

Life Update from Scott Sauls (+) 8 Reference Letters

To Whom It May Concern:

The following letters (8 total) are from individuals who have unique, insider perspectives on my life, family, character, and 28 years of ordained ministry including my 2023 resignation and departure from Christ Presbyterian Church. Their contact information is also provided. Please feel free to reach out to any of them directly.

As you may be aware, we went through quite a season from May to November 2023, including media attention that contains some elements of truth as well as half-truths and falsehood.

In real life, I was not forced into a leave of absence by Christ Pres elders, but rather asked that they put me on leave due to what was happening with the Presbytery committee that oversaw my case. Also in real life, I submitted fully to the “case without process” and was subsequently reinstated by my Presbytery. More recently, I transferred my ordination credentials to ECO, chiefly due to changes in my views regarding women serving in ordained leadership which is prohibitive in the PCA, but embraced in ECO.

Concerning my resignation and events that led up to it, several facts have not been reported in the media. For example, I was never told specifically what offenses I was accused of, or against whom. We have also discovered that many who brought accusations were let go from their ministries because of moral failure, deception, insubordination, etc. Additionally, the man from Presbytery who initiated and prosecuted my case has been deposed and is out of ministry because of a two-decade pattern of sexual misconduct and abuse toward women in his church. The committee he chaired and that oversaw my case is now being investigated for patterns of malpractice, including the covering up of his, their chairman’s, sexual misconduct. This has been a lot to process for my family and me as we quietly heal and move forward.

Having said all this, I have also learned several important leadership lessons through the ordeal. There are some things that I absolutely did bring to the table. To be clear, I have never been accused of or committed sexual misconduct, financial impropriety, substance abuse, fits of rage, etc. However, I was admittedly not prepared to lead a staff that grew from 30 to 85 in just a few years under my leadership. My lack of organizational training, combined with stress reactions to the pandemic and certain staff related issues that surfaced during that time, led me into some regrettable errors including micromanagement, workaholism, etc.

As the first reference letter below (from Chip Dodd) will attest, I have gone through significant recovery and learning since my resignation from the church. This still may not be enough to satisfy concerns you have that may arise, if for no other reason than internet optics, and I am prepared to accept that if it’s the Lord’s will. At the same time, I and those who have known me best and longest believe I am more equipped personally, spiritually, emotionally, and professionally than I have ever been as a pastor, preacher, and leader. But ultimately it is up to you to decide that, as the Lord directs.

Thank you for your interest in me as a potential servant of your community and mission. I recognize full well that I am an unusual kind of candidate!

Scott Sauls

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Chip Dodd. I received my PhD in 1990 and have worked as a therapist, consultant, mentor, and author for over 37 years. For 22 of those years, I owned and operated The Center for Professional Excellence, a long-term treatment center for professionals who suffered from various challenges. Most of our patient population were medical professionals and pastors.

I have counseled with and coached Scott Sauls consistently for 3 years. I have also met several times with representatives responsible for Scott's oversight as they sought my feedback. My feedback was that Scott is especially skilled as a thought leader, visionary, and builder who shines through preaching, teaching, and writing.

Scott is warm and inviting with people, and is also an introvert. When freed to operate from how God made him, he has proven himself highly effective at holding the tension of disparate groups of people at a large church, while remaining focused on preaching, teaching, and visionary leadership. Scott has excelled in these gifts for 12 years in Nashville, plus many years prior in other places like New York City.

Christ Presbyterian Church succeeded at calling and supporting exactly who they needed to lead them. Scott led a struggling, declining, unhealthy church into over a decade of growth and flourishing. That Scott succeeded at fulfilling the imagined hopes of CPC is without question.

However, success neither means perfection, nor does it suggest that stress is not part of daily life in any organization or relationship. In my 3 years working with Scott, he has recognized work compulsion as a major player in his life. This was influenced by the trauma of an abusive, stress-creating childhood in which Scott became wounded, self-reliant, and excessively determined.

