



Nfld. & Labrador

Man assaulted by Sunday school teacher says Pentecostal Church failed to protect him



Teacher apologized to families of 3 other boys, and those cases were not reported to police

[Mark Quinn](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 10, 2018 12:28 PM NT | Last Updated: July 11, 2018



The Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador has offices in St. John's. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

A Newfoundland man who was sexually assaulted by his Sunday school teacher in a northeast coast community decades ago is suing the Pentecostal Church for damages.

The man — now in his 50s — whose identity is protected by a court-ordered publication ban, says the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador failed to protect him as a child

and contributed to his life-long suffering.

“It was the Sunday school process that allowed the perpetrator access to our client.”

- Geoff Budden

He is being called John Doe in court documents.

"It was the Sunday school process that allowed the perpetrator access to our client as a young boy, and because of that we believe the church is responsible," said Geoff Budden, a lawyer with the law firm representing John Doe.



Geoff Budden is a St. John's lawyer representing a man who is suing the Pentecostal Church in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The sexual assaults happened over a decade during the 1970s and 1980s. Court documents say John Doe was repeatedly sodomized by his Sunday school teacher in the teacher's home and at the Pentecostal church.

He was also forced to participate in sexual activity with multiple persons, including other minors.

The Sunday school teacher was charged and convicted but his name is being withheld to protect the identity of John Doe.

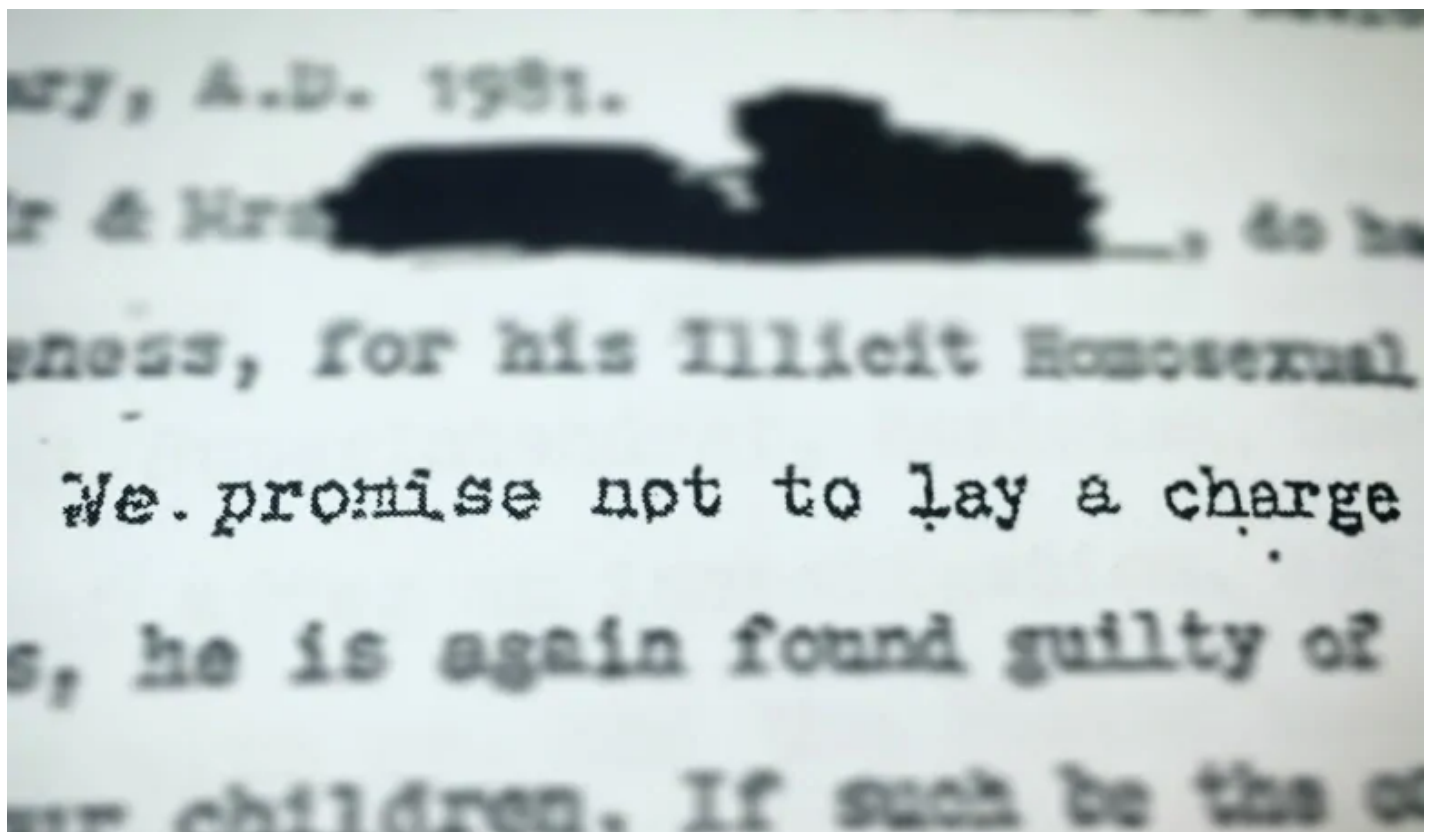
In the course of litigating John Doe's case, letters the church had in the early 1980s have come to light.

"From reading the letters, one would infer that in some point in 1981 it came to the attention of the church that these boys were being sexually abused," said Budden.

'Promise not to lay a charge'

The court documents include three letters written by the Sunday school teacher admitting that he "seduced" and had sex with three separate boys who were his students. In those letters he apologizes to their parents and promises that it won't happen again.

There are also three letters from the parents of those children accepting the apologies and promising they would not go to the police.

