God that first of all are burning with missional passion and practice. We want to explore with you the meaning of the chaos, the vision of a preferred

future, the challenge of being "church." We dream of kingdom outposts that are guided by the biblical text in its storied form, shaped by the community of the Trinitarian God, and devoted to the equality of all who are in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. What does this mean for "the pastor"? Who knows? That's the adventure we all are in!



## **The Girl formerly known as a normal Christian** by Heidi Daniels

I am the girl formerly known as a "normal Christian."

You may know me as a violinist, as a teacher, as a sister, daughter, wife, and friend. You may have noticed that I don't attend a church building anymore and worried about me, maybe thinking that I have really fallen off the deep end theologically. Maybe you haven't talked to me in a long time because you are convinced of this. Maybe you've thought I'm turning away from God, or away from the Bible, or at least away from the Body of Christ. The truth is...

I'm a girl who deeply desires God. I believe I'm his image-bearer, though I'm still learning what that means. There are many like me, many who for years fit inside status quo Christianity. Many who, like me, find that the old boxes no longer contain the expansive life that Christ has filled us with. Many who have quietly and sometimes not-so-quietly found new ways to live out our lives as Christ followers.

I am the girl who, as a child, would wake up her parents late at night to confess some little act or thought that I perceived to be sinful - because I couldn't sleep, my conscience was keeping me awake. I am the girl who couldn't lie because it made me sick to my stomach. Don't get me wrong, I don't think these things reflect my "godliness from a young age", but rather my tender conscience combined with the overwhelming fear that I had, even as a child, of being "wrong."

I am the girl who read her first theology book when she was 13. I ate it up. By the time I was 18, I felt like I knew it all. I had systematic theology "down." I began to study philosophy in high school. I could use words like "pelagian" and "gnostic heresy" and "synchronistic" and "dialectic" intelligently in conversation. I read everything that existed by Piper, Packer, and Bridges. Then, being that it wasn't enough to read "about" the works of people like John Owen, I went back and read the originals, like "Mortification of Sin."

I am the girl formerly known as a normal Christian. I read my Bible daily and highlighted, underlined, and wrote notes in the margin. I led my first Bible study when I was 16. I am the girl who attended not one church during my high school years, but two. I was the faithful church attendee every Sunday, and then a faithful youth group member at a different church - always showing up early to Bible studies and Sunday evening events.

I am the girl who was promised the world by church leaders and famous authors, if only I would read my Bible and pray every day and submit myself to Christ. If I listened closely to the voices of "authority" in Christendom, I'd hear messages about how to secure God's blessing - how to avoid being hurt in romantic relationships - how to live a victorious or successful or wealthy life. When suffering was talked about, no one ever mentioned how dark it could be, how sometimes it felt as if

God had left you all alone. Somehow even suffering was victorious, if you could be cheerful and stoic through it.

I am the girl whose world was shattered when a tale of unrequited love broke my heart, shattered my reputation, and for a while convinced me that God was holding out on me. Then I discovered that what I'd been taught was wrong. God wasn't a vending machine...I couldn't do the right thing and guarantee his response. God was wild, but good. He didn't always do what you'd expect, but he always did what was best.

I am the girl formerly known as a normal Christian...who came to see that much of Christendom in the modern era was about control. We couldn't control God, but we tried, by writing up our ideas about him and then freeze-drying them, shrink-wrapping them, and having them nailed down forever. "Sola Scriptura" became, instead of the liberating mantra of the Reformation, a way to climb into a box where we could close the lid and say that everyone on the outside "just didn't get it."

I am the girl who sat in a pastor's office with two pastors and a very hurting girl and watched as they "shoulded" on her, loading her down with burdens too heavy to carry. What was it that Jesus said about not breaking a bruised reed? It began to seem to me that the opposite was true of church leaders dealing with women who had been victimized by domestic violence and emotional assault.

I am the girl who slowly but surely moved away from being an attendee at a church and being to realize that the passion God had given me for his church wasn't about buildings, or programs, or budgets, or attendance. It was about his people - his body - his bride, the people he died to save.

