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Minister accused of sex assault

Youth pastor faces charges in alleged contact with girl, 15

By **Melissa Knopper, Rocky Mountain News**
November 15, 2002

Denver police arrested a 26-year-old youth minister with St. John's Church of God in Christ after a 15-year-old member accused him of sexual assault.

MacFranklin Alexander, of 4800 Hale Parkway, faces charges of felony sexual assault on a child, sexual assault on a child by one in a position of trust and sexual assault on a child involving a pattern of conduct.

Alexander is accused of having ongoing sexual contact with the girl for about three months, said Lt. John Priest of the Denver Police Department's Crimes Against Persons Bureau.

"This individual has known the victim for some time," Priest said. "He is the minister of music for the church and deals with young people."

Investigators do not believe that Alexander, who was arrested Wednesday, was involved with any other children in the congregation, and he does not have a history of sexual abuse convictions. Priest would not comment on where the alleged assaults took place.

The head minister of St. John's Church of God in Christ, Jay Betts, was not available for comment Thursday. But the spiritual leader of the Church of God in Christ denomination for the state of Colorado, Bishop Frank Johnson, said he was looking into Alexander's arrest.

Johnson said he was not sure if Alexander was a licensed member of the clergy or simply a member of the congregation who has the title of minister.

"We won't tolerate anything like that," Johnson said. "He can't have anything to do with the church if he has been accused of something like this."

Johnson said the Church of God in Christ is a Pentecostal denomination with 53 churches in Colorado.

St. John's Church of God in Christ is a tiny congregation with just a handful of members, said Pastor Phil Campbell of Park Hill Congregational Church at 2600 Leyden Street.

For the past few years, Campbell's church has been renting space to St. John's Church of God in Christ because it does not have its own building. Members of the church use one of Park Hill Congregational's Sunday school classrooms for their weekly services and a Wednesday

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evening Bible-study session.

"They are kind of like what people describe as a storefront church except they don't have a storefront," Campbell said. "When they have big gathering, about 20 people gather."

Campbell said he does not know Alexander well. He said he doesn't have any reason to believe that the assaults took place in the church.

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