

Philadelphia Faith-Healer Couple Gets 7 Years in Prison for Infant Son's Death

A Philadelphia faith-healing father and mother were sentenced on Wednesday to up to seven years in prison for the death of their infant son, the second of their children to die after an illness.

Seven-month-old Brandon Schaible died on April 18 of bacterial pneumonia and dehydration. His parents Herbert and Catherine Schaible were found guilty of third-degree homicide, endangering the welfare of a child and conspiracy.

Prosecutors said they did nothing to help the baby when he fell ill and at the sentencing in Common Pleas Court, Assistant District Attorney Joanne Pescatore said the case "haunts" her.

The Schaibles belong to the First Century Gospel Church in North Philadelphia, whose members believe in the power of divine healing.

"I have never seen in my career a case like this," said Judge Benjamin Lerner in handing down the sentences of three-and-a-half to seven years in prison.

Brandon was the second Schaible child to die. In 2009, Kent Schaible, age 2, also died of bacterial pneumonia.

In the earlier case, the parents were convicted of involuntary manslaughter and put on 10 years' probation on the condition their surviving children got annual physical checkups and were taken to a medical professional if they were ill.

Herbert Schaible, 45, and Catherine Schaible, 44, have seven remaining children.

They pleaded no contest to the charges stemming from Brandon's death in November, averting a trial.

Since May, the mother has been under house arrest and the father has been in jail.

He said in court that he knew he and his wife "slipped" by failing to carry out the earlier court order to get the children medical care.

"It won't happen again," he said. "I am extremely sorry for what happened to my two sons."

Their remaining children range in age from 4 to 18 and all but the eldest are in foster care. The eldest son is too old for such care.

Editing by Ellen Wulfhorst and Gunna Dickson

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