

STATEMENT OF DISCRIMINATION

Gregg Tucker

Over a period of time beginning Fall of 2016 there were a number of disturbing instances of racism at Faith Christian High School, where I was the Dean of Student Life and a teacher. One of these incidents was directed at myself and my 7 year old daughter who is black. All of them were blatant, unsettling, and had a profound impact on how many of our minority students were feeling at the school. As the Dean of Student Life, I felt it was important that we aggressively address these instances, which I suggested to the Superintendent and Principal both in a meeting and via e-mail. Their response was muted. I then spent the next year reaching out and talking with some of our current minority students, as well as alumni, to hear about their experiences at Faith. I realized we had NOT done a good job of dealing with the issue of racism as a school and that it was harming our students of color. In light of this, while I understood the difficulty of the subject, I believed it was important that we as a school confront the realities of prejudice and racism at our school.

I decided on doing a chapel, organized as a discussion forum, for the purpose of opposing racism. We set it on the Friday before MLK weekend as a fitting time to address these issues and start the conversation. I put it on the schedule at the beginning of the year in August. That schedule was shared publicly, and I began the process of planning. Overall my hope was that this could be the beginning of our school doing a better job of addressing the issue of racism. As I said in my introduction to the chapel, I was hoping we could do a better job of addressing racial harassment (inappropriate racial, ethnic, or sexist comments and jokes), a better job of recognizing and raising awareness of the complex systems that work against minorities, a better job of combating the insensitivity, ignorance, and apathy in this area, and ultimately a better job of promoting a more diverse and unified family of God in our school, our churches, and our communities.

Prior to the chapel I sent an email out to all parents to inform them of the sensitive nature of the topic, shared the names of the participants, made arrangements to video the chapel, and shared the plan for the chapel with the entire staff at a meeting the week before.

The chapel went forward on January 12, 2018. My reaction was that it went great. Superintendent Andrew Hasz and Principal Michael Cook initially reacted positively as well. However, I soon realized that several students and parents were very upset with the chapel. After a negative reaction from some parents over the weekend, the administration became more negative, and early the next week they sent an e-mail to all the parents apologizing for the chapel. A few days later some parents had a meeting with the administration that I was not invited to where they harshly criticized the chapel and me personally and called for my termination. I was made aware of the events of this meeting by persons present at the meeting. At this point the administration began minimizing the racist incidents that had taken place at the school and further criticized the chapel and the panel. Within a week the administration demoted me from my chapel planning duties. A couple weeks after that Superintendent Andrew Hasz informed me that after 17 years of employment at the school, my contract would not be renewed. In explaining his decision he identified my work in organizing opposition to discrimination as being high among the school's motivating factors.

The following week I emailed a small group of my colleagues to let them know my contract was not going to be renewed and that this action was because of my actions in opposing racism through the chapel meeting. In that email, I expressed support for an idea of an all-staff meeting regarding the issues I had brought up in the chapel but emphasized that my fellow teachers should proceed as they felt comfortable. That same week, a group of minority parents and their advocates circulated a petition calling for the school to take seriously the issue of racism and to not demote or terminate me for facilitating a chapel about race. It was signed by almost 500 students, parents, teachers, and alumni, who spoke of their experiences of racism at the school and their support of me as a teacher. The following week I was terminated. In terminating my employment, Mr. Hasz explained that my opposition to the school's refusal to renew my contract was the reason for immediate termination.

At the termination meeting, I was asked to sign a joint statement and a separation agreement. I refused to sign both, as they were inaccurate and incomplete. When pressed to sign it, I explained that, unlike what the statement said, this was not a mutual separation and the issue of race was the primary issue. Despite my refusal to sign and my explanation, Superintendent Andrew Hasz sent out an e-mail to parents that evening which claimed that I agreed that it was a mutual separation and race had nothing to do with it. The administration repeated these statements to the news media, stating that I had voluntarily quit when in fact I had been terminated. Those statements were false and disparaging.