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Former church leader arrested on sexual abuse charges

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LENORE - According to information gathered from a criminal complaint filed in Mingo County Magistrate Court, a former youth leader at a church in Lenore is now facing sexual abuse charges.

West Virginia State Police Senior Trooper C.A. Allen says the suspect, 52-year-old Gary Adkins, the 7 year-old victim's uncle, is accused of inappropriately touching the female child and faces three separate charges that includes two counts of third-degree sexual assault (felony), and one count of sexual abuse (misdemeanor) by a parent, guardian, custodian or person in a position of trust of a child. Adkins was charged Tuesday.

Adkins had been a minister at Parsley Bottom Freewill Baptist Church until a few months ago and had earlier worked as a youth group leader there, and many members of the congregation say the defendant has an excellent reputation and find the allegations hard to believe.

"That's just not in his character," Jacqueline Parsley, who used to go to church with Adkins said, during an interview with the media.

"If the family will just be careful and be patient, the truth will come out, guilty or not," Parsley said.

According to the arresting officer, the allegations against Adkins were reported to the state Child Protective Services on July 10 of this year, after the 7-year-old told her mom that her uncle had sexually abused her during the summer months of 2012 while she was visiting his home on Upper Sheppard Town Road, located off of U.S. Highway 119.

The victim said the defendant made her "play with his belly button" and stated that "it was nasty." The mother of the child told CPS that she had observed some serious changes in her daughter's behavior, such as the 7-year-old paying extra attention to cleanliness, not wanting to be away from her mom and a fear of returning to

the uncle's house for a visit. A teacher at the school the victim attends said the child was obsessed with washing her hands and would scrub them until they were "red and looked like she was wearing gloves," saying that she couldn't get the "nasty off of them".

The child also relayed to the mom a few days after the first allegations were made that Adkins had made the child put her hands down his pants and feel his privates. The victim, according to the mother, had inappropriate knowledge for a child her age and was in fear that more abuse had happened to her daughter than had been disclosed, especially due to the fact that she had spent quite a bit of time in the defendant's care.

During the course of the interview with the victim, Douglas reported that the complainant restated much of the preliminary information gathered during the information, but went more in-depth with examples of her daughter's strange behavior and questions, reporting how the 7-year-old asked her repeatedly if she was "nasty on the inside and out," frequently prayed and asked God to forgive her of all her sins and refused to touch certain items such as blankets that she believed her uncle had come into contact with.

In September, a forensic interview was conducted with an older sibling of the victim who claimed to have witnessed the defendant fondling and touching the victim while she was sitting on his lap, and said that he got her away from the uncle when he realized what was going on.

Another family member of Adkins who is now 28 years of age and resides in Indiana spoke with the state police and told them she had gone through similar circumstances while visiting the defendant, stating how he would get her to lie on the couch with him when she was between the ages of 7-10 and would touch her inappropriately.

The troopers investigating the alleged crime asked that if someone else has been a victim of Adkins, they are asked to come forward. They may contact Douglas or Trooper Hensley by calling 304-235-6000 at the Williamson Detachment.

Adkins was arraigned by Mingo County Magistrate Dee Sidebottom and was released from the custody of the Southwestern Regional Jail after posting bond and is scheduled to appear back in court after the holidays for a preliminary hearing.

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