

January 27, 2022

Brendon Wung
Missions Mobilizer with Vision Baptist Missions [VBM]
PO Box 442
Alpharetta, GA 30009

“Re: My concerns regarding VBM’s organizational tendencies”

To all the Pastors of the Pastoral Advisory Committee and to the future Board of Directors of VBM,

After much prayer, consideration, reflection, and personal evaluation, I am writing this letter to you because in my current understanding VBM does not currently have an ombudsman, clear whistleblower policy, or established Board of Directors currently presiding over the Executive Board of Directors for accountability other than the Pastoral Advisory Committee [PAC].

Purpose
My involvement in the situation
Specific details and concerns
Potential Impact
Proposed Solution
Attached Exhibits

Purpose

To be clear, I am not currently writing this letter to all of VBM missionaries, posting it on social media, uploading it on the internet, or mailing it to all those on our ministry mailing lists. At this time, I do not believe that would be helpful or the right way to bring about meaningful change and honest long-lasting growth or improvement.

I am not writing this to destroy VBM, divide my Christian brethren, see anyone removed from positions of ministry, or to hurt anyone intentionally.

I am not expressing any intent in this letter to leave VBM. I currently am committed to staying and would like to remain at VBM to help mobilize more missionaries to evangelize the world in our generation. With everything in me, I believe in VBM’s vision which has propelled it through the years.

To the best of my ability, I am not writing this based upon emotions or because of feeling personally wronged or offended by a Christian brother(s).

I have tried to limit the scope of my letter and concerns to the current organizational leadership aspect of VBM over the past 6 months since the resignation of our former president.

My purpose in writing this letter is because I believe that I have observed and become increasingly more aware of concerns regarding VBM's organizational tendencies, patterns, and practices that need to be reviewed by those who can help keep us accountable and help us to grow, improve, and be better.

My involvement in the situation

For those who may not know, I have been with Vision Baptist Missions since the end of 2013 heading to North Africa. I officially became a full-time missions mobilizer in November 2019. In addition to my primary role as a missions mobilizer, Bro Gardner [previous president of VBM] and Jeff Bush [previous general director of VBM] asked me to help as Director of Deputation shortly after, as well as assist with Event Coordinating and Promotions. I was also asked by Jeff to help with colleges and schools.

Not too long after transitioning to become a full-time missions mobilizer, the acting president Bro Gardner had personally asked me to help him build the Baptist Center for World Evangelism [BCWE] and help find, train, and fund the different future heads of departments in areas such as Planned Giving, Fundraising, Event Coordinating, Promotions/Marketing, Media, Writing, PR/HR, etc. Throughout 2020/2021, I continued with my primary role as missions mobilizer and also assisted with coordinating multiple projects to mobilize more missionaries and help build the BCWE. During this time, I reported directly to Bro Gardner helping him implement the vision he had for the BCWE.

Since the beginning of 2021, I was listed as the Director of Deputation and Mobilization with the other regional Field Directors. I also was one of the nine directors on the Board of Directors (including Bro Gardner) which was established and listed under the Executive Summary in the VBM Policies and Procedures distributed to VBM missionaries at VBM orientation in April 2021 in preparation for the continuity and longevity of VBM in the inevitable event of Bro Gardner's absence. [see document attached "General Policies as of 4/3/21"]

Prior to our first Field Directors Orientation (March 30-April 1, 2021), I was one of the first people who had suggested the board of directors be created to insure VBM's future organizational and operational success before it was officially discussed with and finalized with the Field Directors. I was a part of the Field Directors Orientation and helped in the decision-making process regarding updating VBM Policies and Procedures.

To the best of my recollection, during the Field Directors Orientation, I asked how the board of directors would operate regarding making future decisions and if everyone had one vote and whether it would be by unanimous or majority vote. It was clarified

that in the event of Bro Gardner's absence the 8 of us were to operate by unanimous vote with every board member getting 1 vote. To the best of my knowledge, this is how we operated from August 3, 2021 until September 29, 2021. [see "Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-8-12" and "Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-10-07"]

I was also in the Field Directors iMessage group and Slack workspace since the Spring of 2021. Since around the end of 2019/beginning of 2020, I had been added to the inner circle of Bro Gardner's staff in an iMessage group called "King Makers" which had Bro Gardner, Jeff Bush, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED].

