

Mom of abused boy sues ex-pastor, churches

The lawsuit says area Baptist groups should have protected the Lake boy. His former pastor is in prison.

Stephen Hudak | Sentinel Staff Writer
July 5, 2007

TAVARES - The mother of a Lake County boy who was sexually abused by his pastor has sued the clergyman, two area churches and two Baptist groups, maintaining they should have protected her son.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified compensatory damages for the boy's continuing psychotherapy from the Rev. Douglas W. Myers, his defunct Triangle Community Church in Eustis, Bay Street Baptist Church in Eustis, the Lake County Baptist Association and the Jacksonville-based Florida Baptist Convention.

Lawyers for the boy, identified in court documents as "E," contend that the church groups should have known that Myers, 58, was "unsuitable" to be a pastor.

The lawsuit says the mother and son may ask for punitive damages as well.

Myers, who pleaded guilty to a single count of lewd and lascivious molestation, was sentenced Jan. 3 to seven years in prison. He admitted having sexual contact with the boy repeatedly during a six-month period.

The boy, now high-school age, was 13 at the time of the abuse.

Myers, who founded the Triangle church in 2005, met the child at Bay Street Baptist Church and earned his mother's trust by driving him to school, taking him to Walt Disney World and giving him money.

The lawsuit states that Myers had been anointed a "church planter" by the Baptist organizations -- meaning he was recruited by them to establish a new church to spread the faith.

It also states that Florida Baptist Church provided Myers with health insurance while the Lake County Baptist Association gave him office space.

Representatives for the county and the state church groups would not comment on the allegations.

But the lawsuit's inclusion of Bay Street Baptist Church puzzled its senior pastor, Mark Douglas, a sheriff's chaplain who reported the sexual abuse of the boy to then-Sheriff Chris Daniels.

Douglas learned of the abuse when the boy confided in him.

He refuted the lawsuit's claim that Bay Street Baptist was the "mother church" of Myers' Triangle Community Church.

He said Myers started the church with his own money. Myers held services in a storefront space at a nearby shopping plaza.

Stephen Hudak can be reached at 352-742-5930 or shudak@orlandosentinel.com.