Despite any difficulties, confusion, and accusations that occurred, Scott addressed issues humbly and head on. He had not failed the church morally with financial, drug, or sexual impropriety, alcohol, other addiction secrets, or fits of rage. Scott is a man of outstanding character, good at home, married successfully with a wife and children who love, trust, and feel protected by him. Scott is caring towards others, and a lover of Jesus.

Scott is ready to re-enter the pastorate. I confidently predict that his best and most fruitful years of ministry in the church and broader kingdom still lie ahead of him. I regret that Scott's story has become much larger than it needed to be during a cultural moment where constructive feedback can easily devolve into gossip, grudges, accusation, presumption of guilt, and publicity that undermines good leaders and gospel witness.

Scott has accepted growth opportunities. Scott is better for the help offered and received. Scott is unquestionably called to deliver the truths of the gospel. For the benefit of Scott and others, I hope he will return to ministry soon.

In Christ,

Chip Dodd, PhD, and Scott's Counselor for the Past 3 Years
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To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation for Scott Sauls.

I have known Scott for 12 years. I have worked closely with him during that time in my role as a ruling elder at Christ Presbyterian Church (“CPC”). I have served on the Administrative Commission and the Personnel Committee of the church for almost all the years of Scott’s tenure. In addition, I was in a Bible study and fellowship group with Scott and six other men, which met weekly for most of that time. In the last year, I was appointed by Nashville Presbytery to walk with Scott through the process of which you are no doubt aware. Scott’s response to this process resulted in his full reinstatement as a minister of the gospel in good standing.

Beginning in 2012, Scott led CPC out of a season of dysfunction and decline into over a decade of growth and impact. We are now a multi-generational, multi-site body with more diversity than in previous years. Scott contributed greatly to the growth and health of our K-12 school, as he skillfully brought the school into theological and philosophical harmony with the church.

Scott is particularly gifted and effective at casting vision and speaking winsomely into the issues of the day, and in a manner that both expands the body and equips the saints to live faithfully in these challenging times. He has advanced executive skills. He is a prolific speaker and writer. He works extremely hard and is very productive. He has received counseling for workaholic tendencies, and has grown in his understanding of how to navigate that challenge. That said, it is no sin to bring your best effort to work every day and to expect those around you to do the same. That is what Scott did at CPC.

I am aware of negative stories in the media targeting Scott, mostly emanating from the local newspaper in Nashville. My opinion is that most of the stories have been one-sided and consistent with a narrative the newspaper was seeking to advance, with the willing cooperation of a handful of disgruntled former employees of the church. Scott is not perfect, and he has humbled himself and submitted to a lengthy process to get help with his weak spots. He has gotten that help; he is a prodigious talent, and he is ready to serve in his next call.

I am happy to address any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gif Thornton, Christ Presbyterian Church Elder and Personnel Committee Member
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in reference to Scott Sauls. Scott and I first met 12 years ago when I was a fairly new governor of Tennessee and he was called to be the senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville. Since that time, we have formed a lifelong friendship and I have grown a great appreciation for Scott's gifts and his heart.

Over the last 12 years, Scott and I have helped each other through very difficult situations and leaned on each other for wisdom when wrestling with complex decisions that have to be made in the public eye. I often told him that being a senior pastor is a lot like being a governor. You have many varied constituencies to please, all of whom think their particular interest should be the priority, and you perform your job in a very visible and vulnerable way that invites everyone to have an opinion about you.

Early in his time at Christ Presbyterian, Scott pulled together a group who were all in leadership positions of various responsibilities around Nashville. That group became one of my primary foundations and support during my time in office and the 8 of us experienced a lot of life's joys and heartaches together. Scott was able to humbly set aside his role as a pastor and come together with all of us in a way that added richly to our fellowship.

It has also been a privilege to watch Scott love his wife, his daughters, and now his son in law in such wonderful ways. It is inspiring to watch how he loves his wife in words and in action. I have found Scott to be extraordinarily gifted at comprehending a lot of information and then communicating it to a broader audience. He truly is a gifted preacher and teacher. Finally, and most important if you want to know Scott, he loves Jesus in a bold way and works hard to always lead with and emphasize the power of the cross. His ability to express the truth *and* the love of the gospel is too rare today.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions about Scott. As you can tell, I am a fan.

