

Joyce Meyer Ministries Named in Wrongful Death Suit

✖ Joyce Meyer Ministries (JMM) has been named in a wrongful death lawsuit claiming the Missouri-based organization did not do enough to keep its security manager, Christopher Coleman, from allegedly murdering his wife and two sons.

The lawsuit, filed Monday on behalf of Sheri Coleman's family, claims the ministry failed to thoroughly investigate a series of death threats made against Coleman and his family. The family claims an investigation would have revealed that Coleman was the source of the threats, and that the police likely would have been alerted of the potential danger he posed to his family.

Sheri Coleman, 31, and her two sons, ages 9 and 11, were found dead in their beds in early May. Coleman, 32, who provided security for Meyer and members of her staff, was fired from the ministry a week after the murders. He is being jailed on three counts of first-degree murder and has pleaded not guilty.

Police told the court that Coleman was having an affair and that the ministry has a policy barring employees from divorcing. The plaintiffs' attorney told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that JMM knew of Coleman's affair, but the ministry's attorney denied that claim.

The lawsuit, which seeks more than \$50,000 in damages from the ministry and Coleman, claims Meyer's organization received several threats that Coleman and his family would be killed because of his work with the ministry.

An e-mail sent last November to Mike Cole, a ministry employee, said "Tell Chris his family is dead. They don't deserve to live with someone that protects the [expletive] Joyce."

Another threat, received through the ministry's Web site, said, "Tell Joyce to stop preaching [expletive] or Chris's family will die. If I can't get to Joyce then I will get to someone close to her and if I can't get to him I will kill his wife and kids. I know Joyce's schedule so then I know Chris' schedule."

Police told the court they tracked the electronic threats to Coleman's computer at the ministry headquarters near St. Louis, the *Post-Dispatch* reported.

The lawsuit claims the ministry should have known that Coleman wrote and delivered the threats because of its electronic communication policy. The policy prohibits employees from sending inappropriate messages and alerts employees that the ministry reserves the right to monitor and access any electronic messages.

The plaintiffs claim the ministry should have known the source of the threats; the organization was negligent by failing to confront or terminate Coleman, notify his wife or turn the threat information over to police.

In a statement, JMM said it was not aware that Coleman was the source of the threats and that "upon receipt of the threats against Chris Coleman, the Ministry directed that appropriate law enforcement be contacted regarding the threats," the *Post-Dispatch* reported. "The Ministry has cooperated in every respect with law enforcement in the investigation of these crimes."

The ministry also has said that "no reasonable person would suggest that any employer should be responsible for the criminal acts of its employees committed against his or her

family outside of work just because that person is an employee," according to the newspaper.

Although Coleman is also named as a defendant in the suit, Enrico Mirabelli, a Chicago attorney and cousin of Sheri Coleman, told the *Post-Dispatch* that the ministry is at the center of the case. "The devil is in the details and the details are in Joyce Meyer Ministry."