

## Elders' Response

Your elders and the pastors in Sedona have struggled with an issue for the last year. I'm sharing this message because we want you to understand why we have made the decisions that we have made and why it has taken so long to communicate our concerns with you.

When the Awaken Movement came to Sedona, we were behind it but felt some cautious concern. Because of things we observed and feedback we were getting, we decided to remain cautious and not endorse it, even though many in this church were involved. At the end of the events we saw promises broken, promises to work through the local church leaders and to not condemn local churches, promises to have the church lead the discipleship groups. By then it was too late to tell you not to be involved.

We don't doubt that some good things happened. God uses everything; but we also saw the divisiveness that the movement brought. Pastors throughout the Verde Valley were divided on whether or not it was of God.

Once the events were over, we were told the prayer time became independent of the Awaken movement. We hold no ill will toward Kyle Martin but do hope that he works with the pastors of any new community to which he goes next.

The few things the elders of the church were going to ask the prayer group leaders, we thought were quite reasonable. If they could agree, then we could endorse the prayer time. 1. Do not speak against the local churches. 2. Have a pastor at the prayer meetings. 3. Disconnect from Awakening. Doing so would open the door to many more churches participating and assure us the prayer group was indeed independent. It would give all the glory to God alone.

Before I was able to send out this decision we had made Monday evening, one of the leaders of the ongoing prayer time told me on Tuesday morning that he did not like our idea of authority and is leaving the church. This is where we saw the movement leading, an authority of its own outside the local church.

Ministries not connected to a church are called para-church ministries. They are meant to come alongside the local church or churches to assist them. That is true of a ministry like Young Life. In the case of Awaken, it gradually became clearer that to some, certainly not all who are involved, we've been asked to come alongside the movement and let it lead. Because of the rejection of local church leadership by the main leader, sadly, we will continue to withhold support from the prayer group.

If you want to take part in it, that is up to you personally. Your elders are not tyrants that demand you do this or that. We would caution you that there is still no pastoral oversight for those prayer times in the Sedona area, and that some of the pastors that do attend are considered to be under discipline by other pastors of the Verde Valley.

If you have been at Wayside a long time, you know how rare this kind of conflict is. It has really only happened twice in 8 years. The elders are open to how God might lead you and to groups

that come from the outside to assist the local church. But there are those rare times when we sense something is not right and must take a stand until there is resolution. Consider that God has placed the elders in their position and the warning of Hebrews 13:17.

Whichever side of the issue you are on, our mandate from our Savior is to love one another. We can agree to disagree over these minor issues and still be an example of love to the unbelievers that we desire to win to Jesus.