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Saturday, October 21, 2006

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Pastor charged with molestation of boy

HERNANDO, Miss. - A former Mississippi pastor who is now serving at a church in Tennessee has been charged with molestation of a boy over a four-year period in DeSoto County, authorities say.

Maj. Don Gammage, chief of detectives for the Olive Branch Police Department, said the Rev. Jack Price was arrested earlier this week in Fayette County, Tenn.

Price, 53, is the former pastor at [Fairhaven Baptist Church](#) in Olive Branch. He is presently pastor at [Ebenezer Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Mason, Tenn.](#), authorities said.

Price was returned to Mississippi on Tuesday.

"We had been investigating the allegations for about a month," Gammage said Wednesday.

Price is charged with touching a child for lustful purpose, a crime under Mississippi's molestation law.

District Attorney John Champion said conviction carries a maximum punishment of 15 years for each count, plus a fine of up to \$10,000. Champion said the normal procedure is to only charge a single count when dealing with a child as a witness.

"That way, you specify the beginning and ending dates and everything between those dates is admissible. If you charge multiple counts, then you must present evidence about each and every specific date charged. That's tough," he said.

Gammage said the alleged molestation began in September 2000 and continued periodically through September 2004.

"There were multiple instances over this time period in Olive Branch. We're working with other agencies to see whether additional instances of molestations occurred in other places," he said.

The boy was 11 when the molestations began and they continued until the youth was 15, Gammage said.

"We only became aware of the situation in September when we received a complaint from the boy's mother," Gammage said. "She only learned of the situation then."

Gammage would not say where the molestations took place or the circumstances in which they occurred.

Price served as the pastor of the Olive Branch church several years ago. Gammage said he had been gone from Fairhaven for about three years.

Price was held Thursday in the DeSoto County Jail under \$100,000 bond.

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