I am the girl formerly known as a normal Christian who sacrificed her reputation as "one of the mature ones" - one of the ones you'd WANT in leadership, leading Bible studies, "ministering" - to instead become a person solely dependent on Christ....not pastors, not elders, not authors, not caregroup leaders. It's not that I think pastors, elders, authors, or caregroup leaders are bad people...many of them truly love God and are serving him as best they know how. It's just that I no longer accept that any of them are in a position to mediate my relationship with God, or are given any authority by him in my life. There are those that I respect and look to for an example, for guidance, for advice - like my parents, or Paul Morgan, or others who have walked with God longer than I and have much to offer me. But these people are not my authority, nor are they a mediator between God and me. They are friends, they are the community of Christ with me on the journey...but I do not bow to them.

Indeed, I do not bow to anyone except my Lord. I do not bow to church history, though there are many people that have come before, and I am grateful for their writings, their example, their bravery. I do not bow to any organized expression of church, though they have done much good, I have come to see that there are other ways and sometimes better ways of being a living expression of the Body of Christ.

I am the girl formerly known as a normal Christian. I'm not normal anymore, I certainly don't stick with the status quo, I don't have much reverence for sacred cows, and I'm not afraid to disagree with the majority. But I haven't stopped loving the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and I'm passionate about loving his body - the church. I might not agree with you about how best to do that, but I haven't forsaken fellowship. I meet with the body of Christ in my home and the homes of others, in



coffee shops, across fried rice at Thai restaurants, participating in redemptive conversations and living, loving, crying, and praying together. This, I believe, is Church - and it is something I will love and serve until my dying day.

You may disagree with me and you may think that what I'm saying is wrong...but all I ask is this...

Did Christ call us to be normal Christians? Or normal anything, for that matter? Or did he open up the possibility for so much more than getting along with Pharisees and not upsetting the status quo? As I recall, he wasn't afraid to cause a ruckus in the temple of his day. Wherever you are and wherever you serve - whether inside traditional church or outside - don't settle for normal. He has given us so much more than that.



## **The People Formerly Silent** by Brother Maynard

Preamble: this post is written in a style that's becoming recognizable already — that of Bill Kinnon's The People formerly known as The Congregation, which has really hit a nerve among people who were formerly known as something in a church setting. Several people have appended contributions to it now, and it's got over 180 links to it, meaning that single post is more popular than most entire blogs. This post is part of my contribution to this themed conversation. Tomorrow will follow with a slightly more daring (?) contribution, and on Thursday, I plan to publish my proposal for something of a series wrap-up that sets it all in place. So y'all come back, now. But first: The People Formerly Silent.

We've been in your churches for years. Some of us grew up there, some of us came from other churches, and some of us came from faithlessness. We are all around you, and have been for quite some time now.

Over the years, we've seen a lot of things in the church. Some days we thought "we'd seen it all" or had "heard everything," but then something new came along, and we'd adjust our threshold of what it took to surprise us.

We are the people formerly silent.

When you asked us to make donations, we did. When you challenged us that failing to tithe was stealing from God, we became more faithful in doing so. And when there were special projects that needed donations over and above our tithe, we coughed up again. You said we were being faithful. We said nothing.

When you asked us to get involved in the church ministries — nurseries, Sunday School, men's ministry, ushering, parking patrol, small group leader, and more besides, we stepped up. You said this was evidence of our commitment to the church, and to serving God. We said nothing.

When you told us to support the work of the church by putting our kids into the programs, from schools to clubs, and by attending the events ourselves, from plays to outreaches, to conferences, we paid the registration fees and showed up on time to support the work. You welcomed us and said we were supporting the ministry of the church. We said nothing.

When you wanted the church to grow, you told us to invite our friends and neighbours to the special Sunday services or crusades designed for “unbelievers” to get converted and join the church. We took home the invitation cards, but it was hard to think of anyone we knew well enough to invite. We prayed, and sometimes we could think of people to invite, usually not. Once someone actually came — an uncle, a friend, a neighbour’s child. You said we were witnessing, helping to spread the gospel. We said nothing.