The Board of Directors as described in the April 2021 edition of the VBM Policies and Procedures document that was given to all VBM missionaries became the "Special Committee" at the end of September 2021 and then turned into the "Executive Board of Directors" around the same time once Pastor [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and myself were removed. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had both previously expressed their desire to not remain on the board of directors.) It was not until later that the VBM General Policies document was properly and officially reflected in paperwork with the local state government.

Since the beginning of October 2021, I was removed from the Board of Directors/ Special Committee and no longer in channels/groups with the Executive Board of Directors. I am no longer Director of Deputation, Director of Mobilization, Event Coordinator, etc. I am currently serving as a missions mobilizer helping to recruit more missions students for the Our Generation Training Center [OGTC] and more missionaries for VBM.

Specific details and concerns

I do not believe that everyone does these things nor do I believe that we do them all the time. I have however observed the organizational tendencies, patterns, or existence of these practices enough to alarm and concern me on a moral and ethical level. I believe VBM leadership eventually made the best decisions in the end as best we could, but the process along the way concerned me. I include myself occasionally by referring to "we, us, our" because I was part of the discussions at the time.

I am not detailing my concerns regarding organizational culture or habits in this particular letter, but here are some of my biggest concerns regarding our organization listed below:

1. **Unhealthy focus on optics and appearances** above a commitment to doing what is best and right first and foremost. I have observed and continue to observe this attitude. [see attached documents regarding "Special Letter mail out" and "Personal Notes from 10-5-21"]
2. **Struggling with not covering things up.** Hearing it stated within the first week of the accusations being made that if people really knew about Bro Gardner that he would be sunk and disqualified from the ministry and not wanting the accusations

to get out or looked into too seriously. Rather go down with Jefe [Bro Gardner] and let the mission suffer... Hoping that all of it would just blow over and go away so we could keep moving forward. Our reactionary removal of Marco Polo groups, reviewing and scrubbing notes and chats, deleting of email ring(s), and making sure no incriminating evidence was in our possession. Bro Gardner had drafted a statement within the first week or so about how he might respond to Becky's accusations. We quickly realized that parts of his statement could possibly be interpreted as incriminating confession, so we told him to seek legal counsel and (at least twice during the investigation) any evidence of his draft or possibly incriminating communication was encouraged to be erased and to leave groups that had record of his drafted statement(s) and text communications. [see "Personal Notes from 10-5-21"]

3. **Unethical removal of a board member and major organizational changes** (e.g. new president of VBM, VBM absorbing OGTC, org chart restructure, etc.) done secretly, without discussion or vote, with only 5 of the 8 board members, and without official records/minutes/notes of any kind. It was later done "properly and officially" on October 7, 2021. [see "Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-8-12" and "Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-10-07" and "VBM Organisational Structure" attachments]
4. **Leadership had been continually influenced in major ways while 2 serious investigations were still ongoing.** Continued communication with Bro Gardner by multiple board members which were above and beyond simple encouragement including discussing board decisions and influence being exerted making its way into board meetings and major decisions regarding the VBM board though he was no longer the president or in any leadership role or a part of our organization at all. In one such instance, because Bro Gardner had talked with multiple board members about talking to his PR guy, serious thought was given by multiple board members regarding whether or not we should make defensive videos or post a statement supporting his return BEFORE receiving any results from the criminal investigation or church special committee investigation in order to prepare for his return to the ministry and continued working with VBM. It never passed and we ultimately decided to keep the "divorce" option and not "defend" until the due process was completed. After this, Bro Gardner released his video on Facebook implying his complete innocence. This was also concerning for me since I had heard Jeff say around August 4, 2021 on a personal phone call with me that he had watched the whole video and most of what Becky said was untrue. I myself did not watch the entirety of the video from Becky until almost two weeks after its initial release, and I do not know if all of the directors had watched the video in its entirety either. After personally watching the entire video of Becky's multiple accusations (more than just sexual), I was very confused as to why Jeff would say that most of it was untrue and I was encouraged to not believe her, Bro Gardner drafted a response that could possibly be interpreted as partial confession (this was encouraged to not be in our possession and I left the group that had a record of the draft in it), but then a video was eventually released by him implying that all of Becky's accusations were false. [see attached "Personal Notes from 10-5-21" and excerpts from Philip Bassham's website]

