

I have met with the current Willow Creek elder board, once in person and once with a smaller group via a video conference. They have made private apologies to me, my husband and my daughters, on behalf of the church, and expressed remorse for how we had been treated throughout this process. They acknowledged their belief in all of my story, not just the kiss in Sweden. They expressed deep sadness over what Bill had done to me and how the former leadership of Willow Creek had characterized me as a liar and colluder, and the personal pain and loss all of that had caused me. I have deeply appreciated their kindness and posture of contrition, humility and remorse in this process. I am grateful for their private apologies and their remorse for the pain and destruction this has caused for me and my family in the past and present.

While the recent elder statement to the congregation lacks the specificity that I wish it contained, there are some very important things it does say.

- It affirms that we (the women and advocates) are credible, and that they believe our allegations about Bill-not just some of them, but I believe this is saying they believe all of them.
- During my last meeting with the current elders, I sat through Pat Baranowski's well-documented and credible allegations, many of which are not a part of the public record. I wept through 3 hours of painful and horrific testimony that left many of the elders weeping, some face down on the table in disbelief and mourning. Bill's actions toward Pat were not simply mis-steps, but cruel, manipulative and abusive. If they are saying they believe Pat's allegations about Bill, which this statement affirms, then the truth about Bill's sin is far worse than anyone has been willing to say publicly. I believe her story, 100%.
- I'm grateful that the elders believe all of the women's allegations. Many of them have striking similarities, though they happened years apart. I'm grateful for their posture of godly response to the magnitude and depth of Bill Hybels' destructive behaviors toward me and toward other women spanning four decades.
- It acknowledges the false narrative that was exported asserting that we are liars and colluders and acknowledges the impact that this narrative has had on our professional standing within the Christian community. It then contrasts that with the IAG's statement of our credibility and the elders' unequivocal support of that finding. I believe they are saying that we told the truth. We were not lying or colluding and any perception in the global Christian community that we were must be corrected and rectified. I deeply appreciate these assertions, and of the elders' affirmation of my actions and intentions. I believe the intention is that this statement represents a retraction of this false narrative by the elders, and this is something we've been asking of the elders from day one. The elders have retracted the narrative.
- It singles out Compassion International and Menlo Church, led by Jimmy Mellado and John Ortberg, respectively, as organizations and leaders who have received abusive

treatment from some as a result of their advocacy for “women who were harmed.” As one of those women, I’m deeply grateful for those men, their wives and the organizations who stood by them. And I join the elders in their call to repentance and apology to anyone who threatened these people or their organizations.

- It characterizes Bill Hybels’ behavior as “sinful, intimidating and overtly controlling” and asserts that his denials caused well-meaning leaders to “make statements that were misinformed or incomplete”. I believe this is saying that Bill lied to the leaders and to the congregation by denying things he had actually done, and that it set destruction in motion on all sides.
- It acknowledges the people and the staff of Willow Creek, people who we dearly love, and the pain all of this has caused them. It expresses the hope for healing and restoration, and I share in that hope.

I hope that more detail will be given on Tuesday night as to why the Elders have come to some of those conclusions, because I believe that detail, rather than causing unnecessary obscurity and harm, would help illuminate truth and give needed closure to people in the congregation, to the global church and to the women and their advocates. And while I recognize that this will be the elders’ final public statement on the matter, my understanding is that the reconciliation process with us is ongoing, and I welcome the next steps in that process. I hope one day to stand again with my brothers and sisters at Willow Creek reconciled, in the unity of the Spirit, for the glory of Christ.

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20