

Chapter 1 : Willow Creek Community Church Production Department

This comic sketch looks at the challenges men face while trying to develop strong friendships. The conversation revolves around borrowed tools but sounds like it's between two people romantically involved.

Elder Missy Rasmussen made the announcement at the South Barrington megachurch. Who is Bill Hybels? Six more women came forward with similar allegations in a Christianity Today report published on April 21, and a former assistant to Hybels accused him of harassment in a New York Times report published last weekend. That prompted Pastor Steve Carter – who had replaced Hybels at the helm of the church – to step down himself. Hybels has denied any wrongdoing, but while stepping down he said: Hello Willow Creek Family, Thank you for coming tonight. My name is Missy Rasmussen. I have served for a total of seven years as an Elder. Today I stand before you broken. The Elder Board wants to express our deepest sadness around the events that have occurred over the past few months at our church. But to limit our sadness around these past few months is to not recognize the obviously painful events that have occurred over the past 40 years of our existence. We are also deeply grieved about the new accusations that came to light this past weekend, and our collective hearts break for the pain that Ms. Baranowski has carried these many years. These painful and troubling events have scarred these women, their families, and tarnished our church. On Sunday, our church was further shocked to learn about Steve Carter leaving. We are sad to see Steve leave our church after years of teaching and shepherding our congregation and will certainly miss the way he used his gifts to bless us. Steve advocated for a number of action steps with respect to investigation and transparency, several of which were already in process when he made the request. We invited Steve to participate in setting up an outside, impartial investigation council, and we reached alignment with Steve in many areas. There were also other requests Steve made that we were not able to accommodate, and in the end, he felt he needed to leave Willow. We wish Steve and his family all the best in the next chapter of their lives. We are grateful to serve a God of truth, justice, grace, and mercy in equal measure. God uses broken people to do His work and forgives freely all who come to Him with a repentant heart. To that end, our entire Elder Board has had to come to grips with the areas of our hearts, minds, and souls that blinded us to the pain and suffering of the women and their advocates. We ask forgiveness from God, our congregation, the women, their advocates, and those who have been calling us to repent. While Bill Hybels was our founder and pastor, he was human, broken, and self-admittedly sinful. We believe that his sins were beyond what he previously admitted on stage, and certainly we believe that his actions with these women were sinful. We believe he did not receive feedback as well as he gave it, and he resisted the accountability structures we all need. We did take our spiritual oversight responsibility seriously and at times counseled and challenged Bill on his actions and behaviors. But we were not aware of many choices he made in private and therefore did not hold him accountable in meaningful ways. When those of us who were on the board in first heard the allegations of an affair, we were shocked. The allegations seemed out of character, but they were so serious we knew we had to investigate. We can now see this investigation was flawed. We viewed the allegations through the lens of trust we had in Bill, and this clouded our judgement, which resulted in us not acting quickly enough to secure and examine his devices and in us allowing him to have counseling conversations with the woman who was the subject of the first investigation. Heather, Steve, the executive team, and lead pastors trusted our process and publicly stood behind the work we had done. This caused people to question their integrity, and for putting them in this position, we are so sorry. When new allegations were made in the Tribune article, we did not initially handle those allegations with the care, humility, and repentant posture we should have. We realized this error and have worked hard to repair some trust and create an investigation that the women who made allegations would be willing to participate in. We have consulted experts, had conversations, offered different options to the women who made allegations as to a structure of investigation, but we have been unsuccessful in securing their participation. We are truly repentant. To the people of Willow Creek Community Church, on behalf of the Elders, we are sorry that we allowed Bill to operate without the kind of accountability he should have had. Our desire going forward is to retain what is good and pure about Willow Creek but drive out the parts that are