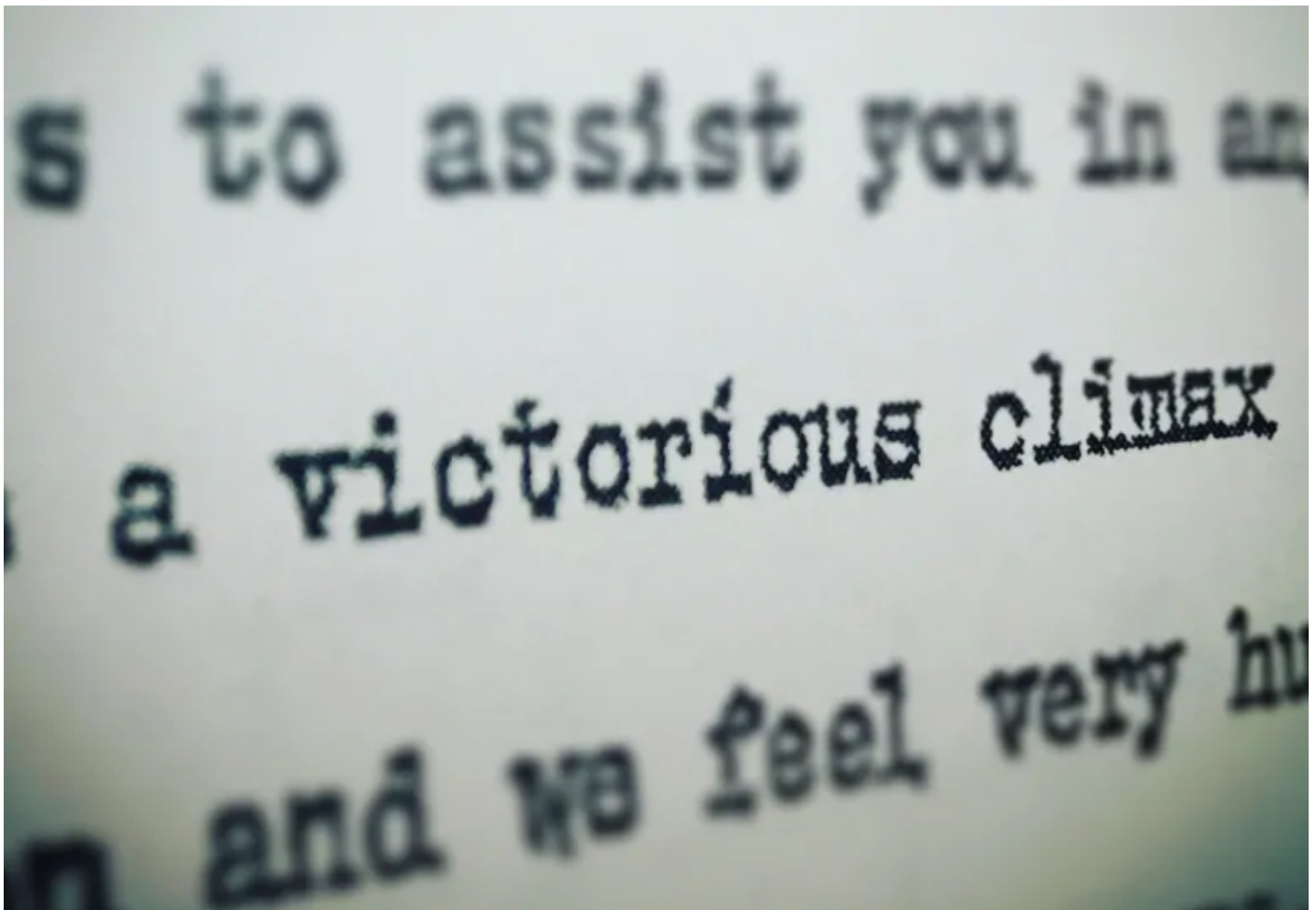




The parents of three students who say they were sexually assaulted wrote letters accepting the Sunday school's teachers apology. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

There is also a letter addressed to the Sunday school teacher signed by the local pastor and church board members telling him that he has been removed from duties with the church for a year.

"We wish to assure you of our prayers and endeavours to rehabilitate you and our readiness to assist you in any way possible to bring this whole ordeal to a victorious climax for you," the letter says.



The local pastor and church board members promised to assist the Sunday school teacher who apologized for sexually assaulting children. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

The church did not report the Sunday school teacher to the police. John Doe is not one of the boys the teacher wrote an apology for. Doe's lawyer says Doe was sexually assaulted by the teacher before and after the apologies were made.

Irresponsible decision

Budden and his client believe the decision to not report the teacher to police was irresponsible and showed more regard for the Sunday school teacher than his victims.

"Our client feels that nothing was done to protect him while on the other hand, significant efforts were made to assist the perpetrator in reintegrating into the church community, which he in fact did," said Budden

"Certainly by the early 1980s enough should have been known to know that that simply wasn't a safe or responsible way of acting."

As part of the suit seeking damages, lawyers are due in court in July to make an application to a judge to give them unedited versions of church's letters.

In the versions John Doe's lawyer now has, the names of victims and their parents are redacted.

Doe's lawyers want to speak with the people named in those letters to learn more about what happened around the time the letters were written.

"What did the church know? When did they know it? And this is highly relevant to our case because our client was abused before these other children came forward and after these other children were identified and the apologies were given," said Budden.

Pentecostal Assemblies responds

In a statement of defence filed in court, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador "denies each and every allegation in the statement of claim."

It also asks the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador to to dismiss the action and asks that John Doe pays its legal costs.

Calls from CBC News to the lawyer representing the Pentecostal Assemblies in this case were not returned.

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