

Presbyterian Minister Accused of Sexual Abuse Still Active in the Church

3/11/2008

According to chicagotribune.com, a Minnesota woman is calling for the removal of an Elmwood Park Presbyterian minister, saying that he sexually abused her as a teenager. Julie Lemley Hokanson, now 37 years old, claims she was abused between 1984 and 1988 by Rev. Ronald Campbell, who was the director of the youth program at Frist Presbyterian Church of River Forest. Lemley Hokanson first came forward with the allegations against Rev. Campbell in March 2006. Lemley Hokanson is upset that Campbell has been allowed to remain active as a pastor at Elmwood Park Presbyterian Church by the Chicago Presbytery despite the allegations that he abused a teenager. The Chicago Presbytery, which oversees Presbyterian churches in Lake, Cook, and DuPage Counties, allowed Campbell to stay at his job after an investigating committee convened by the church found in Summer 2007 that there was "probable cause to believe an offense was committed" by Campbell. In a statement Rev. Robert Reynolds, head of the Chicago Presbytery, said, "In order to be removed from the position of ordained minister, a pastor must plead guilty, resign, or be found guilty after a trial." Church charges are expected to be filed this month against Campbell, following the recent completion of the investigation. Campbell will be tried within the court system of the Presbyterian Church, not a criminal court and a trial is likely to start about three months after formal charges are filed, Reynolds said.