When you wanted to build a bigger building to house the growth of the church and support new and expanding programs, you sought our agreement. It sounded like a lot of time and money, but we gave our assent, or at least we didn’t object. You said it was the Lord’s work. We said nothing.

As the new building project got underway and was completed, we gave more money, we volunteered more time, attended more events and supported more ministries, we looked for more people to bring to church. You said we were leaders. We said nothing.

We continued pouring our time, energy and money into the church, its programs, its ministries. If the doors were open, we were there — and we had keys for the times we were at work in the building when nobody else was there to open the doors. You said we were faithful workers and exemplary leaders, and praised us before the congregation. Our kids said we were never home anymore. We said nothing.

You began to take us into your confidence, talking to us about other people in the church — their failing marriages, their straying children. Their lack of faith, their secret sins, their struggles to live as Jesus demanded, their failures to tithe, their non-attendance at church events, their non-participation in church programs. It was clear you disapproved... and though we related to those people, our marriages weren’t perfect, or kids seemed prone to stray, and there were so many events we attended that we wished we didn’t have to. You said we weren’t like them. We said nothing.

You taught us the Bible, but at times we had questions... things we wanted to voice about the way you interpreted something, how we saw it differently. Sometimes there were things that just didn’t sound or sit right. You said you had studied these things quite a lot. We said nothing.

You were the leaders, the pastors, the professors, the elders, the professionals. We called you “Doctor” or “Pastor” or “Reverend” or sometimes just by your given name. But you were always different. We wondered why that was, why you weren’t like the rest of us, why your ideas, opinions, and words were so much more important than ours. We secretly wanted to be like you, just to be on the better side of “different.” You said you were called to do this. We said nothing.

You heard from God about what the church should do. We didn’t hear the same thing. We tried to talk it out, but you had an answer for every objection, except the fact that God seemed to have told us something different than he told you. We talked a lot about this one, but in the end with a kind of finale to your words, you told us to go and pray about it some more. We said nothing.

We were silent. But now we are the people formerly silent.

As we watched and listened and tallied, we were like the proverbial frog in a warming pot as the temperature rose. But one day, something changed... the water in the pot started to boil, and we

found we weren't frogs after all, but lobsters. Just one degree more, that's all it took. It was a different thing for each of us, but finally, it was enough. And like a lobster in a boiling pot, we just can't be silent anymore... but in order to understand what we're saying, you have to look beyond the words, or the lack thereof.

We are the people formerly silent... now speaking with our feet.



## **The Person Formerly Known As Your Leader** by Barb Peters

Bob suggests that, at some point in time, "the system" was working for us; while we may be questioning it now, there was a time when we were getting some kind of perks or rewards from it. Bob suggests that until we, as individuals and groups, honestly deal with the areas of our lives that made us enjoy the system at one point - and repent or receive healing in those areas - we will only replicate the same dysfunctional patterns and attitudes in whatever structured or destructured group we ended up joining or creating. Robert C. Girard

This is a response to what I have read in The People Formerly Known as Series. It is a repentance. I know than many of the other writers have used the Polemic "we" but I can't do that yet. This is personal, a confession from my heart to all of you.

I am the Person Formerly Known as Your Leader.

I was the supporting cast in our church. I was not one of the "Main" leaders. I was never paid to lead. I had "leadership roles." I (along with my husband) was viewed as one of the supporting pillars in our community of believers. I tried not to be one of the front leaders. I simply took the vision of the church, supported it, taught it, explained it, fought for it and promised loyalty to it. For almost 20 years my husband and I have been in this role and just recently we have come to see many things we never would have thought possible.

I am the Person Formerly Known as Your Leader

All this time I worked as your leader. I was at one time or another, your small group leader, your counsellor, and your ministry head (nursery, new member development, etc). I helped at various times on the worship team, the prayer team, the nursery, the elder board, the college ministry team, the hospitality team, and I'm sure a host of other teams and positions.

I am the Person Formerly Known as Your Leader

Because of all this, I need to repent and ask your forgiveness. I was wrong. I thought wrong things. I believed wrong things. I modelled wrong things. I taught wrong things. I was wrong. I have sinned against you and the others and against my grace loving, mercy giving, all powerful, all loving God.