5. **Lack of transparency** - Not taking the initiative in clearly communicating with churches - I suggested multiple times that a letter to all VBM churches should be mailed as a preemptive and proactive step taken by the board. Since we posted the letters on VBM Facebook page [see “August5statement” and “August7statement” and “August24statement”], we should also send a letter like that to all the churches in the mail. It was dismissed several different times as unnecessary at the time hoping things would not be looked into and clear up soon so we could send the results of the investigation and not that we were in the midst of the investigation. It was decided that we did not want to draw people's attention to the video or the accusations. Without sending a letter in the mail to the churches, the public statements on Facebook were unpinned and we started intentionally pushing content to bump the public statement down the page. [see “Personal Notes from 10-5-21” and excerpts of Philip Bassham’s concerns]
6. **Reactionary** - A very serious draft email/letter from Pastor [REDACTED] was sent in for our review listing his concerns with how he believed we were handling the matter improperly and that he would be sending that finalized to all VBM missionaries and all VBM supporting churches. Though he was operating with limited information, he did express some very serious concerns about VBM’s organization. After Pastor [REDACTED]’s draft email was reviewed by the board, we then decided that we should send out another public statement as soon as possible; and within about a week, we posted another letter [see “2021-09-12-Vision-Baptist-Missions-Letter”]. We also pleaded with Pastor [REDACTED] not to send that letter to all the VBM churches. The letter from Pastor [REDACTED] was received by VBM missionaries via email on September 12, 2021; and I am unsure if it was sent to all VBM supporting churches. [see his letter attached “TBC to VBM”]
7. **Burying and hiding things** - by making information about the accusations and results from the investigations “available” but making sure that it is not easy to find without intentional digging and effort. At the time of the writing of this letter, other than using this exact and specific link "<https://visionmissions.org/accusations-against-our-founder/>,” you cannot access or find the information at all anywhere on VBM’s website. This means that a person must either copy/paste this exact link or manually enter the entire web address to be able to find this information or it cannot be found on the website. The last public statement [see “2021-10-08-Letter-to-VBM-Churches”] that was mailed to all VBM supporting churches (and with my encouragement, also to all the supporting individuals) does not inform supporters that all of the investigations have concluded or that all the results are now currently available to be viewed or who is the new president and general director of VBM. Both myself [see “End of year update letter”] and Travis [see attached “Question for the Exec Board” email thread] are able to communicate an accurate summary succinctly, but VBM refuses to clearly communicate more externally to supporters or even internally with VBM missionaries what happened with Bro Gardner and how are we supposed to communicate or handle the situation moving forward.
8. **Dishonest with the pastors of the PAC** - October 5, 2021, I was present in the corner of the VBM office when the first official zoom call meeting with the Pastoral Advisory Committee (7 pastors, executive board members, and Chris Fies recording notes) was held. Direct and specific questions were asked regarding who was on

the board of directors up to this point and how the leadership structure was before and during the crisis since August, as well as, why the sudden leadership restructure (major organizational changes and new org chart) and how we used to operate making decisions up to that point. I believe that the answers given were vague, unclear, and dishonest. Absolutely no mention was made of the 8 of us serving previously, why the 3 of us were no longer included with the 5 executive directors, that we previously operated by unanimous vote, nor how one of the directors had been removed secretly and the new president installed secretly without due process. [see “Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-10-07”]

- 9. Silencing voices, controlling prayer letters, and discouraging open and honest communication** with our prayer and financial supporters - I have generally been discouraged from clearly communicating with my financial supporters and ministry partners the results of the investigations regarding the founder and former president of VBM. I made the suggested updates and changes to my draft letter which was suggested by a couple executive directors [see attached “End of year letter update” and “Question for the Exec Directors” email thread] before I first emailed the 1-page letter to our supporters around December 16, 2021. That same day very shortly after I emailed it and before it was printed to be physically mailed, per Jeff Bush’s request, I then paused the hardcopy mail out of that same letter until more discussion could be had. Almost a month later, after the holidays, and after listing 15 reasons [see attached email thread “Special mailout to the...”] why I believe I should clearly communicate and take the initiative to inform my supporters that all the investigations have concluded and all of the results are now available and after simply stating what steps VBM had taken and directing them where they could find original documents, I consulted my local church pastor and got his approval. Pastor [REDACTED] said that I could decide to send it or not send it, and he did not think either way there was anything wrong with it. He could understand my list of reasons and wanted to make sure that I would be sending the letter with the proper motive(s). [REDACTED] the director of VBM did not understand why it was my responsibility to inform our supporters but said that there was nothing factually wrong with my letter or anything specifically wrong with my reasoning. I was encouraged to look at another director’s example of how to generally mention it in a small paragraph without misrepresenting or misinterpreting the facts. [see section “Innocent—Not Guilty!” at the bottom of “Gmail - Fwd/ China! 🌐 November 2021 Prayer Letter” attached] I then asked [REDACTED] specifically if the executive directors were officially and clearly telling me not to mail that letter to our supporters. He said, “No.” They are not controlling missionary prayer letters and there was nothing incorrect or false about the letter I was wanting to mail. In my understanding, they as a whole all agreed that I should not mail this letter to our supporters because of the backlash and not wanting people to look into it more for themselves so that we could just move forward. I decided to mail it on January 12, 2022. That same day, Jeff Bush told me that the VBM office (who had been mailing our letters up to this time) would not be assisting me in mailing my letter to our supporters. [see “Wung Special Letter mailout”] I respectfully told him that I would get someone else to

