

Woman Sexually Assaulted During Seattle Church Service

A registered sex offender has been jailed on suspicion of sexually assaulting a woman as she was in the midst of prayer during Sunday church services in Seattle, police said on Monday.

The suspect was subdued inside the sanctuary by several of the victim's relatives, who restrained the man until police arrived on the scene of what officers called one of the most outrageous sexual assault cases they had ever encountered, Seattle Police spokeswoman detective Renee Witt said.

"We've all seen and heard some pretty bizarre and egregious things, but this ... it just kind of blows your mind," Witt said.

The 25-year-old victim was accosted while attending services with her family and boyfriend on Sunday morning at Saint Spiridon Russian Orthodox Cathedral, a church just north of downtown Seattle familiar for its blue, onion-shaped domes.

Police said the assault began when congregants rose during the service, and the suspect, identified as Aaron Little, 37, reached over and lifted the woman's skirt to peer under it.

The victim initially did not realize the intrusion, but several of her male relatives witnessed it and hustled the man out of the church through its front door, Witt said.

But before the relatives could return to their pew, the man dashed back into the chapel through a side door and sexually assaulted the woman, Witt said. The woman's family members once again caught up with the suspect, grabbed him and called police, she said.

“Four people actually held him for us until we got there,” Witt said. “He’s really lucky they used the restraint they did, considering what he did. Good for them.”

The man, who lives in a small town south of Seattle and has a previous conviction for sexual assault, told officers he has mental health problems, Witt said.

He was jailed without bond on suspicion of rape, but it will be up to prosecutors to decide how he might be charged, police said.

Editing by Steve Gorman and Matthew Lewis

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