Former church custodian faces 69 sex counts

By CALVIN LEAR
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LAFAYETTE — Police here Thursday filed 69 sex-related charges against a former church janitor who allegedly preyed on boys in a church activity group.

Three boys, between the ages of 6 and 12, have accused Dewey Carroll Hunt, 56, of 1710 W. Division St., Jennings, of molesting them from 1989 until this past July, said city police Lt. Robert Hemseall.

The molestations allegedly occurred during their membership in the Christian Cadets at the Word of Faith Ministry, 223 Stone St., Lafayette, Hemseall said.

Hunt, who was arrested July 29 on one count of molestation of a juvenile after a cadet came forward, was booked Thursday with 54 counts of molestation of a juvenile and 15 counts of oral sexual battery, Hemseall said. He said those charges involve three boys.

“We are interviewing additional boys who may have been victims, and we hope others come forward,” Hemseall said.

The Rev. Sterling Miller, pastor of Word of Faith, said his church fired Hunt on July 20 after conducting its own investigation, and before police acted.

The church has offered to pay the victims’ psychiatric counseling, physical therapy, medical and even legal expenses, Miller said.

“And after they have made their decisions, we will, of course, offer them spiritual help,” he said.

Hunt was not a commander of the cadets as police reported, Miller said.

The Christian Cadets activities are similar to those of the Boy Scouts, except that, in addition to camping techniques, the boys are taught about “God and country,” Miller said.

Miller said Hunt was a custodian, but did assist the cadets with activities.

“There were almost always husband and wife teams, and other men, with the boys on outings,” Miller said. “It would have been a very isolated case, very seldom, that it would have been just (Hunt).”

Hemseall said the molestations occurred at the church and at a house at 219 Portland St., which belongs to the church.

Miller said he evicted Hunt from the house on July 23. Hunt then moved in with his parents in Jennings, Hemseall said. Miller said Hunt is married.

Hunt initially cooperated with juvenile detectives, but Thursday stopped doing so and asked for an attorney, Hemseall said.

Miller said he has addressed his congregation about the case, and invited all ministers in Lafayette to a briefing on the case.

Word of Faith Ministry is an independent church, Miller said. He began the church 20 years ago with 13 people. The membership now is 1,300, he said.

“We tackled this head on. We will not cover this up,” he said. “We’ve done everything we could do once we found out what was happening.”

He said his congregation is most concerned about helping the victims.

“We’re not trying to talk anybody out of anything. We want them to do what’s in the best interest of their child and their family, and to do whatever will let them be at peace with themselves,” Miller said.

He said he believes the church will survive.

“If one man can destroy a church, then Jesus’ sacrifice would be flawed,” Miller said, “because Christ delivered us from sin.”