

Former Church Youth Director Sentenced To 30 Years On Porn Charges

News

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Dennis W. Myers, 53, of Blue Springs, was sentenced by U.S. Chief District Judge Greg Kays to 30 years in federal prison without parole, which is the statutory maximum sentence.



Myers formerly served as a youth director at Christ United Methodist Church in Independence, Mo., and at First United Methodist Church in Springdale, Ark. On Aug. 5, 2013, Myers pleaded guilty to engaging in illicit sexual activity with a 16-year-old victim, identified as Jane Doe #1, after transporting her across state lines, and to receiving child pornography over the Internet.

Myers met Jane Doe #1 when he was youth director at the First United Methodist Church in Springdale. According to court documents, Myers began engaging in sexual activity with the victim when she was 14-15 years old and in the eighth grade. Myers left his employment with the church and started a DJ business in approximately 1993-94, when Jane Doe #1 was 15 years old. He was training Jane Doe #1 to assist him in that business. From November 1994 to November 1995, when Jane Doe #1 was approximately 16 years old, Myers transported her from Arkansas to the Kansas City, Mo., area, where they engaged in sexual intercourse. Court documents report that towards the end of their relationship, as Jane Doe #1 attempted to break away from him, Myers provided her with an excessive amount of wine and raped her as she cried and tried to fight him off.

Years later Myers moved to Blue Springs. Following complaints by two adolescents of inappropriate sexual activity, law enforcement officers searched his home on Sept. 15, 2011, and seized his computer. Forensic examiners found a video of child pornography that had been downloaded from the Internet and viewed on the computer.

Myers was sentenced today as a serial abuser for engaging in a pattern of activity involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of six additional minors, including the victims of a case filed in the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Mo. In relation to the Jackson County case, Myers digitally penetrated a 12-year-old girl and fondled another 12-year-old girl, both of which occurred in his home. According to court documents, Myers has perpetrated other instances of sexual abuse or exploitation of minors, including:

His fondling of a fourth victim, 13 years of age, on an overnight church lock-in;

His fondling of a fifth victim, 16-17 years of age, on a church camping trip;

His fondling of a sixth victim, 15-16 years of age, at his apartment;

His production in his Blue Springs home of a pornographic image of a prepubescent girl, a seventh victim.

In 1994 a victim in Independence wrote to the church in Arkansas to disclose Myers's activities while he had been the youth director in Independence. Myers, who was working at the Arkansas church at the time, intercepted the mail. According to court documents, Myers then wrote to the victim and tried to persuade her not to disclose, telling her, among other things, that it would bring scandal to the church.

The government also offered evidence at today's sentencing hearing of other instances of inappropriate and suspicious, although not criminal, interactions between Myers and neighbor girls.

Under the terms of his plea agreement, Myers must also plead guilty to the charges of statutory sodomy in the first degree and attempted enticement of a child in a pending case in the Circuit

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Court of Jackson County.

The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office will recommend a sentence of 10 years on each of the two state counts to run concurrently with each other and with the federal sentence.