- I repent for teaching and modelling that the "covering" of our church, my leadership, and our network would keep you from going into rebellion or deception.

- I took your private confidences and passed them on to the other leaders regardless of my telling you that I wouldn't. I told myself that this was an accepted practice to gain wisdom in dealing with

your situation. Now I see it was probably mostly to garner, in some twisted way, the favour of my leaders, to show my loyalty and to gain a better placement of myself in their leadership system.

- I taught, modelled and practiced tithing. I taught you that if you didn't tithe, bad things would happen to you and/or your finances. Now I understand the fallacy of this. It is a fear tactic – and it is not of God.

- I did not stand up and speak up when I heard and saw something wrong being taught, lived, or modelled. In this way, you, as people who respected me had neither voice nor protection. There were many times I should have spoken up gently/humbly to correct other leaders around me. I wrongly felt that it was up to God to correct and deal with them. That it was not my "place" to correct "God's Anointed."

- I wanted to be seen by leaders as loyal and mostly I wanted to be in what I perceived as one of the "inner circles of friendship." I bought their friendship with flattering words, serving them unconditionally, not making waves, not challenging them and being disloyal to what I sometimes knew was wrong. I was a religious whore.

- I taught you that with leaders, you did not have the right to expect friendship or any sort of loyalty back. I told you that you should become what I had become, completely a servant. They owed you and me nothing. I have learned to watch out for "friendships" where I am the servant only. I have learned my "servanthood" was nothing more than trying to manipulate myself into prominence.

- I taught that the church was an Army and that we therefore needed Generals and Sergeants to lead us. (I of course saw myself as the sergeant – not the head but certainly one of the right arms of the head.) Again, I did not read my Bible.

- I taught you to despise other churches in our city. I taught you that they were not as enlightened as us, did not have as much of the Holy Spirit as us, could not worship as we did, did not recognize the leadership in our church and come under their apostolic leadership, and so many other things. I hinted at their pastors "weaknesses." I judged their programs, people, leaders and lives as unfit for the true expression of the Kingdom of God and taught you to do the same. It is true that I did see many legitimate problems, and I still do but I had pulled back and decided I was done with the all but the select body of Christ in our area and encouraged you to also "not waste your time."

- I practiced and taught you "shunning." This is the practice of not associating with those who have left our body. I taught you to look the other way in the grocery store. To ignore their emails and be succinct and distant when they called you. I taught you that you could be contaminated by a perceived friendship with them, and instilled in you the fear that was in me, that I would be seen as disloyal.

- I taught you that when people left our body, they left their destiny. I thought that the only way they were to fulfil what God had for them was through our particular church.

- I encouraged you in total obedience to our leaders and total submission of ministry to their vision. I often referred to the church as being in the leaders' "boat." We were to totally get in this "boat" and leave it up to God and the leaders where and how to navigate this life. We were not to question this

boat leader's vision or direction as they were "hearing from God". If you wanted to minister it had to be under their direct "umbrella."

My pride, arrogance, manipulation and disregard for the scripture are detestable to me. In that I was your leader, role model, and teacher makes it doubly serious. I know of nothing else than to remove myself.

I am not beating myself up as to the point where I imagine that I did nothing right. There were many of you that I loved unconditionally. We showed hospitality, we modelled a good marriage, an open and honest life and when I needed to, I have asked your forgiveness. But the scope and magnitude which I see my own heart today is detestable to me.

So today, I ask your forgiveness. I know many of you were not directly under my leadership. So why do I ask your forgiveness? This is why. - Maybe in reading my "confession" you will come to realize that those in leadership above you who have inflicted so many hurts will someday come to realize what they have done. Maybe your prayers for them will result in them walking out of their own deception. Maybe the grace that you show to them will be a signpost for them to follow. Maybe in not hating them you will be able to love and pray for their blinders to fall off. From my heart to you, I am so sorry, please forgive me. And please forgive those who also have been your leaders.

A Person Formerly Known As Your Leader