

**Josh Kaul**  
**Wisconsin Attorney General**



**P.O. Box 7857**  
**Madison, WI 53707-7857**

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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Former Youth Pastor Pleads Guilty to Sexual Assault of Child Reported Through Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul and Wood County District Attorney Jonathan Barnett announced a guilty plea in a case involving an assault reported through the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative.

Former youth pastor James Lane, 53, pleaded guilty on April 8, 2025 to repeated sexual assault of the same child, an offense that occurred between September 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003. A sentencing hearing is scheduled to take place June 3. Lane faces up to 40 years in prison.

Lane, then a youth pastor at Faith Reformed Church located in the City of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, admitted to assaulting the victim in Lane's vehicle when he was driving the victim home. The victim in this case had not reported the assault to either church or legal authorities prior to reporting through the website for the Wisconsin DOJ Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative.

"As this conviction shows, the Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative is continuing to have an impact," said AG Kaul. "Thank you to the courageous survivor whose decision to make a report has led to accountability for the defendant."

### **About the Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative**

The Wisconsin DOJ Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative has made important progress. The initiative, which was launched in April 2021 and recently marked its

fourth anniversary, has encouraged survivors of faith leader abuse, their friends and family, or anyone who has information about the response to such abuse to report to Wisconsin DOJ. Wisconsin DOJ continues to encourage survivors of sexual abuse by clergy and faith leaders to contact Wisconsin DOJ and file a [report](#).

The initiative has now resulted in criminal charges against three alleged abusers. Two of these cases resulted in a conviction of the accused child assailant, with the third ending in dismissal after the defendant died. Another report resulted in the addition of a priest's name to a diocesan list of individuals with substantiated allegations of child sexual abuse. In addition, the initiative has helped connect many survivors with victim services. Wisconsin DOJ will continue to work with survivors and their loved ones to follow up on information reported to Wisconsin DOJ and to provide support to those who have been impacted by clergy and faith leader abuse. The Clergy and Faith Leader Abuse Initiative will ultimately result in a final report.