

Cowboy Church board removes Nolen from leadership post

October 7, 2010

The board of directors of the [Texas/American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches](#) voted unanimously in mid-September to terminate Executive Director Ron Nolen, who had led the organization since September 2006.



Ron Nolen

In a letter to pastors, the officers of the fellowship—President Greg Spears, pastor of Milam County Cowboy Church in Rockdale; Vice President Mike Moss, pastor of Bull Creek Cowboy Church in Lone Oak; and Secretary Ray Lane, pastor of Triple Cross Cowboy Church in Granbury—gave several reasons for Nolen’s dismissal but declined to release them for publication.

“Every effort has been made to follow the biblical process laid out in the Scriptures for accountability with the hope of reconciliation and restoration,” the letter to pastors stated. “Unfortunately, those attempts have failed. The board had to act quickly, precisely, decisively and appropriately to protect the integrity of the organization.”

The letter stated the fellowship is healthy and committed to moving forward with God’s direction, “following the model and values that we teach in our schools and practice in our churches.”

“We are committed to transparency, accountability, teamwork and consensus building. Most importantly, we look forward to the great things God has in store for the Texas and American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches as we seek to share the good news of Christ with honesty, integrity and accountability before God and each other.”

The letter also stated: “The board has a great love and respect for Ron Nolen and his family, and we will continue to reach out to Ron and pray for him and his family. We are certain that you also have great respect and admiration for Ron and his work in this movement. It is for the sake of unity in our churches we must make you aware of this decision and ask you to join us in prayer for Ron, his family, the board and our organization as a whole.”

Nolen was placed on sabbatical by the board in August. Jeff Bishop was named interim executive director. He has served as director of summer camps for the TFCC/AFCC the last three years and recently resigned as pastor of Cross Trails Cowboy Church in Fairlie to start a new cowboy church in Bandera.

Efforts to reach Nolen for comment were unsuccessful.

Nolen retired from the Baptist General Convention of Texas staff to head the TFCC in 2006. He had been a church starter and then director of western heritage ministries before taking on the new responsibility.

He had led in founding Cowboy Church of Ellis County, the first cowboy church to be affiliated with the BGCT, in 2000 and assisted in establishing many others. When he took over the TFCC reins, it had 73 churches. More than 140 now are affiliated with the TFCC and another 36 with the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches, which was begun in November 2007.

Under Nolen’s leadership, the TFCC/AFCC has developed a system of

coaching for new pastors, a summer program of camps for preteens and youth and has held 26 church planting schools in Texas and mini-schools in Alabama, Kansas and Louisiana to train people in starting and doing cowboy church.

Editor's Note: Ron Nolen contacted the Baptist Standard Nov. 4, 2011, and indicated he did not respond prior to publication of this article because he did not receive a notice that Managing Editor Ken Camp was attempting to contact him.

Nolen said he resigned the day before the board of directors of the Texas/American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches voted to fire him.

Although leaders of the organizations did not state reasons for Nolen's termination, he told the Baptist Standard it was due to a "personal issue." He stated "certainly" he did nothing illegal.

Since his termination, Nolen has met regularly with a group of men who comprise an "accountability group," he said, adding he and his wife have participated in marriage counseling.

Nolen is involved in starting a Western-heritage church in Santa Fe, N.M. The Albuquerque Journal has published [an article on the young congregation](#).