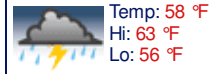

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Minister flees law after sex abuse charges

The Associated Press

(May 1, 2002) — SYRACUSE -- A Baptist minister charged with sexual abuse escaped dozens of deputies who surrounded his house only to be arrested early Wednesday at a local motel.

The Rev. David Gardiner was to be arraigned Wednesday in Salina Town Court on charges of sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child. Onondaga County Sheriff Kevin Walsh declined to provide details about the charges.

Gardiner, 42, is pastor of the Liverpool Baptist Church, a small congregation with about 50 members, said Greg Sigworth, the church's deacon.

Deputies went to Gardiner's home about 5 p.m. Tuesday to question him.

When deputies arrived, Gardiner, who was outside, ran into his home, which is connected to the church. He locked all the doors and refused to come out, Walsh said.

"We were going to talk to him about some crimes, and he ran into the house. Obviously, he didn't want to talk to us," Walsh said.

Walsh said Gardiner's 12-year-old son was inside the house but was napping and unaware of what was happening. When the boy awoke about 8:30 p.m., he came outside. Authorities finally stormed the house about 11 p.m. and discovered that Gardiner was gone.

A brief manhunt ended several hours later when Gardiner was found hiding out a Super 8 Motel in Liverpool, 6 miles northwest of Syracuse.

"e don't know exactly when he got out, but we believe it was before we surrounded the place," Walsh said.



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