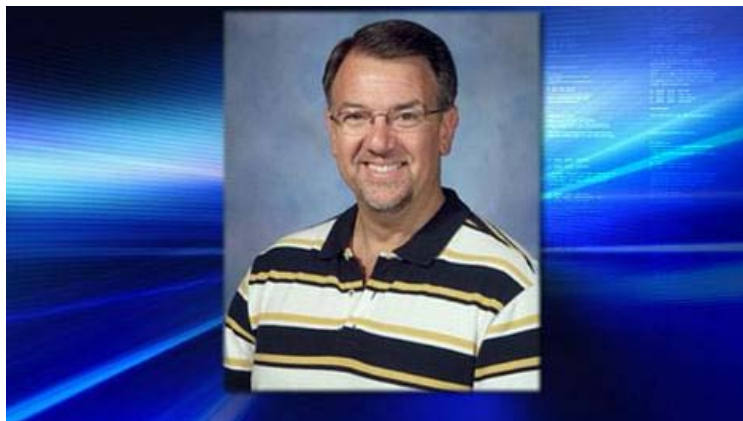




Investigates

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Disturbing revelations about former Prestonwood minister



Credit: WFAA
Former Prestonwood Baptist Church youth minister John Langworthy admitted to "sexual indiscretions with younger males" that were "ungodly."

by BRETT SHIPP

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WFAA
Posted on August 8, 2011 at 10:04 PM

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A disturbing confession from a pulpit in Mississippi is reverberating all the way to North Texas.

John Langworthy, a former youth music minister at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, admitted to molesting at least one of his young students in the late 1980s.

While he was immediately fired, there are questions about whether Prestonwood church leaders tried to keep the incident under wraps.

By most accounts, John Langworthy was a talented, spiritual, charismatic youth music minister at Morrison Heights Baptist Church in Clinton, Mississippi.

At least three former students — two at Prestonwood and one in Mississippi — have privately told a different story to former Prestonwood staff member Amy Smith, who has been trying to warn anyone who would listen.

"In the summer of 1989 — June, exactly, when the allegations came out about John Langworthy," said Smith, a Houston resident and local leader of the non-profit group Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, or SNAP.

After Smith tried for more than a year to bring the alleged abuses to light using social media, Langworthy took to the pulpit Sunday in Mississippi to confess his sins in two different states.

"Prior to coming to Clinton 22 years ago, while serving at a church in Mississippi and then Texas, I had sexual indiscretions with younger

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by MojoPages

males," Langworthy told the congregation. "These decisions were ungodly, and I deeply regret them."

Smith said she is in contact with two of the alleged victims, who say the abuse included physical contact. For one, it allegedly occurred over the course of 15 months.

A third alleged victim told News 8 that Langworthy would regularly spend the night with teenage boys, and was once in the same bed with him.

"I was laying on my back and was awakened by feeling his hand on my stomach," the alleged victim said. "Once I was on my stomach, he tried to force his hand under my stomach or right along my waistband."

Two of the alleged victims from Prestonwood said church officials conducted an internal investigation to determine the extent of the abuse.

"What Prestonwood did, from my knowledge, is find victims in the church on their own and begin to speak with them," Smith said. "That is the job of law enforcement."

The State Family Code on the books at the time required professionals — including clergy — to report suspected child abuse to authorities.

Smith says not only weren't police notified, but Langworthy then headed to Clinton, Mississippi, where he led youth choirs at a church and a public school.

"As bad as that is, I believe the not reporting the cover-up is a re-victimization of the victim," said Smith, who lives in Houston.

Smith said she began contacting church officials at Prestonwood and in Mississippi last summer.

Nearly one year later, Langworthy was allowed to voluntarily resign from Morrison Heights Baptist Church in Clinton.

"I was not asked to resign by the pastor or elders," said Langworthy to his congregation on Sunday. "My resignation was the best decision for my family."

Dr. Jack Graham, who had just been named Prestonwood's pastor at the time the abuse was discovered, declined comment.

Executive Pastor Mike Buster gave offered this statement:

"In the summer of 1989, the church received an allegation that John Langworthy had acted inappropriately with a teenage student. Based on this allegation, he was dismissed immediately, removing him from all responsibilities with the church. In no way did officials of the church seek to cover up the actions of Mr. Langworthy or silence his accuser. The elected officers dealt with the matter firmly and forthrightly."

Failure to comply with state law on reporting child sexual abuse is a misdemeanor offense, but may not come into play in this case since the alleged abuse took place more than 20 years ago.

What's clear to Amy Smith is that none of this would have been made public had she not worked so diligently on behalf of the victims.

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@ billybear3..How do you know if this man is a Christian and how do you know if he is a conservative?

Bigmac79 said on August 8, 2011 at 10:28 PM

Well, well, well, let's go after Prestonwood. Why don'r you satanists at channel 8 look into something like Potters house?

crush said on August 8, 2011 at 10:23 PM

Thanks to Amy Smith for caring.

billybear3 said on August 8, 2011 at 10:11 PM

Another Christian conservative boy lover.

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