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FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 2014

PEOPLE

State says murder suspect planned to wed boyfriend

Prosecutors claimed in court Thursday that Alabama Baptist minister Richard Shahan was on his way to Europe to marry his boyfriend when police arrested him in Nashville, Tenn.

By Bob Allen

Prosecutors say a former minister at First Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., charged with his wife's murder, was trying to leave the country prior to his Jan. 1 arrest to marry his boyfriend.

The latest twist in a story that has received worldwide media attention came Jan. 16 in a bond hearing for Richard Shahan, 53, who resigned recently as children and families pastor and facilities director at First Baptist, reportedly to head overseas for three years of mission work in Europe and Central Asia.

Prosecutors said information gleaned from more than 3,000 of Shahan's e-mails indicate he was planning to leave the United States for good, ultimately moving to the United Kingdom.

"He planned to become a citizen there and begin a new life with his boyfriend ... who he intended to marry," Deputy Jefferson County District Attorney Leigh Gwathney said, according to the *Birmingham News*. "He had no intention of ever returning to the United States. He had no home to return to and he had said his goodbyes to his family."

Jefferson County District Judge Sheldon Watkins set bond for Shahan at \$100,000. If he makes bail, he must remain on house arrest and submit to electronic monitoring. A preliminary hearing is set for Feb. 5.



"Pastor Richard in his element," reads

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made public before Thursday's hearing.

The prosecution's theory appears similar to the 2010 murder conviction of [Matt Baker](#), a Baylor University graduate and pastor of several Texas Baptist churches who was convicted of killing his wife and making it look like a suicide because he planned to marry his mistress and believed a divorce would harm his ministry career.

Baker is serving a 65-year prison sentence in a high-profile story that was featured on ABC's "20/20" and inspired a Lifetime movie, "[Sins of the Preacher](#)," which first aired in September and is scheduled for rebroadcast on Feb. 9.

Another detail that emerged at Thursday's hearing is that Shahan was carrying \$27,000 in U.S. and foreign currency when Homeland Security officials detained him at the Nashville International Airport attempting to board a flight to Germany.

The judge ordered return of the U.S. currency but said the other money — pounds, euros and Kazakhstani currency — could be held as evidence.

Shahan's lawyers disputed his representation as a fugitive from justice, saying he talked openly about his plans to do mission work overseas for months. They also questioned whether the state has any "direct evidence" of their client's involvement in his wife's death.

"They are doing everything they can to try to manufacture a murder case," Attorney John Lentine said, according to the *Birmingham News*.

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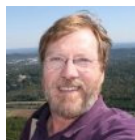
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**Bob Allen**

Bob Allen is [managing editor](#) of Associated Baptist Press.

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**DaCoachK** · 13 hours ago

No, he planned on leaving the country and pretending to be married to his boyfriend. Two men can be friends, not spouses. Duh.

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**Robbins Mitchell** · 14 hours ago

Well, this is just too faggoty for words

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**RCQ_92130** · 4 hours ago

gays are so trashed.

yet still gay activists will do ANYTHING to defend the image of the gay community and suppress the reality of what a homosexual life is really like. and on top of that they want access to our children's minds

pretty vile.

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**HogLady70** · 6 hours ago

Funny how that this is the first time I've heard anything about a gay lover. Being a Baptist living in Alabama with a child in the ministry, I've kept up with the story. Nothing in the "Alabama Baptist" has been mentioned about him being gay, nor has anything been said on any of the 4 tv stations in my city. Hmmm, just makes me wonder where this came from. . . JS!

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**Agni Ashwin** → HogLady70 · 4 hours ago

I guess reading his emails gave some new information.

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**Nic** · 19 hours ago

Hmm. In the Matt Baker case, the accused murdered because, it was claimed, he thought divorce would hurt his career. According to this article, Shahan was leaving the United States to marry his gay lover. That doesn't seem like someone interested in their career?

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Amy Butler

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