unhealthy. We commit to building a community that is known for its humility, honesty, and transparency. That was not our intention, and we regret that it has taken us this long to acknowledge that. We are sorry that our initial statements were so insensitive, defensive, and reflexively protective of Bill. We exhort Bill to acknowledge his sin and publicly apologize. To Nancy Ortberg, we are sorry about the way your allegations were handled and the time it took us to truly understand your experience. Based on conversations we have had with various parties, we believe that Bill kissed you in that hotel room in Sweden. To the staff member who came forward recently to share about her experiences working for Bill, we are sorry for how we have communicated about you. We allowed Bill to give his account of those experiences without you having an opportunity to do the same. We specifically regret reading your emails at our family meetings and any impressions that may have created. We are grateful for your courage to come forward to share with leadership about your concerns. We know you care deeply about our church, and we will continue to engage with you in our steps toward repentance, ownership, forgiveness, and reconciliation. What does that look like specifically? Our board never acted out of malice, and we tried to serve the church we love faithfully, but the reality is we feel that the failure of the board to move our church through this in the way we should have calls for action to be taken. We have engaged an outside, independent governance expert to conduct a robust governance review. He will report his findings to a task force made up of a majority of non-Elders. Suggestions for best practices and model improvement will be considered and enacted, setting our future leadership up for success. We are also convening a group of respected, independent Christian leaders to spearhead an investigation to look into the reprehensible actions Ms. Baranowski has reported and all other allegations and areas they determine need to be investigated. Regardless of what an investigation may find, we know enough to know that if Bill had not already stepped down, he would have disqualified himself from pastoral leadership here. We, as a board, know Willow needs and deserves a fresh start, and the entire board will step down to create room for a new board. This board replacement process will start promptly and proceed in waves to ensure an orderly transition, with all current Elders leaving by the end of the year. The first wave of Elders will leave by August. The members of the current board will not control the implementation of the findings of the governance review and investigations we are announcing tonight. We want to be the kind of church God is calling us to be. A church that learns lessons and grows through painful situations. A church that is filled with hope for healing and that demonstrates the love of Christ. A church that reflects the heart of God and is about lives changing, hope, and through Him, making the impossible possible. We believe that God is still building His church!

Chapter 2 : Sources for Drama Sketches: Where to find them | Reformed Worship

After its introduction at Willow Creek, and with a three decade run, drama sketches began waning, even at Willow. Sometime during the spring of I was told about a new church " Willow Creek Community Church " that had recently started.

This article appeared in *The Christian Century*, May 1, , pp. Copyright by The Christian Century Foundation, used by permission. Current articles and subscription information can be found at www.christiancentury.org. Church leaders used to do this intuitively. Though it is very media-oriented, Willow Creek has not opted for a TV ministry. And it is not focused on one personality. Variations on the seeker theme make up a new vocabulary: Pritchard describes Willow Creek church, its ministries and its leaders, then offers a critique. He acknowledges that he has provided something for everybody"advocates of Willow Creek like the first part and lose interest in the analysis; detractors prefer the analysis and are impatient with the description. Pritchard describes himself as an evangelical whose basic discipline is sociology. Though his book was published in 1997, the discussion provides a springboard for the major question underlying the Willow Creek phenomenon. Is this pragmatic, consumer-oriented approach to the unchurched the way of the future for churches in North America? If so, what is the cost to traditional understandings of church and ministry? If I were 25 years younger, I would undoubtedly be an enthusiastic member of the Willow Creek Association. But I am older. In addition to worrying about straying over some theologically important boundaries, I have pragmatic reservations. My training in organizational behavior and experience with "planting" churches also provide me with a distinct perspective. Healthy congregations in the 21st century will undoubtedly be more "seeker friendly," but they will balance marketing efforts with a more judicious use of traditional understandings of the church and its ministries. But then Willow Creek itself will probably look different in 15 years. Using their market-driven approach, its leaders will likely learn to address the current weaknesses. He and unchurched Mary personify the baby boomers that Willow Creek is committed to reaching. The first step in reaching them is to understand them"how they feel and think, what they need and how they will respond. Personifying the person to be reached is a helpful staffing point, and a valuable corrective to doctrinaire approaches to outreach and worship. Effective church leaders of previous generations usually had a good intuitive feel for the people they wanted to reach. One of the most visible market researchers for churches is George Barna. He did some of his early research at Willow Creek and shares many convictions of its leaders. He is certainly a competent pollster. But I find that he overgeneralizes his data to fit with his agenda. The "market" for Christianity in America is undoubtedly changing for a significant part of the population, but there are many more "niches" out there than appear in usual discussions of baby boomers. Unchurched Harry and Mary, as they appear in Willow Creek discussions, represent only a limited segment of the boomers that churches talk about trying to accommodate"specifically, the well-educated, professional, unchurched whites in upscale Chicago suburbs. Although Willow Creek leaders encourage other churches to find the comparable profile for their own communities, much of the discussion among followers repeats the South Barrington impression of Harry and Mary. Most are what Pritchard terms "superficially churched Larrys. A second Willow Creek innovation is to conceive of the major Sunday morning service as a time to reach seekers instead of believers. When criticized for leaving out components of a traditional worship service, Willow Creek responds that this is not a worship service; it is a seeker service. The freshness of this approach is appealing. The problem of a society rapidly becoming unchurched deserves a radical solution. If Sunday morning is prime time for believers, why not recognize it as prime time for seekers? They too face the least competition for their time at these hours. This would be a reasonable accommodation if those involved in seeker services remain conscious that it is not yet worship as it ought to be. In practice this distinction often gets blurred for leaders in congregations that model themselves after Willow Creek. One result is what Sally Morgenthaler, in her book *Worship Evangelism*; sees as a nonworship epidemic. How many of those efforts will ever get to the next step? Will those Willow Creek followers even remember what the next step is? In a true seeker service, attenders are not called on to participate or directly respond in worship. What Harry wants and gets is a polished professional performance.

