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News

Las Vegas Pastor Charged with Molesting Boys

by Kilian Melloy
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Billy McCurdy

In a case with striking parallels to claims made against anti-gay megachurch pastor Eddie Long, a Las Vegas cleric stands accused of using his status as a man of the cloth--and the citation of Biblical passages--to coax young male victims into sexual encounters.

Billy McCurdy of Revival Temple Church of God in Christ was arrested and charged with 11 counts after two teen boys told authorities that the pastor had sexually abused them. McCurdy had been accused, but not tried, of similar abuse five years ago, reported the Las Vegas Review-Journal on Oct. 8.

The two teens had lived with McCurdy for a time, the account said. McCurdy has been involved with youths in his work with the church, leading trips and offering a place to stay to youths in need. In 2005, at a "swim and slumber party," McCurdy allegedly attempted to fondle a 15-year-old boy with whom he was sharing a bed for the night. However, the Review-Journal reported at the time, authorities declined to prosecute, citing "conflicting evidence."

"We didn't feel we could prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt," said David Roger, the district attorney at the time. "There was conflicting evidence concerning the accuser."

McCurdy is currently being held without bail, reported the Las Vegas Sun, which said in an Oct. 8 article that McCurdy faces six counts of open or gross lewdness and another five counts of sexual assault. News sources said that police arrested McCurdy on Oct. 8 following an eight-month investigation.

The charges brought by the accusers echo claims against Atlanta-based megachurch pastor Eddie Long, an outspoken opponent of GLBT equality. A suit against Long by three men claiming he abused them when they were teenagers makes similar claims that Long used his influence as a spiritual leader and cited passages from scripture to draw the young men into sexual encounters. Because the men were already of the age of legal consent at the time of the alleged sexual encounters, Long does not face legal consequences. But the scandal has sent ripples through the African American church community, and sparked renewed conversation about homophobia among African American people of faith.

Kilian Melloy serves as EDGE Media Network's Assistant Arts Editor, writing about film, theater, food and drink, and travel, as well as contributing a column. His professional memberships include the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association, the Boston Online Film Critics Association, and the Boston Theater Critics Association's Elliot Norton Awards Committee.

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