

Response to the NTM Panama Final Report

I am sitting in my office with a lot of work on my plate having just completed a long and arduous year. I have a lot to do not related to NTM, but I believe that reflecting back a little and reminding people reading of what has taken place is important.

Last year, 2016, saw the completion of two reports by Theresa Sidebotham. While the opinions vary on whether it was a good or bad report, I am not sure I can change anyone's mind either way. I will say I personally have spoken with the Director of Personnel, the Chairman of NTM and members of the Executive Board. I exchanged email with The Director of IHART, I have spoken with the investigators who investigated some of the accused, I have had meetings with numerous local pastors. Sometimes those meetings were initiated by me, and in other cases it was initiated by groups of pastors. I have spoken with a little over 400 people that have related abusive accusations in the last 3 years and read many other stories. While none of this proves anything, my point is that I have engaged in the debate.

The bigger issues are twofold if I can simplify them.

#1. Has NTM completely taken their hands off of the process and allowed the report to be what it would be regardless of the outcome? The answer is no.

To take their hands off of it they would need to not hire an attorney that has numerous ties to NTM. They would need to not have an attorney handling the investigation who is admittedly working in the best interests of the one paying her. The attorney would need to not try to mitigate the risk to a paying client if the facts bore out wrongdoing. The attorney would need to not write a report that minimized the action where the conclusion was unavoidable. NTM Executive Board and Personnel Department would need to be willing to act with complete integrity and transparency. The Executive Board would need to be willing to make difficult calls as it relates to the financial security and the reputation of the organization, and to be able to look at the retirees and longtime friends and say, "I don't hate you but what you did or allowed to happen was wrong, and wrong actions carry a consequence." So, to the reader, if you have a problem with anything I have just written, then you need to take a long look inside yourself and find out what is wrong. What I have advocated for all along has been a consistent message of: Take away all of the clutter and get to the bare facts, let them stand for what they are without excuse or apology. This has not happened, nor will it be allowed to happen – too scary.

#2 NTM members and Executive Board must be committed to a life of gut level honesty about themselves and committed to pursue their vocation and issues of life with integrity.

I started my journey with the way NTM was handling abuse believing the absolute best about the organization. I believed that there were men at the helm that had and did want the organization to change and I heard members say so. I do not believe in witch hunts. I do believe that when a group of people uphold the name of Jesus that they commit themselves to a

standard and to be accountable to that standard. I do not look for perfection in the way that people do this. I do expect that when confronted, that the first thing considered is not the reputation or stewardship, but am I blameless before God, other Christians, and the unbelieving world in my approach to the issue at hand. After many interactions with NTM Executive Board members and Director of Personnel I do not believe this to be true about them.

I will relate three instances:

#1. After leaving a meeting in Sanford I had no contact or phone calls from a particular individual for over 12 months. I was told by a group of local men who are friends of mine that “so and so “said they tried to call and you wouldn’t return their calls. I have the phone number of this person from Sanford plugged into my phone so I know when he calls, but he never called in this time period. When I heard this I actually called AT&T and went thru the records of all of my calls for the time in reference to see if I had missed a call from them, but we did not find any numbers from Sanford or this person’s personal number. I went back to this group of guys to verify what had been said to them, and they confirmed that this man had said he had tried to contact me but I didn’t respond.

#2. There is a very damaging statement made from someone in Sanford with a position of authority to an accused abuser that stated to the abuser that they would be in jail if they had done their actions in the US, this statement is documented. When meeting with members of the Executive Board I was told “we just don’t have enough clarity to know if what this person is being accused of is true” My thoughts are “Well if you have the facts and you can’t read them and make the appropriate determination then you are being willfully blind”

#3. The previous Director of IHart was fired shortly after a meeting of mks went to San.ford in November of 2014. Theresa Sidebotham’s role in that meeting was told to me in a text as “House Counsel”. As I have gone back and spoken with Executive Board members about this to remind them about how she was presented to us, they argued and dismissed this as not true. The response from them has been no she was the Director of IHART. Theresa did not come on officially in that role until Jan of 2015. There is an official release stating this, they are either revising history because it is inconvenient, or they are not paying attention. Some of you reading this, may say that these are not a big deal or that you also do not have enough information to make a determination. Maybe you are willing to explain away much of this by thinking I (the writer) just don’t understand, I don’t have all the facts, I have a vendetta, I am an instrument of Satan. My response is that there is plenty of information available (see second paragraph). Many of the people gathering the information have tried to be as unbiased and through in uncovering the truth as possible. The layers are many. The way that I have pointed out inconsistencies and deceit to the Executive Board has been to document absolutely every conversation with everyone I have talked to including location, date and who was

present. These conversations generally have gone nowhere because of an unwillingness of many NTM members to hold their leadership accountable and those in Leadership characterizing what I am stating as untrue or uninformed. I have lost all respect for the Executive Board. I have lost a lot of respect for many members that I know. I have expressed how disheartened I was to see a group of Christians acting this way and Fanda Eagles has plenty of readers, but I have not seen any outrage where it matters.

So as I reflect on 2016 I have come to realize that many of you in reality don't care about truth and so we have come full circle in our efforts as mks. Where we needed to be believed and cared for as children, the Christian and mission community failed and this left us damaged. As adults our conclusions aren't that different.