Is a seeker service the best introduction to what a Christian church stands for? Addressing such reservations has led many churches to settle for being "seeker sensitive" or "seeker friendly"â€”arranging the service to be more accommodating to the unchurched, but still retaining the focus of a worship service. Sophisticated lighting, sound and visual imagery seem a prerequisite in this media age. Drama is not new to churches, of course. The five-minute drama that winsomely introduces the theme of the day is being increasingly utilized by churches concerned about effective communication. This is a plus, for any kind of service. Two other areas that Pritchard highlights in the descriptive part of his book are the emphasis on programs that appeal to the emotions and the packaging of the gospel as user-friendly Christianity. But probably neither will stand the test of time well. There are two possible negative consequences. One is that biblical truth and power will be so diluted that the Christian church will lose effectiveness at ministering the gospel. This is the easiest criticism to make, and it may not be the most important. God has a way of raising new leaders and ministers to meet the needs of a changed day. The more worrisome consequence is that when the culture changes, as it will, Willow Creek may lose its effectiveness and not know how to adapt. Perhaps the folk in South Barrington will recognize what is happening and figure out how to change. But what about the hundreds of imitators who lack the creative drive, flair and energy to adjust? In a world of Willow Creeks, pop psychology can invert and ambush biblical truth about the relation between people and God. A firm foundation in scripture and in research-oriented psychology would generate a clearer recognition of the limits of such approaches. But cautions are not likely to receive much attention because of what Pritchard identifies as a strong pragmatic bias toward what is immediately useful. Will the Willow Creek way generate enough intellectual grounding among followers to help them spot and avoid the problems in the long run that come with attention only to quick fixes? The same goes for the attitude toward marketing. It is a tool that ultimately has to serve the higher truths of those using it. When I taught church marketing, I stressed the need for careful, informed engineering of the product chosen for the intended market; it has to perform as promised. Letting marketing techniques and vocabulary dominate church thinking, without critically assessing how needs will be met, is a good prescription for driving "customers" away and running the enterprise into the ground. It happens regularly with businesses that give engineering short shrift. At least they offer plenty of exposure to how theology and churches can go wrong. More seminary-trained people have come on board since then. Twenty years ago everybody was talking about and criticizing Schuller, his Hour of Power television show and his "possibility thinking. Church growth was a new and radical concept for many. The shallowness Schuller was accused of, caricatured as the Gospel of Success, revolved around his preaching of self-esteem without reflecting on sin and judgment, and his avoidance of controversy through relinquishing a "prophetic" role. Schuller considers Willow Creek founder Bill Hybels his leading disciple, but Hybels is less excited about the relationship. Willow Creek has not opted for national TV, even though it is very media-oriented. It considers itself primarily a community ministryâ€”another plus for church modeling. And Willow Creek is more effective at reaching the boomer generation. Those who want to learn about the people they are trying to reach should get out onto the street talking to hundreds and even thousands. This makes a more constructive impression than reading statistical trends and developing hypotheses about a mythical Harry. Willow Creek loses out in the comparison because of a serious basic weakness: In recent years they have developed hundreds of need-meeting small groups and now offer some seminary courses, but one wonders where they will find the determination and example needed to move into disciplined encounters with the full word of God. Before they can serve, volunteers must complete many hours of course work on Christian topics. There is depth, with effective ways to involve the "loosely churched. In I became a mission developer and established a suburban congregation that aimed to attract the unchurched. A few years later, I left behind a healthy but decidedly small congregation that is now calling a new pastor. My effort was the fourth church plant in the community in seven years. The first was a traditional conservative Presbyterian church that had limited growth. The second was an Evangelical Friends restart that offered a seeker service; it achieved Sunday morning attendance of several hundred but has had to contend with conflict and lost momentum. It is a textbook example of a good plant. I attended one of these services before starting mine and had to acknowledge that they were doing everything I came to do, and doing it well. I have learned that developing topical events with

