

Attorney: Prayer Group Killing Confession Made Up

An attorney for a Kansas City man charged with killing the wife of his **prayer** group leader said Wednesday that he made up his confession after other group members dropped him off at a police station.

Attorney Melanie Morgan said 23-year-old Micah Moore was distraught over the death of 27-year-old Bethany Deaton when he confessed to killing her and made a series of stunning allegations detailed by police in a criminal complaint.

Moore, who lived with Deaton and her husband, Tyler, in a communal home shared by male members of their **prayer** group, told police that several members had sexually assaulted Bethany Deaton and were worried she would tell someone. Moore said that's when Tyler Deaton ordered him to kill Bethany Deaton, according to the complaint.

Moore, who has been charged with murder, was scheduled for a preliminary hearing Wednesday, but that was delayed when the prosecutor's office asked for more time to take the case before a grand jury.

Afterward, Morgan read a statement recanting Moore's confession, which she described as "bizarre and nonsensical."

She did not address his allegations that Bethany Deaton had been sexually assaulted or that Tyler Deaton had ordered his wife's death. Morgan also declined to take any questions.

Tyler Deaton has not been charged in his wife's death. Jackson County prosecutor Jean Peters Baker has said Deaton is under investigation but declined to elaborate. Deaton does not have a listed phone number and did not respond to requests for comment The Associated Press made through Facebook and phone

and email messages to his father.

Police have said Bethany Deaton's death initially appeared to be a suicide. Officers found a note and empty bottle of over-the-counter pain medication along with her body in a minivan parked by a lake on Oct. 30.

It wasn't until Moore confessed on Nov. 9 that they announced a homicide investigation.

Tyler and Bethany Deaton moved to Kansas City in 2009 from Texas to attend a six-month internship at the non-accredited International House of Prayer University. The two had met as freshmen at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, in 2005, and two years later Tyler started a prayer group, a former longtime member of the group told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was afraid of retaliation from Tyler Deaton.

Tyler Deaton was listed at one point as a division coordinator for IHOPU's "friendship groups," but the school said that was a mistake. It issued a statement distancing itself from Tyler Deaton after Moore, a student at IHOPU, was arrested.

"Since Bethany's death it has come to light that over five years ago, both she and Mr. Moore joined an independent, close-knit, religious group in Georgetown, Texas," the school said in a statement. "This religious group of fewer than 20 people was led by Tyler Deaton. They relocated to Kansas City over the last few years and operated under a veil of secrecy."

IHOPU is the educational arm of **International House of Prayer of Kansas City**, an evangelical Christian group focused on missions and preparation for the end of time.

The Deatons' prayer group had at least two houses, with women living in one and men in another. Bethany Deaton, 27, moved into the men's house with Tyler Deaton after they married in August.

According to the criminal complaint, Moore told police that men in the house began drugging Bethany Deaton and sexually assaulting her soon after she moved in. He said she was seeing a therapist and group members became concerned she would tell the therapist about the assaults.

Moore and other men who lived in the house told police that several group members also were having sexual relations with Tyler Deaton, unbeknownst to his wife. One man, whose name was blacked out of the criminal complaint, told police that Tyler Deaton said after Bethany Deaton died that he had had a dream he killed his wife by suffocating her.

Moore told detectives Tyler Deaton instructed him to kill Bethany Deaton because he knew Moore had it in him to do it, and that Moore reported back to Tyler Deaton after she was dead. Moore told police that he had placed a bag over Bethany Deaton's head and held it there until her body shook.

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