

New details in minister child sex arrest

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MUSCLE SHOALS, Ala. (WAAY) - Authorities say children's minister Jeff Eddie told them he had so many sexual experiences with children at his church he could not recall all the times he had done it.

A felony complaint police filed against Eddie, 41, said the Highland Park Baptist Church children's minister admitted to performing oral sex and masturbating children when Muscle Shoals investigators questioned him Sunday.

Eddie, who was arrested Sunday, is charged with 31 counts of sodomy, 2 counts of possession of child pornography, and 2 counts of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12.

In the sodomy complaint filed against Eddie, police said the abuse came to light after a church member walked in on Eddie with his hands up a minor's shirt. One of the victims says Eddie engaged in sex acts with him downstairs in the church's electrical room at least once a month going back to 2011, when the child was 11 years old. The incidents happened until July of last year, the child said, and then happened twice after that.

The child pornography complaint states a staff member at the church walked into Eddie's office Jan. 22 and found a child sitting in Eddie's lap, with Eddie's hand up the child's shirt. The staff workers said Eddie appeared to be startled and removed his hand.

The staff member contacted church pastor Brett Pitman and worship pastor Jeff Beech about the incident. Beech stated Eddie gave them his church-issued electronic devices to search through, and on Feb. 1 Beech said he found two pornographic images of children.

Muscle Shoals Police Chief Robert Evans says the investigation was initially only focused on child pornography.

"It started out as possible child pornography on the computer--and also possible sexual abuse that involved some minors," Chief Evans said during a news conference Wednesday morning. But the evidence quickly pointed to the fact that there was much more going on. Eddie admitted to the acts during questioning.

Eddie is being held in the Colbert County Jail with bail totaling \$1,030,000.

Court documents indicate Eddie's wife filed for divorce Monday, the day after he was arrested.

Lead Pastor, Brett Pittman of Highland Park Baptist Church, released this statement during today's press conference at the Muscle Shoals Police Department:

"As a church, we are outraged, shocked and deeply saddened by the events that have unfolded over the last few days. First and foremost, we are striving to assist any children and families that have been affected by these events. The health

and well being of these children is our number one priority at this time. For years, Highland Park Baptist Church has invested in the Shoals community and we are committed to helping our entire community cope with this situation.

Anyone with any information about this case should immediately contact the Muscle Shoals Police Department. Any children or families in search of counseling may contact our church office for assistance. In closing, we want to personally thank every person that has come forward. They are heroes and should be treated as such."

Highland Park Baptist Church

A preliminary hearing is scheduled for February 18th at 8 a.m. at the Colbert County Courthouse.