contemporary music and coordinated drama is hard and demanding work—far different from picking three hymns to insert in the same liturgy with the assigned texts for the day. It calls for high energy from the pastor and many others as well. Keeping everyone motivated and inspired is a challenge in itself. New members and rapid growth can help stimulate energy, but rapid growth remains more the exception than the rule. If the reason for all the extra effort is to attract the unchurched and the results are spotty then this approach seems a prescription for burnout. How often does this happen among the leaders of churches in the Willow Creek Association? Will many last ten or 15 years, let alone 20 or 30?

We would like to show you a description here but the site won't allow us.

Where can I find help? Our pastor will be preaching on forgiveness. Where can I find a sketch that will be appropriate for the service? We want to do an outreach evening for our community. What drama could we perform that would be fun and yet meaningful? Over and over we receive questions like these in our theater office. They come from congregations who are interested in incorporating drama in worship, and over the last ten years their number has mushroomed. For the beginner, the path to building a viable drama ministry is often beset with difficulties— not the least of which is locating resources and training aids. Even for the veteran drama group, finding resource material is often a struggle. Well, there is good news! Help and resources are becoming more abundant and accessible. Several publishers and groups are now specifically addressing the church drama market. Many others have materials available, if you know how and where to look. But the process is not simple, nor is the acquisition of desired scripts a surefire thing. You will do a lot of reading, and, unfortunately, spend some money on scripts you will not use. There seems to be no shortcut to the time-consuming, sometimes costly research necessary, unless your church is blessed with excellent writers who consistently produce quality scripts that fit your situation and purpose. Providing guidance through the resources jungle is somewhat difficult, because needs and artistic expectations vary widely from individual to individual and from group to group. And quality varies greatly, even in works from a particular publisher or resource. Explanations in catalogs, although helpful, give little indication of actual style or quality. You will learn to trust certain writers or sources, but this simply takes experience. So if the source is new to you, try a limited order just to get a feel for what they have to offer. A few of the publishers distribute their publications through bookstores, and you have the opportunity to peruse the works briefly, at least. The list on these pages should give you a place to start locating sketches and training materials, or provide new possibilities for your ongoing search. By the way, even church drama has artistic protections! Clarify royalty and permission requirements; they are unique to each provider. One of the largest and busiest publishers of church drama resources with an extensive collection of dramas suited to a variety of applications— including worship, youth, family, and outreach. Numerous sketch collections, one-acts, and some full-length works are complemented by an array of program builders, how-to books, and technical aids. Distributed through religious bookstores. Each February, Lillenas hosts a major church drama conference. Certainly the leader in making popular the pre-sermon sketch, Willow Creek makes available their original scripts average six minutes. These sketches by various writers are often open-ended and are intended to raise questions and issues that will be addressed by the pastor. Over sketches are indexed by topic; catalog updated annually. Available by volume or singly. Videos of selected sketches, along with instructions to actors and directors, are also available. Churches that become members of the Willow Creek Association receive discounts on product purchases. Offers numerous drama, puppetry, and clowning scripts, skits, and how-to books. Sponsors drama conferences annually. Major source of general plays— one of the largest distributors of full-length plays and one-acts. Write for "Catalogue of Religious Plays," which