mail the letter and all our future ministry letters in the foreseeable future since VBM was controlling what letters I could send to our supporters.

Potential Impact

I believe that my concerns should be seriously considered for the cause of Christ. I also believe that the health, growth, and future effectiveness/success of VBM as an organization hangs in the balance. The repercussions of my concerns could result in a massive exodus from VBM and incredible loss of confidence from VBM missionaries, churches, and supporters across the country, thus drastically impacting the global effectiveness of our missionaries to evangelize the world.

Proposed Solution

- 1) All of the pastors on the Pastoral Advisory Committee and the future Board of Directors (when officially established) should investigate my claims, interview all the executive directors and as many VBM missionaries as possible, and consider the evidence provided in the attached exhibits.
- 2) The pastors on the PAC and the future Board of Directors (when officially established) need to help the executive directors and VBM as a whole be able to recognize the areas in our lives and in our organization that we ourselves are blind to and help us to take clear, specific action steps towards real and meaningful change. Sometimes we cannot help ourselves because we cannot see clearly without someone else's perspective helping to guide the way or offer wise counsel.
- 3) Consider discussing these questions: "What, if any, of the specific concerns that Philip Bassham and the 17 others [see attachments] brought up regarding our organizational culture, tendencies, and patterns are valid observable behaviors that need to be acknowledged and actively worked on moving forward?" and "What is the list of specific things that VBM needs to change, improve, or grow in or is it all just optics?"

Attached Exhibits

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rNSagUquBvRk9XZncBbmN03J_kgL241O?usp=sharing

Includes:

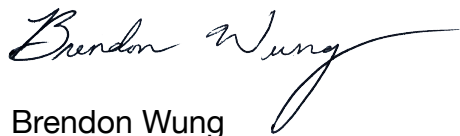
- "End of year letter update" to supporters which was not allowed to be sent through VBM
- VBM General Policies as of 4/3/21
- VBM General Policies as of 10/13/21
- "TBC to VBM" - Tucson Baptist Church's letter to VBM
- Gmail thread "Question for the Exec Board"
- 1st Gmail thread regarding "Special mail out to the..."
- 2nd Gmail thread regarding "Wung Special Letter mail out"
- Some discussion regarding Advancing Global Missions Inc.

- Gmail - Fwd/ China! 🌐 November 2021 Prayer Letter
- *Excerpts from Philip Bassham's concerns posted on his website, previous missionary with VBM - <https://projectthailand.net/2021/09/06/my-resignation-from-vision-baptist-missions-amidst-their-mishandling-of-sexual-abuse/> and <https://projectthailand.net/2021/09/06/exposing-vision-baptist-missions-response-to-allegations-against-austin-gardner/>
- "Austin-Gardner-Statement-Updated" - Letter of concern from 17 missionaries and interns formally associated with VBM
- Personal notes from October 5, 2021
- August5statement
- August7statement
- August24statement
- 2021-09-12-Vision-Baptist-Missions-Letter
- 2021-10-08-Letter-to-VBM-Churches
- "VBM Organisational Structure" (including org chart) as of October 2021
- Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-8-12
- Directors Meeting Minutes 2021-10-07
- VBM Organizational Culture

*I generally disagree with Philip's perceived timeline of events and find VBM's timeline to be more accurate. However, I believe his concerns regarding unhealthy organizational tendencies and culture are worth serious consideration.

Thank you for your time and patience. Thank you also for helping make us a better Christian organization.

Respectfully, your brother-in-Christ and fellow-laborer,


Brendon Wung

