

Begin forwarded message:

From: Willow Creek Elder Board <elders@willowcreek.org>
Subject: Elder Update Regarding Dr. Bilezikian
Date: January 28, 2020 at 6:44:32 PM CST
To: [REDACTED]
Reply-To: Willow Creek Elder Board <elders@willowcreek.org>



WILLOW CREEK
COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 28, 2020

Dear Willow family,

Over the weekend, a longtime Willow Creek congregant made her personal story of abuse public. This story involves Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian (widely known as “Dr. B”), a mentor to Bill Hybels. We are heartbroken for what this congregant experienced and are deeply sorry for the pain this has caused her and her family.

Approximately 10 years ago, she presented church officials with assertions that Dr. Bilezikian behaved inappropriately toward her. While Dr. Bilezikian has never been an employee of Willow Creek, he has been active in the life of the church for decades. At the time, the church’s Elder Response Team (ERT) met at length with the woman and with Dr. Bilezikian. The team believed the woman’s claim that Dr. Bilezikian engaged in inappropriate behavior dating back to the mid-eighties, including but not limited to hand holding, hugs, kissing, inappropriate touching, and sending overly personal communication. The ERT did restrict him from serving, but the restriction was not adequately communicated, resulting in Dr. Bilezikian serving and teaching in various capacities over the years. This was wrong, and we are sorry.

Over the past years, behavior has been brought to light that is both harmful and unacceptable for a Christ follower. This sinful behavior that we believe was demonstrated by Dr. Bilezikian and Bill Hybels was wrong, and we hold any person entrusted with leading at Willow Creek Community Church to a higher standard. Leaders carry a mandate to shepherd the body of Christ and guard against sinful behavior (1 Peter 5:2–4).

We, as an Elder Board and a body of believers who follow in the ways of Christ, will

continue to do the work of pursuing restorative justice and being agents of reconciliation. We are committed to learning from the past to better support our community and those who are hurting. Please pray for all involved.

If you have experienced abuse from leadership at Willow, past or present, please contact us at 630-682-9797, ext. 1291.

In His service,

Willow Creek Elder Board
Shoji Boldt
Barb Butz
Jeff Choh
Silvia Escobar
Jeff Mason, Chief Governance Officer
Michael Roth
John Sleeting, Secretary
Mary Square

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