Gratefully,

Bill Haslam, 49th Governor of Tennessee
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To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Pastor Scott Sauls for over a decade in different capacities, from a member of his church, to a fellow elder on Session serving alongside him, as well as most recently, the executive director at Christ Presbyterian Church directly reporting to him.

While not an exclusive list, Scott's primary strengths and areas of gifting include the following:

- Scott is an incredibly talented teacher and preacher of Scripture. His combination of intellectual challenge, relevant application and Scriptural truth sets him apart from many. A key piece of this is that he is also not afraid to tackle difficult topics or hard conversations—of which many may not want to hear but need to hear. And in doing so always ending with encouragement and hope.
- The gift of mission and vision are strengths that have set our church on a journey of prosperity in ministry and beyond. He has stewarded and advanced the voice, priorities, and mission of CPC through preaching, creating content, and positioning CPC as a church of resourcing and influence.
- Scott is also a gifted moderator of governing bodies, commissions and committees. He is a natural facilitator.
- He just gets it. His experience combined with a quick assessment and understanding how to continually improve is impressive. From discipleship pathways, to hospitality, to launching new ministries.
- I have seen Scott first hand counsel staff and congregants in really hard places and his soft, non-judgmental, and encouraging posture is definitively pastoral.

The season our church has been in has been difficult and hard on everyone. What excites me is that during this time, I have seen the Lord's work in Scott and have encouraged him that his best ministry is yet to come. What impresses me also, is that during this season Scott and Patti have grown closer together and are bonded in the love of Jesus. I'm excited to see where the Lord will call Scott next and all of the fruit from his future ministry.

If I can ever be of further assistance regarding Scott, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Blessings,

Doug Korn, Executive Director for Christ Presbyterian Church
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To Whom It May Concern:

I consider it a privilege to give Scott Sauls my support and recommendation for whatever the Lord has next for him and Patti. Scott has been my friend and pastor for over a decade as we have lived, worked and played together within the same community. In this time, I have been able to see him lead and love as well as repent and serve in multiple contexts, often with multiple and competing constituencies, and throughout he has led with vision, courage, and conviction. My firsthand experiences with Scott are many. However, a few stand out as evidence against whatever negative hearsay you may have read online.

I have been on the literal floor with Scott as he has ministered to broken people in the very deepest moments of loss and pain. If one has ever heard the piercing cries of anguish from another human in the midst of tragedy, then one also knows that in those moments you either shrink and retreat, or you move towards and step into the pain. Scott never shrinks and always steps towards. I have witnessed him do this with other community members as well as first hand with me and my family. Every time I was involved, Scott approached the situation with humility, reverence, honesty (never giving a superficial answer), and deep compassion. While it may not be the proper place to say this, my prayer for him is that he will give himself the same compassion I have seen him show others.

Scott has led our church through unparalleled polarity within our country and in our communities. Anchored with a vision of the beautiful and diverse Kingdom of God, Scott never let the pull of differing geo-political ideologies within the community influence his teaching. The message from our pulpit (through two contentious elections and a pandemic, and with state and national elected officials from both sides of the aisle sitting in the congregation) always required everyone to search their own hearts for the still dark and unconfessed places. It was not always fun, but neither is eating healthy. Scott's conviction for teaching God's truth and the "third way" of engaging culture was so deep and unrelenting, I believe it came at a great cost to him personally and professionally. I respect that he never caved to pressure from either the right or the left leanings and operated from the adage, "If everyone isn't somehow both convicted and comforted every Sunday, then I am probably not preaching the whole Gospel."

Finally, Scott is a good man. Certainly, he has his flaws, and if asked I am sure he will tell you all of them. I also know he is a genuinely faithful man of God and I trust him as such. He has spent significant time and energy doing deep, hard work on himself. As a close observer, my empathy for what he has walked through and how he has walked through it has only grown. As a person who also leads a ministry, I know how heavy the burden, how lonely the position, and how deep and voluminous the pressure, as leaders bring their own beauty and brokenness to the positions they hold. We *all* lead from who we are. Who we are and how we lead are inseparable and I believe in who Scott is and I am excited to see how he leads next.

