

New Bedford pastor arrested on rape, former police officer sentenced for child pornography on the same day

On December 18, 2019, a former New Bedford police officer was sentenced for possessing child pornography and a New Bedford pastor was arrested for kidnapping and rape. Our justice system needs to send a clear message to people in positions of power by holding them accountable to the maximum extent of the law.

Paul Hodson, a former New Bedford police officer, pleaded guilty in federal court in Boston to charges of possessing and distributing child pornography. Hodson admitted to using peer-to-peer file-sharing software to trade child pornography. On the same day that Hodson pleaded guilty, Iglesia De Jesucristo Church 1411 Acushnet Ave. Pastor Elmer Perez was arrested on charges of rape, witness intimidation, kidnapping, indecent assault/battery, and threatening to commit crime after a month-long investigation into accusations of sexual assault.

There are few people within a city with more power and trust than police officers and pastors. Our police officers are invited into schools as human resources officers and our children are expected to trust the police. It's shocking when one pleads guilty to child pornography charges. In 2017, former New Bedford police officer Jean Gomes was sentenced to 10 years in prison for inappropriately touching a 10-year-old girl.

Pastors gain immediate and immense trust from their followers. When people in power become criminals it is important for our justice system to "throw the book at them" with the maximum

sentence possible. As a society, we need to send a message to other people in positions of power that you'll be held extra accountable should you abuse it.

Paul Hodson has pleaded guilty and should receive the maximum penalty. Pastor Elmer Perez is only charged at this time and is presumed innocent, but if he pleads or is found guilty, he should go away for life. The justice system needs to send a strong message to people in positions of power in New Bedford – you will be held to a higher standard and accountable should you break the laws and our trust.