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# San Bernardino Church Named in Sexual Abuse Lawsuit

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It's probably safer to stay out of church altogether and watch services on TV.

A lawsuit filed against the First Baptist Church of Hesperia alleges that the pastor knew about sexual abuse being committed by his church deacon, and did nothing about it. Roy Long, an 88-year-old former deacon at the First Baptist Church of Hesperia, was accused of molesting two minor girls who were in his charge. The sexual abuse reportedly continued over a period of four years from 1996 to 2000. The girls initially did not confide in anybody until years later, when they turned 17 they told their mother.

Long later pleaded guilty to sexual intercourse with minors and molesting girls under the age of 18. He was arrested in November last year and sentenced to time served and four years probation, due to his advanced years.

Now ,a lawsuit has been filed against the pastor of the church where Long served. The lawsuit filed by a Los Angeles based firm is alleging that pastor Wayne Stockstill was aware of the sexual abuse, but chose to remain silent about it.

The lawsuit also sues Long for damages, besides the church itself.

The case against Wayne Stockstill and the church stems from an incident when a female witness saw Long abuse one of the plaintiffs on a wagon hay ride at the church's Fall Festival. The shocked woman immediately went to Stockstill, and recounted what she had seen. Upon this, Stockstill apparently told her that he would "take care of the matter". Apparently, the good pastor was in no hurry to take care of matters at all. The witness was shocked when she heard of Long's arrest last year, and to know that the deacon had not been dealt with at all. She wrote a letter to the pastor, upon which she received a reply in which he admitted that he made an "egregious mistake" in his handling of Long, and that he had "erred on the side of grace" choosing not to believe the witness.

In short, he decided to not believe a first person account, and instead let the sexual abuse continue. It's possible that there are more victims in this sordid tale. This is also the reason why The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has publicly released Roy Long's photograph. They hope that other victims will come forward to tell their story and strengthen the case against him.

There has been a tendency on the part of the church to rely on forgiveness and grace when it comes to pedophile crimes committed by their church leaders. The oft-repeated mantra – even when these offenders come to court to give testimony – is forgiveness and prayer for the perpetrator's sins. That's a very touching sentiment, but we must make sure that priests and other church members are not allowed to get away with such crimes. The only way to do that, unfortunately, since moral and spiritual influence seem so sorely lacking in these people, is to hold the church itself responsible for keeping their staff in order. In this case, the church relied on contributions by its members and the church has complained that it will essentially be driven bankrupt in the event of a multi-million dollar settlement – which is common in such cases. We think such settlements will serve to enforce better verification checks while recruiting leaders instead of crying about the possibility of going broke after unspeakably heinous crimes have been committed.

If you or a loved one have been the **victim of sexual abuse**, you need the help of an

experienced **California personal injury attorney**. Contact a lawyer at The Reeves Law Group for a free consultation.



Posted by Robert Reeves at 2:40 pm - no comments

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