



## MENLO.CHURCH

The following email was sent on **January 21, 2020** from [elders@menlo.church](mailto:elders@menlo.church)

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Dear Menlo Church Community,

We wanted to provide an update as it relates to John Ortberg.

As you might be aware, John has been on personal leave since November 22. John's personal leave was suggested by the Elder Board (Session), and followed the Board's need to investigate concerns raised by a third party. In July of 2018, a person serving in the Menlo Church community came to John and shared in confidence an unwanted thought pattern of attraction to minors. The person assured to John's satisfaction, that the person had not acted on the attraction and sought John's support. John believed the person and provided prayers and referrals for counseling. However, John failed to take the required steps to prevent the person from volunteering with minors at the Menlo Park campus and did not consult anyone else at Menlo Church about the situation.

The Board takes these concerns very seriously and believes the bond of trust around our children's safety is among our highest callings as a Menlo Church community. As soon as these concerns were brought to the Board's attention, the Board acted immediately and consistent with Menlo Church policy, informed our denomination (ECO) and retained an independent investigator to look into the matter. Based on that investigation, interviews with supervising staff across Student's and Children's ministries, and a review of detailed volunteer records, the Board has not found any misconduct in the Menlo Church community, and the investigation did not reveal any allegations of misconduct. Nevertheless, the investigation showed John exhibited poor judgment that was inconsistent with his responsibilities as Senior Pastor.

John fully understands the Board's concerns regarding his handling of this situation. John is saddened by the potential risk he now realizes he brought on the Menlo community and wholly agrees that he did not handle this matter consistent with his responsibilities to Menlo Church and the Board's expectations of him. He deeply apologizes for his action and decisions, and is committed to the safety and integrity of our community and to ensuring that such a situation does not arise again.

The safety and integrity of our community is of paramount importance at Menlo Church, and we hold all members of our community, especially Menlo Church staff, to the highest ethical standards. The Board's role includes setting expectations for Menlo's pastors and staff, and in holding them, including John, accountable. This includes ensuring that their actions and decisions are consistent with Menlo Church policies, as well as those of our denomination, ECO. The Board is ultimately accountable to ensure that the right safeguards are in place and that the operational policies and actions of Menlo Church staff are consistently followed. We believe we took timely action consistent with our policies and will continue to demonstrate great care and governing oversight.

Should any reports of abuse or misconduct surface at a later date, we are prepared to take immediate action with law enforcement and are fully aware of our obligations as mandatory reporters. We are also reviewing our protective measures for children. We have significant protective measures already in place, including the two adult policy and background checks for all regular volunteers. In the coming days, we will communicate those measures to you directly as well as to share any improvements we make. Please know if you ever witness or experience any kind of inappropriate conduct or wish to report something, you can confidentially contact Beth Seabolt at [Elders@Menlo.Church](mailto:Elders@Menlo.Church). Also, if you are a parent seeking resources for how to discuss these difficult topics with your child, please contact Sue Kim-Ahn in Central Ministries.

Our shared beliefs are among what bind us together at Menlo Church. Among our core beliefs is God's Redemptive Plan – that we believe God does not intend for sin and suffering to get the last word, but is at work to redeem and reconcile what He has made, with the affirmation that “everybody's welcome, nobody's perfect, and with God anything is possible.” To that end, and based on the Board's investigation and careful deliberation, the Board has adopted a specific restoration plan setting John's return from personal leave on Friday, January 24th. John will only be working internally with staff and the Board during this interim period, focusing on his restoration plan and seeking to rebuild trust. We hope for his return to the pulpit in the near future, if approved by the Board after closely monitoring John's progress. John will share a brief word on these matters with the congregation this weekend.

In the midst of this matter, our commitment to our vision remains firm: to help people find and follow Jesus. We invite you to join us in continuing to pray.

Beth Seabolt  
Elder Board Chair,  
on behalf of Session