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Warren church accused of allowing pastor, principal to rape boy

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Officials of a Warren church and religious school should have stopped obvious “grooming” of a teenage boy whom the church’s pastor later raped. A lawsuit also claims the pastor never should have been hired because the church knew about his pedophilic tendencies.

In a civil action replete with disturbing accusations, the unidentified boy says employees and officials of Antioch Baptist Church and Academy failed mightily to detect and prevent the actions of convicted rapist Christopher Settlemoir.

“The rape of a minor child occurred dozens of times while the staff turned the blind eye crime (sic) being perpetrated against a child within their care,” says the lawsuit filed Friday by “John Doe” in

Macomb County Circuit Court in Mount Clemens. “(Antioch) had a duty to self-report to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement that plaintiff... was at risk of and actually was being sexually abused.” Settlemoir in 2011 pleaded no contest each to two counts each of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, second-degree criminal sexual conduct and accosting a child for immoral purposes for assaults that police said lasted more than a year ending in June 2010. He also was accused of sending explicit text messages to a second boy.

The 29-year-old former Warren resident, who was married and had an infant daughter, is serving a seven- to 15-year prison term.

The lawsuit alleges that officials should have been aware of Settlemoir grooming the teen, who was being raised by a single mother whose father “was not an active part of his life.” Settlemoir “vetted, targeted, identified, befriended and then molested” the victim, the lawsuit says.

The 15-year-old victim’s mother went to the Warren police on June 9, 2010, showing them incriminating text messages.

The lawsuit was filed by attorneys James Simasko and John Perrin under the plaintiff name “John Doe” to protect the victim’s identity.

Officials at the Dequindre Road school and church knew or should have known that Settlemoir was discharged from a college pastor internship program in Indiana “when he continued to bring young boys back to his apartment for ‘movie night’ despite warnings to stop” and rang up \$100 in charges for “gay porn” on his cable TV, the lawsuit says.

Telephone messages left to the school principal and general voice mailboxes were not returned Monday.

The victim has since graduated from high school and remains in counseling, Perrin said.

The lawsuit claims assault and battery, negligence and violation of a state law that requires officials to report suspected child abuse.

The lawsuit seeks more than \$25,000 in damages, but Simaski said, “We feel the damages are in the multi-millions of dollars. No amount of money can make up for what happened to him.”

The plaintiff seeks compensation for emotional distress, post-traumatic stress disorder, humiliation, isolation, damage to reputation and resulting physical manifestations.

The case is a reminder to parents that “you can never let your guard down” to ensure their children remain protected from potential child predators, Simasko said.

The lawsuit alleges that Settlemoir’s wife, Eunice, a teacher at the school, and his secretary, Gail Boggs, must have known about Settlemoir’s activities.

Ten other employees, directors or officers at Antioch as well as Settlemoir are also named.

Other accusations, according to the lawsuit, include:

- Settlemoir frequently had Boggs remove the boy from the class taught by his wife as well as other classes, including Bible class, to go to Settlemoir’s office, where he locked the door and kept the boy for long periods during which assaults occurred.
- Boggs knew that Settlemoir “had solicited sexually explicit photographs from her own son, who was by that time an adult.”
- After the accusations surfaced, the defendants accused the victim of “being a liar and instigator of his own rape.”
- Eunice Settlemoir “attempted to conceal and later recruited other members of (Antioch) to destroy a laptop belonging to her husband to prevent police from obtaining evidence.”
- Eunice Settlemoir saw her husband bring boys to his home where he displayed “inappropriate affection toward” the victim, and committed one of the rapes while she was at home. Some illicit photos were taken there.
- Settlemoir’s conduct was “so obvious that even other students recognized and commented” on it.
- Settlemoir exchanged cell phone photographs of his erect penis and those of the victim and other male classmates, “pretending that his conduct was just a ‘game.’”
- As basketball coach, Settlemoir watched players change clothes in the locker room and often commented on the size of their sexual organs. He tried to “humiliate certain male children” by ridiculing the size of the youths’ organ.
- Settlemoir rewarded one youth with “Monster” energy drinks for providing pornographic images.
- Settlemoir openly referred to some students as “boyfriends.”

Settlemoir’s no contest plea in criminal court was treated as a guilty plea there but provides him some legal protection in civil court because he made no open admissions.

The case was assigned to Judge Edward Servitto.

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