

Son of Obama faith adviser dies in apparent suicide

by [Sarah Pulliam Bailey](#) in the [January 8, 2014](#) issue

Isaac Hunter, the son of megachurch pastor and Obama spiritual counselor Joel Hunter, was found dead December 10 in an apparent suicide, police say.

Isaac Hunter, 36, father of three, had resigned from his own Florida megachurch after he admitted that he had engaged in an affair with a staff member. His wife of 13 years had filed a domestic-violence petition against Hunter, describing him as unstable, erratic and suicidal, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Responding to a call from Hunter's brother, who had received a text message speaking of suicide, police found Isaac Hunter dead from a gunshot wound, said Officer Rob Pelton, spokesman for the Altamonte Springs police department. Police were investigating the death as a suicide.

"As we look back on Isaac's ministry . . . we are profoundly grateful for the impact he had in all of our lives," wrote Pastor Jeff Kern of Summit Church, where Hunter served before resigning more than a year ago, on the website of the congregation in Orlando. "We know that Isaac is deeply loved by Jesus, even in a time of brokenness, and are assured of his continuing relationship with Christ, now in heaven."

His father, Joel Hunter, has been a spiritual adviser to President Obama, speaking and praying with him regularly.

Isaac Hunter was the second of Joel Hunter's three children. Isaac's resignation in the fall of 2012 made him one of three Orlando pastors who left their pulpits after admitting affairs.

Isaac Hunter founded Summit Church in 2002. It started as a youth ministry at his father's church that quickly grew to five campuses and a congregation of about 5,000.

Vernon Rainwater, a pastor at Joel Hunter's Northland Church, posted an announcement for the church of more than 15,000 people. "All of us are grieving for the Hunter family, and we will deeply miss Isaac. Words cannot express the sorrow we're feeling," said Rainwater.

The death was the second suicide related to a high-profile megachurch pastor this year; Rick Warren's son Matthew committed suicide in April, and Rick and Kay Warren have talked openly about their son's battle with mental illness in media interviews.

Former Southern Baptist Convention president Frank Page published a book this year about his daughter's suicide in 2009. A pastor in Georgia committed suicide after a Sunday morning service in November.

"My heart is broken for the Joel Hunter family in the loss of their beloved Isaac. No words, just tears," Kay Warren tweeted.

Cameron Strang, editor of *Relevant* magazine, posted on Facebook that Isaac Hunter had been his pastor for several years. "Please pray that somehow, some way, someday, good will ultimately come of this," Strang wrote. —RNS

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