

Megachurch Agrees to Shell Out \$3 Million in Sexual Abuse Lawsuit

Ex-pastor Bill Hybels is not the only person at Willow Creek Community Church accused of taking advantage of those less powerful.

The megachurch has acknowledged that a church volunteer on its campus abused two young boys with special needs.

The Chicago Tribune reports this week that Willow Creek has agreed to pay over \$3 million to settle lawsuits brought by the families of the two boys, who were 8 years old and 9 years old at the time of the abuse.

The *Tribune* reports that court records reveal the church paid \$ million in February to one victim of former volunteer Robert Sobczak. It agreed last year to pay \$1.5 million to the other.

Sobczak, 24, is now serving a seven-year prison sentence after pleading guilty in 2014 to sexually abusing the 8-year-old.

In 2013, he pled guilty to sexually abusing the other boy and initially received probation in the case.

The *Tribune* says Willow Creek issued a statement in response to questions about the settlements, calling the situation "heartbreaking."

Willow Creek also said it has worked to investigate the abuse and prevent future abuse of children in its care. "We have worked with law enforcement and security experts to learn how this happened and how we can ensure it never happens again," the statement explained.

The *Tribune* reports that Cook County prosecutors said Sobczak

separately took the boys to an isolated area of the church to molest them. Church policy calls for at least two adult volunteers to be with any single child at all times. {eo}

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