



Some of you may know pastor Mike Klunke through joint events we've done with Cornerstone Christian Fellowship at ISU. Mike was part of the original church plant team that went out from Illini Life to start Cornerstone in the Spring of 2002. In the midst of Wayne's leave of absence Mike agreed to serve as my co-pastor and help us form a functioning Elder Board here in Illini Life. One of our primary goals as a new pastor team has been to establish healthy church leadership and oversight. We believe that comes through an Elder Board. As of now that board includes Mike and I, but we have 2 additional Elder candidates in the process of being looked at. We hope to share more about that with you in January.

In September we informed you that Wayne Wager was put on leave and asked to step outside the life of the church while an independent investigation was conducted by a third party into concerns raised about his leadership and conduct. That investigation is now complete and it is our belief that it was very thorough and conclusive. All parties hearing the report agreed on the next step which we have gathered you here tonight to share. There are further findings and more details we will share with you after the holidays, but we did feel it was important for you to know some of the key findings and conclusions before we disperse for Christmas break. We realize there is never a good time to share these kinds of details and are sad it has to be during your final exams, break, and so close to Christmas. Our desire throughout all this has been to be as transparent as possible with you, so it seemed appropriate to communicate the decision we made this week with you as soon as possible.

The investigation revealed behaviors and comments by Wayne that were not only inappropriate and hurtful but abusive and harassing.

The behaviors focused in on a disregard for power dynamics or a lack of understanding of the weight of authority Wayne's role as a pastor carried. He often commented that he was just speaking to congregants as "a friend." This disregard of his power lead to confrontations that were hurtful, unwanted, and wrong. Because Wayne thought he was simply talking to a friend he didn't take into account the weight of his words and the power his spiritual authority as a pastor carried in the lives of the individuals he was speaking to. We believe this behavior constituted an abuse of power.

A large portion of the findings of the investigation were focused around comments Wayne made over a span of many years. These comments can be summarized as revealing an over emphasis on personal appearance and looks, and ascribing value, worth and effectiveness in ministry tied to that. Some of these comments were about the appearance and attractiveness of individuals in Illini Life, particularly women. For example in a staff meeting Wayne referred to a

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new girlfriend of a member of Illini Life as a “total babe.” He spoke of the “Miss America Qualities” of a student in Illini Life to her friends, and commented on her beauty to others on several occasions. As well, when counseling a woman after a break-up he told her she would need to lose weight if she wanted to get back into the dating pool. These comments did harm to their hearers, created a culture where individuals felt unsafe and were aware that their appearance was being judged or that they may be being “checked out.” These comments and ways of speaking about women were wrong and constitute sexual harassment.

As a result of the investigation and findings, we have made the decision to remove Wayne Wager as a pastor and staff member in Illini Life. His standing as a pastor with Collegiate Church Network is also under review by the National Elder Board. Wayne will remain outside the life of this church for at least the end of this academic year, allowing space for any additional individuals to share their hurts unhindered. During this time Wayne will continue attending Stonecreek Church where he has been visiting during his leave of absence. Those pastors have been made aware of the investigation and its findings and have agreed to provide him with pastoral care and oversight.

Some have asked if Wayne’s conduct constitutes an abuse of power or sexual harassment or if this is too severe of a decision. We would say “Yes”, his conduct was both an abuse of power and sexual harassment, and “No” it is not too severe to remove him as a pastor. The call to pastoring is a high bar and the expectations for holiness, respect, restraint, and loving-care have been violated here. Wayne himself agrees that his conduct has disqualified himself from pastoring.

As your pastors, we deeply regret that this behavior went on for so long unchecked. We failed you as your leaders and your church community in allowing these things to have gone on. For this we are truly sorry. For those of you that have been hurt by any of these types of behaviors we want to hear from you, we want to repent and help you seek healing for the wounds you carry.

Nick Modrzejewski & Mike Klunke  
Pastors of Illini Life Christian Fellowship