

Baptist Pastor Jack Schaap Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison in Teen Sex Case

A former pastor of an Indiana **megachurch** was sentenced to 12 years in prison on Wednesday on charges resulting from a sexual relationship he had with a teenage parishioner he was counseling.

Jack Schaap, 55, pastor for 11 years at the First Baptist Church of Hammond, had pleaded guilty to a federal charge of transporting a minor across state lines with intent to engage in sexual activity, according to the U.S. Attorney's office for the northern district of Indiana.

The church, located in a Chicago suburb, has 40,000 members and typically has 15,000 people in church on a given Sunday. Schaap was employed by the church and the associated Hyles-Anderson College for about 30 years, according to a spokesman for the church.

The girl was 16 when the encounters began and turned 17 during the course of the activity, according to prosecutors. U.S. District Judge Rudy Lozano gave Schaap two years' more prison time than prosecutors had recommended and also ordered five years of supervised release.

Schaap had told the court before sentencing that he was stressed and burned out at the time of the offense from working 100-hour weeks, and also was suffering from prostatitis, according to the prosecutors' sentencing memorandum. More than 140 letters in his support were sent to the court.

But prosecutors noted in the memorandum that Schaap and his victim spoke on the phone or texted each other 662 times in

one month, and they spent extended time together, which would suggest he managed to find breaks in his busy schedule.

“Rather than stress, exhaustion, depression or medical maladies ... the findings of the government’s investigation suggest that it was lust, hubris and poor judgment that prompted defendant’s much-deserved fall from grace,” prosecutors wrote.

Adultery is grounds for dismissal under the church’s bylaws, and Schaap was fired last summer following an internal investigation.

Reporting by Mary Wisniewski; Editing by Greg McCune and Steve Orlofsky

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