

Virginia Megachurch Pastor's Attorney Faces Assault Charges

The defense attorney who represents former megachurch pastor Geronimo Aguilar was arrested for allegedly assaulting a woman living in his home.

Aguilar, pastor of Richmond Outreach Center (ROC) in Virginia, faces child sex charges and could spend the rest of his life in prison if convicted. His lawyer, David L. Carlson, was involved in an altercation with a woman last month.

According to police reports, Carlson was arrested Sept. 13 for assaulting Lisa Kelley, who lived in his home at the time. She told officers Carlson rubbed her face in the carpet and dragged her across the floor.

Carlson denied the accusation at the time of the arrest and told officers Kelley had problems with alcohol and prescription drugs. He was released on bail shortly afterward and is awaiting his next hearing, set for mid-November.

"We adamantly deny that he is guilty of anything, and I'm very comfortable and confident the trial will establish that and he'll be found not guilty," Judson W. Collier Jr., Carlson's law partner, told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* Tuesday.

Aguilar, known as "Pastor G," was charged in Texas in May 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.

Carlson is the second person associated with Aguilar to be

accused of assault since his legal troubles began. The first was pastor Jason Helmlinger, who resigned from ROC at the same time as Aguilar.

Helmlinger, a former Henrico County police officer, was charged in May with threatening former ROC pastor Allen Caldwell, who said Helmlinger "cursed at him during a phone conversation and used racial slurs," the *Times-Dispatch* said. The charges were dropped in July.

UPDATE: Charges were dropped on Nov. 18.