

Prominent Virginia Pastor Arrested in Police Prostitution Sting

The senior co-pastor at Rock Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, was arrested last week during a police sting and accused of solicitation, several media outlets are reporting.

John Blanchard, 51, was one of 17 men arrested in the police operation, in reported. The men were allegedly looking for sex through online and social media platforms.

“During the two-day operation, detectives intercepted suspects who believed they were soliciting sex from minors,” a statement from the Virginia Beach Police Department read. The Chesterfield County Police Special Victims Unit told in Virginia Beach that the suspects believed they were soliciting sex from minors, but they were actually communicating with police detectives.

Blanchard has since voluntarily stepped down from the senior pastor role. reported that the church released a statement on Facebook Wednesday morning, but that post has since been taken down. captured the entire church statement before it was removed:

“Pastor Blanchard has voluntarily stepped back as lead pastor and from all his ministerial duties until this present situation is totally resolved. During this season, Bishop Anne Gimenez will be stepping in as Lead Pastor and sharing the pulpit with Pastor Robin Blanchard.

As followers of Christ, we must remember that redemption, salvation, grace, mercy and healing are all gifts given to the children of God. Although everyone must address their own convictions and consequences, our assignment as believers is

not to condemn, but to be agents of God's love, healing, justice, and reconciliation. (Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"). If we are to walk in eternity with Christ, our position must be one of truth, love, faith, mercy, justice, and forgiveness.

Thank you for your prayers and support. The outpouring of love has been overwhelming and we appreciate all of those who have reached out to be an encouragement to us!"

We would ask that the privacy of the Blanchard family be respected as they walk through this difficult journey together.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) - Ephesians 2:4-5 Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18)."

Blanchard was arrested on Oct. 29 on charges of solicitation of prostitution from a minor age 16 or older and using a vehicle to promote unlawful sex. He was released on bond, reported.

The men arrested ranged in age from 24 to 51, and the majority were from Virginia. One suspect was from Maryland. Blanchard is scheduled to be arraigned in Chesterfield Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court on Nov. 15 on the two charges.

Blanchard has been the senior pastor at Rock Church since 2013. He spoke to the congregation last on Oct. 31, reported.

Rock Church was founded by John and Anne Gimenez in 1968. John Gimenez passed away in 2008. WAVY-TV reports that Robin Blanchard will remain in the pulpit while Anne Gimenez will step into the role as lead pastor in the interim. {eo}

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