lists primarily one-acts and collections of shorter pieces. How-to books are also available. Alexandria House, West End Ave. The Drama in Worship series provides slice-of-life sketches. The Living Word series features sketches based on biblical events or characters. Seekers is geared toward the unchurched. Some monologues and short plays and contemporary-issue sketches in a seeker-sensitive format. Audiotapes accompany some scripts. Meriwether publishes a few books relating to church drama and also handles the Contemporary Drama Service collection. Write for "Christian Drama Resources" catalog. Charles, IL ; Another church making available its sketches. Over listed in catalog, with short synopsis of each. Communication Resources, Belden Village St. In addition to a regular series of sketch collections for the church, they offer a newsletter containing articles on all aspects of production and writing. Also carries Cross Point Scripts. Several collections of scripts are available from this national touring company. This drama group, which tours internationally, offers some of its original sketches. Over sketches that have been used by a drama team are available. Indexed on "Topic Search Sheet.

Very similar to Willow Creek, with a wide range of resources. They also publish a monthly magazine with dramas, clip art, and music and sermon text suggestions; very helpful and complete. Friends of the Groom, Center St. All are production-tested by Friends of the Groom. Hope Church has incorporated sketches in their services for seventeen years. Cataloged by topic and Scripture, the scripts are available singly or through a subscription service. House of Prayer Ministries, Florian Ct. This group has published five sketch books, a book with five Christmas plays, and a drama handbook. The Johnsons, a professional touring drama team, offer two-person sketches they have created. The scripts usually deal with contemporary issues, often in a humorous manner. A long-standing Christian professional theater company offers a collection of sketches and a practical guide, *Developing a Church Drama Group*. This touring group has published several of its production-tested sketches. New source for scripts written for the seeker-sensitive congregation. Has a series of twenty-seven sketch collections of slice-of-life scripts, indexed by topic and Scripture verse. The majority of sketches are minutes. Some seasonal pieces are longer one-act length. Scription Drama Company, Flower St. Youth Specialties, Greenfield Dr. Various sketches are included in youth program guidelines. Dedicated to assisting the communication and support of Christians working in all arenas of the dramatic arts—church, school, college, community and professional theater—CITA offers church dramatists the following: An extensive bibliography of resources, updated annually. The list itemizes entries for all genre of dramatic materials, published and unpublished, as well as a number of individual playwrights to contact. Software—Drama for the Church Sketch Directory, version 5. This computer database lists over 1, sketches published by dozens of companies by title, author, topic and number in cast. This annotated sketch bibliography is designed to be a script-search tool and does not contain actual scripts. Networking contacts—find other Christians in your area who are involved in drama. Drama conferences sponsored by CITA on a regional, national, and international level and data on other numerous seminars and conferences held across the country. Newsletter and journal exploring theoretical and practical topics. The more people involved the harder it is to find enough rehearsal time. We rarely use four or five people. It just takes too much time to be able to pull it off well. Look for dramas that only last three to five minutes. Few amateurs have the time to memorize and rehearse longer scripts. Get Scripture texts and sermon themes as far ahead as possible. Then look for dramas that essentially ask questions and raise issues that the Scripture and sermon will address. Treat the drama as a means to introduce issues, not provide answers. Let Scripture and sermon do that. Consider where in the service the drama fits best liturgically. Placement depends on the content and context. For example, we have used dramas as prelude, as a call to confession, or just before the sermon.

