

# Christian Charity: Managers Knew Missionary Sexually Abused Kids but Let Him Keep Serving

A Christian charity says that two managers knew for years that a missionary under their charge was sexually abusing children, but they let him continue as a missionary in Haiti.

Ohio missionary Jeriah Mast was indicted July 3 with 14 charges involving “gross sexual imposition,” according to NBC News. The abuse took place in Ohio and involved minors younger than 16, some under the age of 13. The sexual abuse allegedly took place between 1998 and 2008, but 38-year-old Mast pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Mast also allegedly sexually abused children while serving as a missionary in Haiti with Christian Aid Ministries (CAM).

The ministry’s board of directors released an open letter on July 9, stating that two managers at CAM knew about Mast’s abuse since 2013. They wrote that Mast had told these two managers that he had participated in sexual activity with boys under 18 in Haiti.

“CAM’s board of directors was not aware of any sexual conduct between Jeriah and minors until 2019,” CAM wrote. “Paul Weaver and Eli Weaver are two men who have faithfully served the Lord and our ministry for many years in management roles. Unfortunately, they allowed Jeriah to continue to work in the field even after his confession in 2013 of sexual activity with young men that had taken place several years prior. Both men recognize that their failure to properly investigate and inquire into Jeriah’s conduct was a serious failure in judgment and should have severe consequences.”

The board of directors also said they placed the two managers on administrative leave during the investigation into their role in the abuse.

Mast had been in Haiti for six years by 2013, working in post-hurricane aid, medicine distribution to clinics and school aid, according to KVOA.

Robert Flores, an attorney representing CAM, told NBC News that "the minor victims in Haiti that we are aware of were taking part in local schools or programs to which CAM was providing assistance or support, such as food or materials."

In another open letter on Sept. 20, the board of directors stated that an Anabaptist care group with no affiliation to CAM recently went to Haiti to learn how to equip Haitian pastors to care for victims.

"We sincerely apologize that this abuse was committed by our employee," they wrote. "We are grateful for those who have made themselves available to meet emotional and spiritual needs. Our desire is for victims to experience healing."

CAM confirmed they would provide "appropriate assistance" for known victims of Mast's abuse, which includes housing, vocational training and more. The ministry also says it is strengthening its background checks and screening as well as its current whistleblower and accountability programs.

Shining Light Christian Fellowship said in a statement issued June 12 that Mast confessed his sins of sexual abuse within 24 hours of returning to the U.S.

"He went through a couple days of deep repentance," the church's ministry team wrote. "He confessed multiple instances of immoral sexual relationships with boys, which began in his youth. He acknowledged to living a life of deception and hypocrisy. He also confessed that he lied to cover up his sins."

“Jeriah spent hours on his face weeping and wailing over his sins and feeling such remorse over the hurt he caused so many people.”

The church says it prepared a “Restoration Plan” with “strict parameters” to ensure that Mast no longer continues his abuse. This plan includes someone knowing at all times where Mast is, not allowing him to be alone with minor boys and requiring him to pursue counseling for further treatment. The ministry team says it is fully cooperating with law enforcement.

After confessing to church leadership, Mast confessed his crimes to the Holmes County Sheriff’s Office, says Chief Deputy Richard L. Huan Jr. During his confession, Mast admitted to crimes in Holmes County, Ohio, and Haiti. Huan also says the FBI is investigating Mast’s alleged abuse in Haiti.

Ludwig Leblanc, a Haiti-based attorney who represented five of Mast’s alleged victims, says that his clients did indeed meet Mast through CAM’s programs. But Leblanc says the abuse did not take place on the ministry’s property in Haiti. His clients are now in their mid-20s.

The young men have each received \$10,000 from CAM, Leblanc says, and as a result, his clients did not pursue civil action in Haiti.

“You need to understand the economic situation of our country. These kids don’t go to school and need money,” Leblanc wrote in an email. “We were in the process of building a strong case with psychologists and doctors but they decided to take the money. After that, I decided not to continue to represent them.”

Mast’s jury trial in Ohio is scheduled to begin Nov. 5. {eo}