Sincerely,

Nate Morrow, Head of School for Christ Presbyterian Academy
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To Whom it May Concern:

It is with pleasure that I write this letter in support of Scott Sauls.

I have known Scott for over a decade personally and professionally. I have also been a licensed therapist in Nashville for 25 years. For 20 of those years, I counseled and collaborated almost exclusively with Nashville area pastors and church staff. This included several who were directly involved with circumstances that influenced Scott's decision to resign. I will not document details here, but instead welcome a private conversation. My contact information is below. I sincerely hope you will reach out.

I join many others in believing that Scott, though imperfect by his own admission, is a man of great integrity. He humbly submitted and stayed silent even when I believe he had reasons to defend himself, and was fully reinstated to his pastoral calling. Several of us, myself included, have challenged Scott that he may have over-confessed to some things that weren't his to own. In spite of that, he has continued to fully own what he can and quietly leave the rest in God's hands.

I wholeheartedly recommend Scott to you. Here are only a few reasons why:

1. Scott is a man of extreme integrity. This includes his willingness to apologize when he is wrong. He also expects integrity from others around him.
2. Scott has a strong work ethic. No one will outwork him. He will not demand that others rise to his level. But those who lack workplace integrity or aren't team players will be challenged to adjust to his leadership.
3. Scott is a great connector and assimilator of people. He is *for* people. He looks for the good and helps others see their value and contribution to the greater good.
4. Scott is brilliant. He can assimilate, organize and teach complex information and thought in a way that is engaging, motivating, and challenging. He has had the best mentors, and in my estimation has become an elite thought leader in the Christian world.
5. Scott is an amazing influencer. People want to work for and with him. He desires excellence and brings out the best in those around him. This can be challenging in a system that lacks authenticity and transparency, but will be a breath of fresh air to those who value pursuing excellence.

I would welcome any conversation that would benefit you in understanding Scott, his abilities, and his limitations.

Thank you,

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of Scott Sauls. My family has attended Christ Presbyterian Church for roughly ten years now. I have served as a member of the Personnel Committee for eight years. As a result, I have worked closely with Scott in his capacity as senior pastor, and my husband and I are close friends of Scott and his wife, Patti.

Scott's excellence in preaching and teaching are evident to anyone who has listened to even one of his sermons or read one chapter of any of his books. He is eminently gifted. Scott is committed to leading all of his flock to see their own sin and blind spots while consistently reminding them of the inexhaustible love and mercy of Christ. He has thoughtfully led a politically diverse congregation, convicting people on both sides to see their own blind spots while reminding us that we have more in common with one another as believers than we have differences. From the pulpit, Scott has led with humility, speaking openly about his own struggles and sins.

After Scott was placed on leave by the Presbytery, he willingly went away to work on himself, acceding to all recommendations. Scott showed true repentance during and after his extended time away and publicly owned his faults in front of our church body, asking forgiveness from anyone who felt they had been hurt by him. Scott also made himself available to meet with any of those people, all of whom were anonymous to him, who wanted to reconcile. Notably, only one person who complained agreed to meet with him.

Scott is a visionary. He took a church that was very broken and helped lead it back to health, growing both the membership and financials. Scott led well during the pandemic, creating a vibrant online ministry that served its congregation well during an incredibly trying time. Scott is an extremely hard worker and is not one to let other people carry the load. He will not rest on his laurels and is unafraid to get his hands dirty. He cares deeply about every detail and worked tirelessly to ensure every aspect of our church was directed towards fulfilling our mission of "loving people, places and things to life." Scott is also an effective apologist, thereby driving lots of first-time church goers to our church. He is committed to a big tent approach—majoring in the majors and minoring in the minors.

Scott had an incredibly tough year. Unfortunately for him and for our church, there are a handful of anonymous people who appear to continue to want to hurt and humiliate Scott. Unfortunately, in a world of click bait there are too many journalists willing to write articles based on the limited perspective of a few unhappy people to gain readership. Far more people in our church have been incredibly blessed by Scott's ministry. The Lord used Scott mightily to encourage them in a more humble, obedient, thoughtful walk with Christ. I am one of those people. I am incredibly grateful to have sat under Scott as my pastor and to call him a friend.