Chapter 4 : Top 10 Drama Scripts : Maranatha Music :

Drama consulting services and assistance in locating scripts for specific needs are offered. Cross Point Scripts, Wiltshire Road, Akron, OH ; () 98DRAMA. Very similar to Willow Creek, with a wide range of resources.

What happened to drama in churches? September 1, at 9: By Sharon Sherbondy After its introduction at Willow Creek, and with a three decade run, drama sketches began waning, even at Willow. Sometime during the spring of I was told about a new church " Willow Creek Community Church " that had recently started. I was so intrigued by what I heard about the church that I decided to check it out for myself. Besides contemporary music and a young pastor who spoke directly into my heart, there was drama! They had a six-minute hilarious drama reflecting life as I was living it. What an experience this was. By the time the service was over I was hooked and from that moment on, Willow Creek Community Church became my home church. And drama became my ministry for the next 25 years. Nancy Beach was the one responsible for bringing this art to Willow Creek. She was a huge fan and proponent of drama, and she understood the impact it had on an audience. She invited Rick Wold to be the drama director. He was a gifted writer and director who had an incredible ability to connect with an audience. Skeptics on drama There were, however, skeptics. People accused Willow Creek of being in the entertainment business. Drama never stood on its own, never provided the moral of the story. Its bottom line purpose was to show the conflict, ask the question and then hand the audience over to the pastor. Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek and also a fan of drama, took actors with him, along with vocalists, wherever he spoke. He was not showing off the church. On the contrary, Bill knew what drama did. He knew that drama had the potential of opening up the hearts of his audience so he could minister in a deeper way. Having the privilege of being on many of these trips, I saw again and again people starting the service with their arms crossed but ending up completely open once the drama was done. Not easy to do In just a matter of time, people found themselves drawn to this art and began to desperately want to bring this compelling ministry to their church. But this was easier said than done. Creating a short script was a unique ability in and of itself. Very few understood how to write a beginning, middle and end, introduce and develop characters and conflict all within five to seven minutes and avoid wrapping up the conflict in a nice, neat bow, providing a happy ending. So Willow Creek incorporated drama workshops at their Arts Conferences to address these very needs. People packed the room and took copious notes on everything taught by Steve Pederson, the drama director following previous directors, Rick Wold and Judson Poling. Workshops were offered on acting, directing and writing. Willow Creek scripts became available for purchase. People went home from these conferences pumped up and ready to act. Workshops were held, scripts were being translated and soon dramas were being performed here, too, in their local churches. Drama in the church became a worldwide phenomenon. Professional and amateur actors suddenly found a place to serve. Pastors following dramas, found their congregations ripe for the Word of God. And church attendees found a place that was willing to be honest about life. It was an amazing thing that lasted for three decades. Decline in drama But then things began to change. Drama began to wane. Doing drama in the church was hard. Volunteer drama directors often felt inadequate. They loved the ministry but had little or no idea on how to execute drama. They had no training and no time to be trained. They faced teams who lacked commitment, actors who were limited, and leadership or audiences who were resistant. Willow Creek, the church that started it all, has removed drama from its church service. The thought is that the culture has changed and drama is no longer relevant. In 2 Samuel 12 God sends Nathan to tell David a story " a drama " about a poor farmer, his favorite lamb, and a rich man stealing the lamb for dinner. David clearly identifies with the drama and responds immediately, his heart open wide. Drama was and will always be relevant. It will also be hard. But it is so needed in the church. But for now, drama is on hiatus. My prayer, however, is that drama will return one day with renewed vision, commitment and recognition because it is a tool that God has used to reach his people and churches once used to reach their people.

Chapter 5 : What happened to drama in churches? - Church Executive

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