



Rod Underhill, District Attorney
1021 Southwest Fourth Avenue, Room 600
Portland, Oregon 97204-1193
Phone: 503-988-3162
www.mcda.us

January 31, 2020

Senior Pastor Michael Sperou sentenced to 160 months in prison for sexually assaulting a child

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that North Clackamas Bible Community Senior Pastor Michael Sperou, 69, received a 160 month prison sentence for sexually assaulting a child, who was under the age of 12, on two separate occasions between 1991 and 1996.

The court also imposed a \$70,000 compensatory fine that will go to the victim. Upon release, Sperou will be on post-prison supervision for approximately 12 years and will have to register as a sex offender.

Multnomah County Deputy District Attorneys Melissa Marrero and Charles Mickley prosecuted this case.

"Michael Sperou created an environment that facilitated prolonged abuse of children," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Melissa Marrero. "This was an unconscionable breach of trust. Mr. Sperou turned his church into a controlling, coercive and damaging environment."

"Some people die with their secrets of being sexually abused," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Charles Mickley. "That's not what happened here. Here, we have survivors coming forward sharing intimate details about the darkest periods of their lives. These survivors are examples of remarkable courage and strength."

On January 24, 2020, a jury found Sperou guilty of two counts of unlawful sexual penetration in the first degree.

Sperou serves as pastor for a group – founded in 1980 – that initially identified itself as the Southeast Bible Church. The members gathered and lived among rental homes they shared. The group now calls itself the North Clackamas Bible Community. Sperou has led the group since its formation.

The victim named in the indictment testified about the abuse she suffered at the hands of Sperou, who was in a position of trust and authority over her due to his role as pastor in the church she was born into.

Furthermore, two other women testified that Sperou also sexually assaulted them while they were children within the church. Due to the statute of limitations, the state was barred from prosecuting Sperou for those criminal offenses.

Several members from the jury attended today's sentencing hearing. Of the seven women known to have been abused by Sperou when they were children, six, including the named victim, provided impact statements to the court. DDA Marrero described to the court the disturbing facts and lasting trauma each survivor has suffered as a result of being sexually assaulted by Sperou.

The state presented evidence during trial that showed Sperou had a sexual interest in children; that he allowed minors to spend time with him in his bed; that he provided alcohol to minors; that he emotionally and financially manipulated church members; that he abused alcohol; and controlled nearly every aspect of church members' lives, including how they raised their children.

In 2015, the court imposed a 20 year prison sentence after a previously empaneled jury convicted Sperou of three counts of unlawful sexual penetration in the first degree. However, in June 2019, the Oregon Supreme Court reversed the convictions and remanded the case back to Multnomah County Circuit Court.

Prior to closing arguments in the retrial, the court granted a judgment of acquittal and dismissed Count 1 of the indictment, which charged Sperou with one count of unlawful sexual penetration in the first degree because of a legal technicality discovered by the state and then presented to the defense counsel and the court. As such, Count 1 was not decided by the jury and therefore, the state could not seek a sentence for that conduct.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's Office recognizes the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office and Portland Police Bureau, including PPB Detective Heidi Helwig, the primary investigator, for their dedicated efforts investigating this case.

We also recognize Victim Advocates Malia Bruni and Kimberly Phillips-Clark (retired) for the advocacy and support they provided the survivors during the initial trial and during the most recent trial.

#MCDA#