Amy Richards, Christ Presbyterian Church Personnel Committee
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To Whom It May Concern,

As the Founder and CEO of PastorServe, a ministry serving tens of thousands of pastors plus church governing boards and staff, I have also known Scott Sauls for almost thirty years.

Our friendship began when I served as Scott's pastor and boss in Kansas City in the 1990's. Since then, we have kept a close and consistent friendship. I have through the years looked to Scott as a model shepherd and top-level leader. I have called on him for help with strategic planning, cultural insight, and some of PastorServe's most complicated shepherding situations. He has always been ready to serve. We find Scott to be a gentle yet strong shepherd who provides insightful direction. Scott is not domineering or abrasive, but wears the towel of servant leadership. He is a magnificent friend who has brightened my life, my team of leaders, and especially my family.

Scott went through hell in 2023. Don't believe the misinformation that litters the internet. As one who, like Scott, serves in a highly visible role, my reputation for integrity is very important to me. I would stake that reputation on my firm belief in Scott's character.

Scott is a man of deep integrity. He has a long track record of loving Jesus and people sacrificially. He knows himself as a broken man in need of God's grace and mercy. Scott has done deep work through intensive counseling and mentoring to go where few leaders have the courage to go. What you hear in his preaching and read in his books is a byproduct of this, and is also who he is in real life. Scott is emotionally grounded, balanced, sensitive, caring, and a loving family man. He works hard and, as his former mentor Tim Keller said in a very public setting, is deeply trustworthy. Scott is especially drawn to those who need care—whether anxious, depressed, lonely, left out, or have special needs.

Scott is an innovative leader with convictions that do not waver with opposition. He has built multiple ministries, some nationally recognized, while serving at Christ Presbyterian. His ministry has impacted tens of thousands. Scott is a world class communicator, both in oral and written forms. I pray that his next calling will position him to continue sharing these gifts fully. His message is desperately needed in a shame driven, clickbait world.

For many years, Scott has been a respected and humble ministry leader in Kansas City, St. Louis, New York City, Nashville, and across the nation. My prayer is that his next chapter of leadership will be the most fruitful of them all. I believe it will.

I am happy to answer any questions regarding Scott. I can be reached at any time.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Dodd, Founder and CEO of PastorServe
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of pastor Scott Sauls. Scott and I first met when he arrived in St. Louis as a new student at Covenant Seminary. From the start, I could sense God had his hand on Scott in a peculiarly powerful way. Though he arrived profoundly wounded by life, God used it to make him a compelling witness to a gentle Jesus. At the seminary, he was my homiletics student. At church, he was an intern. In both roles, however, I felt I was his protégé because of his spiritual maturity and exceptional communication skills. His humility makes it delightful to be in such a position.

Since those early years, we have remained very close friends. As such, I have proudly watched his influence grow in the Kingdom. Under his pastoral leadership, his churches have flourished. Through his preaching, many have been converted and many more have found unprecedented joy in living for Christ. From his pen, scores have learned to see Jesus so beautifully, they want to reflect him beautifully to the world in thought, word, and deed.

I have also been in a unique position to observe Scott live through the crucible of the last number of years, a universal period of trial discouraging nearly half of pastors out of the ministry. While Scott has in some ways suffered uncommonly, his response to it has been rather unique. Rather than defending himself, he listened for kernels of truth and furiously repented of everything he felt legitimate. He also shouldered burdens not his own. His marriage to Patti has become even sweeter as they have vulnerably sought counsel and engaged in intensive therapy. And perhaps the most convincing proof of their godly deportment through the injustice suffered is that their daughters remain in love with the Church of Jesus Christ, largely through Scott's and Patti's humble and gracious example. I am confident the Father will use this dark night to cause Christ's light to shine even more brightly from Scott than when I first met him.

If I can be of further assistance to you in your consideration of Scott, I am your servant.

Blessings,

George Robertson, Senior Pastor, Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee
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