

Mark Driscoll removed from the Acts 29 church planting network he helped found

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(RNS) Seattle megachurch pastor Mark Driscoll has been removed from a church-planting network of more than 500 churches he helped found after a pattern of “ungodly and disqualifying behavior.”

Driscoll, co-founder of the Acts 29 Network, has been an influential but edgy pastor within conservative evangelical circles for several years. His own Mars Hill Church attracts some 14,000 people at 15 locations across five states each Sunday.

At the same time, however, Driscoll has been controversial in evangelical circles for years. *The New York Times Magazine* called him “one of the most admired—and reviled—figures among evangelicals nationwide.” He has been provocative, occasionally profane and has faced allegations of plagiarism and inflating his book sales.

After Acts 29 board action, all of Driscoll’s Mars Hill Church locations have been removed from the website of the network.

“It is our conviction that the nature of the accusations against Mark, most of which have been confirmed by him, make it untenable and unhelpful to keep Mark and Mars Hill in our network,” the Act 29 board wrote in a letter. “In taking this action, our prayer is that it will encourage the leadership of Mars Hill to respond in a distinctive and godly manner so that the name of Christ will not continue to be dishonored.”

In a longer letter obtained by blogger Warren Throckmorton, the Acts 29 board asked Driscoll to “step down from ministry for an extended time and seek help.”

“Over the past three years, our board and network have been the recipients of countless shots and dozens of fires directly linked to you and what we consider ungodly and disqualifying behavior,” the board wrote. “We have both publicly and internally tried to support and give you the benefit of the doubt, even when multiple pastors in our network confirmed this behavior.”

Driscoll, who’s been facing the same heavy criticism in recent years that he was known for dishing out to others, recently admitted to and apologized for comments he made under the pseudonym “William Wallace II” where he posted statements critical of feminism, homosexuality, and “sensitive emasculated” men.

The Acts 29 board’s letter suggested that it could not lean on Mars Hill’s own board for discipline.

“In response, we leaned on the Mars Hill Board of Advisors & Accountability to take the lead in dealing with this matter,” the letter states. “But we no longer believe the BoAA is able to execute the plan of reconciliation originally laid out. Ample time has been given for repentance, change, and restitution, with none forthcoming. We now have to take another course of action.”

As Throckmorton has reported on his blog, the Acts 29 action comes after evangelical leaders Paul Tripp and James MacDonald resigned as members of the church governing board, and ex-members staged a recent protest at the church.

The Acts 29 Network is a network of churches attempting to be “gospel-centered” and “missional.” Its mission is to plant new churches with an emphasis on holiness, humility, diversity, and evangelism.

Driscoll stepped down as president of Acts 29 in March 2012, appointing Matt Chandler as his successor and moving the headquarters to Dallas, where Chandler is a pastor.

Driscoll’s spokesperson did not return requests for comment.

Earlier this year, Driscoll apologized for missteps in publishing and quit social media for the rest of 2014.