

A Healthy Hand-Off: Willow Creek's Leadership Transition Signals Spiritual Renewal

In a season where church headlines are too often overshadowed by scandal and division, Willow Creek Community Church just offered us a refreshing and biblically grounded picture of something different, something good.

After five years of guiding the church through a turbulent season, Senior Pastor Dave Dummitt stood before his congregation this past Sunday, Mar. 23, and announced he's stepping down. But let's be clear: this isn't a tale of failure or controversy, it's a testimony of faithful stewardship and a healthy handoff.

"There is no moral failure. There's no scandal. No one has forced me to step down, so sorry bloggers. There's no dirt to dig up," Dummitt said with refreshing honesty and maybe just a hint of humor. "This is just a beautiful healthy handoff, smooth momentum building."

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That momentum matters.

When Dummitt stepped into leadership in April 2020—just as the pandemic began—he inherited not just a pulpit but a crisis. Two years earlier, founding pastor Bill Hybels resigned amid sexual misconduct allegations, leaving behind a cloud of pain and uncertainty. Dummitt's task wasn't just to stabilize the ship, but to restore trust, health and most importantly, a biblical focus.

Together with the elder board and staff, Dummitt said their

goal was to “bring beauty back to our church.” That beauty, he explained, meant returning to the basics: “reach lost people, raise up leaders and fully devoted followers of Jesus.”

And by the numbers, that vision is coming to life, as reported by The Christian Post.

“The attendance was up; the baptisms were up; we saw that 40% of all the new people that are coming to our church weren’t a part of a church before they came to Willow,” Dummitt shared. “Discipleship, the things we use to measure that, groups, teams, giving, all of those things were up and that’s a beautiful, beautiful thing.”

That’s not just church growth, that’s kingdom fruit.

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Now, Dummitt is handing the baton to Shawn Williams, the South Barrington campus pastor and executive pastor of weekends. Williams isn’t a stranger or a stranger to the mission. He’s someone Dummitt personally mentored, and someone he calls “a man of great character” and “a phenomenal communicator.”

This is what healthy, biblical church transition looks like: leaders building up other leaders, disciples raising up disciples and a church staying centered on Christ rather than personalities.

As Dummitt prepares for a new season, consulting, family business and a well-earned rest, he leaves behind a church stronger than it was and poised for a faithful future.

It’s not often we get to say this, but praise God: this is a good story.

It's a reminder that the church is still alive. Still growing. And still being led by men and women who want nothing more than to see Jesus lifted high.

Let's pray that this kind of transition becomes the rule, not the exception.

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