

Church Militant Makes Drastic Cuts Voris scrambles to right the ship

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(Detroit) – Controversial Catholic website ChurchMilitant.com is foundering and making dramatic changes to stay afloat.

After Evening Prayer on Friday .. Church Militant’s firebrand founder Michael Voris notified 19 employees, roughly 30 percent of his staff, they were laid off effective immediately.

Without mentioning the layoffs, Voris announced on Monday the site’s daily news program, Church Militant Evening News, is temporarily on hiatus.

Attempting to explain the abrupt change in programming, he told viewers: “Given the amount of misinformation by the Marxist globalists, coupled with the current political and cultural environment, Church Militant is deciding to devote more resources to this critical aspect [news context] rather than simply reporting.”

But an accidentally leaked internal memo reveals the organization’s shift in focus is more likely driven by finances. Twelve reporters and editors were let go, people with direct involvement in producing the daily news program.

The leaked memo said Evening News is on hiatus “until the Super PAC, if it is indeed launched, is up and running and can facilitate the show’s return.”

The Super Pac to which the memo refers is being developed by Federal Election Commissioner Trey Trainor and Jim Graham, former executive with Texas Right to Life, and has been in the works for at least a year.

The memo laid out a plan for the public announcement, saying it will explain that “changes are afoot, painting [a] picture of new programming, new features, that lie ahead – leading viewers to look ahead to the future.”

The layoffs

Church Militant offered laid off employees no severance, saying they could file for unemployment. A cautious estimate of budget savings from laid off employee salaries is in the \$1 million range.

The staff members downsized included a mother of three about to undergo cancer surgery, a young man engaged to be married in June who recently bought his first house, a young father who just learned he and his wife are expecting their third child.

An intelligent young man with social interaction deficits who loved his job and had just purchased his first car told friends he would have stayed at Church Militant even if leaders had cut his salary in half.

Some of the 19 employees moved hundreds of miles to Detroit, at Church Militant's insistence and at their own expense, for employment.

The layoff was not totally unexpected. In a November 10 four-page email to staff, Voris laid out the dire state of the organization's finances, blaming Democrat policies. The same day, Voris gathered the troops to answer questions. In those remarks he mentioned layoffs might be necessary.

To slow the flow of cash, austerity measures were immediately put in place. Phones were removed from reporters' desks, health benefits were cancelled, essential equipment such as printers were not replaced. There was a freeze in hiring and travel.

While Voris' November memo blamed most of the financial crisis on politics, he also mentioned three lawsuits that "were a heavy drain."

Insiders believe that was an understatement.

How Church Militant flamed out

In the last four years, Church Militant has been on a roller coaster. In 2019, the organization raised more than \$1 million to build and equip a state-of-the-art television studio. The number of staff grew quickly, gearing up to cover the 2020 election cycle.

Following the 2020 election, Church Militant began airing a daily Evening News program that expanded from thirty to sixty minutes. Again, more employees were hired; the set was redesigned, more equipment was purchased.

In the fall of 2021, Voris planned a showdown with U.S. bishops in Baltimore at their November meeting. Church Militant rented a city-owned outdoor venue directly across the street from the bishops' hotel.

Church Militant was at the top of its game with a staff of approximately 70 employees.

When the city of Baltimore backed out of the venue deal citing concerns about violent protests, Church Militant hired noted attorney Marc Randazza, sued the city, and ultimately prevailed in federal court. But hundreds of thousands of dollars were expended in the effort.

Simultaneously, the organization was battling two other lawsuits.

Even before the ominous November email, staff were beginning to leave. At least two women left, claiming the organization was a hostile environment for women. Another male staff member left in solidarity with one of those women. He reported other male staff members were joking about rape.

Church Militant has no whistleblower policy. Kristine Christlieb, a Church Militant producer who was laid off reports, "In 2022, I asked Simon Rafe, Chief of Staff, about a whistleblower policy. He said one wasn't needed."

Church Militant attempted a massive rally in August 2022, the Call of Action conference, renting space in downtown Detroit's infamous Huntington Place Convention Center (formerly Cobo Hall), projecting attendance at 800 participants. After a pull-out-all-the-stops marketing effort to boost attendance, only approximately 350 people registered.

When Voris composed the November email, Church Militant had spent down its reserves, was out of cash and borrowing money for operations.

Meanwhile Evening News was staggering along, stuck in a pattern of low viewership.

Another wave of resignations from key staffers came in January 2023. Morale was low.

The March 31 announcement of layoffs was not a surprise. The surprise was the number of people who were let go. No one realized how serious the financial problems were.

Who is responsible

The non-profit organization's board, ultimately responsible for the financial crisis, is led by Voris, who is himself a voting member of the board. While that arrangement is not illegal, it is also not considered best practice. Only one person on the board is not an employee. It's not known if anyone on the board has an accounting or finance degree.

Christlieb, who is also a veteran fundraiser with decades of experience in all kinds of non-profit organizations before being hired by Church Militant said: "There was no financial expertise or experience on the board that I know of and also, no one had been recruited to the board who could help financially with an emergency charitable gift," she explained. "There was not proper oversight or accountability. The very individuals who made decisions bringing the organization to the brink of disaster retain their jobs."

Christlieb went on to say, "This kind of board governance and mismanagement can lead to unfortunate outcomes. That's why it's not recommended. Church Militant didn't even have a priest on the board. There was no one to put on the brakes."

NOTE:

- 1) Kristine Christlieb is NOT a disinterested party, she is among the employees laid off.
- 2) Verify with Church Militant the Board info, that Voris is still president and a voting member of the board, that only one non-employee serves on the board; that there is no priest on the board; and that no one on the board has professional training in finance.

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