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Church youth pastor charged with molesting teen

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ANOKA, Minn. -- The youth director for a church in Ham Lake stands charged with multiple counts of [criminal sexual conduct](#) in the alleged abuse of a teenage girl.

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A criminal complaint issued against Damian Blake Burkhalter in Anoka County Thursday accuses the youth pastor at Glen Cary Lutheran Church in Ham Lake with repeatedly molesting the girl, then age 14, starting in June of 2010.

The victim told a therapist about the sexual assaults during a session in Kandiyohi County in early June of 2011, and the therapist notified authorities.

Authorities say Burkhalter began the molestations by hugging and kissing the girl, then his behavior escalated to fondling her breasts and attempting intercourse. He allegedly sent her graphic texts and notes describing what he wanted to do to the teen.

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The victim told investigators that the assaults occurred at church, various retreats and youth camps, and at Burkhalter's home in Blaine. At one point the victim says she and her sister were accepted into Burkhalter's family, and he talked of adopting them.

Damian Burkhalter is charged with two counts of 1st degree criminal sexual conduct, and two counts of 2nd degree criminal sexual conduct. Bail is set at \$100,000 without conditions, or \$50,000 with the condition that he have no unsupervised contact with juveniles.

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