

Virginia Megachurch Sex Scandal Continues to Rock ROC

Four of the five pastors at Richmond Outreach Center (ROC) in Virginia resigned last week amid a sex scandal, but its members are working toward a new beginning. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reports that Jonathan Falwell will begin advising the church's board of directors.

Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., is a son of the late Jerry Falwell. ROC board member Billy Croxton said on Saturday that Falwell and one of his executive pastors "would serve as spiritual advisers and offer counsel as the ROC looks for a new leader while continuing to operate the church's ministries," according to the *Times-Dispatch*.

"Pastor Falwell continues to support the mission and vision of the ROC," Croxton said.

The board announced Wednesday that it had accepted the resignations of its founding pastor, Geronimo Aguilar, and pastors Jason Helmlinger, Andrew Delgado and Matthew Aguilar.

"We wish the best for the pastors and their families," the board said in a brief statement. "The Richmond Outreach Center remains focused on serving those in need and we will never stray from this mission."

The resignations followed a scandal-filled month, when Geronimo Aguilar—known as "Pastor G"—was charged in Texas with seven felonies in two cases of sexual assault of two sisters under the age of 14.

The alleged assaults—which were said to have taken place before Aguilar founded ROC in 2001—date back to 1996. Four of the felonies he faces carry potential life sentences.

Helmlinger, a former Henrico County police officer, faces charges for allegedly threatening former ROC pastor Allen Caldwell, who said Helmlinger "cursed at him during a phone conversation and used racial slurs," the *Times-Dispatch* said.

In the first time church officials have spoken publicly since Aguilar's arrest on May 21, Croxton and Stephen C. Lewis, the church's attorney, discussed ROC's future.

"The board's role, from which we have not strayed, is to continue to position the ROC so it advances its mission of changing lives and making life-changers for many years to come," Croxton commented. "The ROC plays a critical role in helping the less fortunate in our city."

He added later, "There are too many hurting people still in the city of Richmond, and we need to go get them. There are too many people that need help: the drug addict, the child we pick up, the people that need groceries."

Croxton said several pastors, in addition to Falwell, will assist in looking for a replacement of ROC's senior pastor. He is not sure how long the search will take or what guidelines will be set.

"We're pretty new at this, and you need to understand that we're an extremely young church; we've never had to do this before. We're going to wait and see what God has in store for us," he said.