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PASTOR CHALLENGES LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Rejects Use Of Porn Films To Treat Juvenile Sex Offenders

RICHARD MACK
For The Mpls. Daily American

A Lutheran minister in Minneapolis believes a massive dose of pornography is not the way to cure an adolescent who has committed a sex offense.

Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota (LSS) believes it is, and in collaboration with Hennepin County Juvenile Court has been committing juveniles to the pornographic treatment for six years.

Lutheran Social Services, 2414 Park Ave., a Lutheran umbrella institute, unilaterally was accorded the opportunity to attack the minister in the Jan. 29 edition of the monopoly press of St. Paul.

To get his side of the story out to the public, the minister has resorted to selling a \$2 tape recording of his case to anyone who wants the information.

The minister is Rev. David Barnhart, pastor of the 1,700-member Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls, 5212 - 41 Ave. S., Minneapolis.

The minister's tape views the massive dose of porno treatment for adolescent sex offenders as similar to the treatment meted out in Hitler's concentration camps when a prisoner was caught sneaking a drink of water without permission from the guards.

"Want a drink of water?", the SS officer in charge would say when the thirsty offender was brought before his desk. "We will give you some water." But first, the guards would place the guilty prisoner in a locked, empty room for a few days with nothing to drink. Then they'd strap the water thief to a table, back side down, turn on the hose and force huge quantities of water under high pressure into his mouth and down his throat until his stomach burst.

On his tape Rev. Barnhart describes the Lutheran Social Services treatment for a 16-year-old boy who, along with his mother and

father, was committed to the LSS "Personal Social Awareness Program" by the Hennepin County Juvenile Court after the parents had reported their son had fondled the privates of a 3-year-old child he was babysitting.

After the experience (labeled "family journey" by LSS), the parents called Rev. Barnhart and asked him to hear their story. It is their testimony from which the pastor made his tape during a lecture to his congregation. Here is a synopsis of what he said on the tape and what the St. Paul newspaper allowed LSS to say without including the lurid evidence Rev. Barnhardt submitted on his tape:

Before reporting to the Personal Social Awareness Program, the parents of Tommy (not his real name) asked their son's court-appointed parole officer just what they could expect to experience through their attendance.

The parole officer said she personally had not attended the program, but based on information she had received from a past participant, she assured them it would. "Blow their minds!"

If they did not attend though, the parole officer had warned, the court would likely find that neither Tommy nor his parents were cooperative, that the parents were a danger to the welfare and good development of their own son, and that Tommy should be taken away from them and put in juvenile prison or sent to court-appointed foster homes.

She said the court would feel that disposition a more proper situation for Tommy than his living at home with uncooperative parents.

With Tommy, the parents duly reported to the director of the LSS program, William Seabloom, whom the St. Paul paper said is "a certified sexual counselor who is known nationwide as a pioneer in the treatment of adolescent sexual offenders."

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LSS Sex Program

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About 150 parents and adolescents were in attendance for the "journey" at the Lutheran Social Services on Park Ave.

For openers, the group was supplied with paper and pencils and instructed to write down all the words they could think of -- dirty and clinical -- relating to the sex act. The papers were collected and posted on the walls for the group to examine.

Later, a clown was brought in to entertain the group. The funny part was the clown's glasses. The glasses were bigger than the clown's whole head. On the glasses were printed obscene words, and he plied the audience for all to read just above the leering smile.

Movies were on the agenda for the group, which included one boy of 10 years.

In one film they watched a grown woman taking a bath and masturbating with lotion and hand until she reached an orgasm.

In another film they watched a young boy like Tommy masturbate for about twenty minutes.

They watched a young mother with baby in arms, raped.

They saw homosexual males and lesbians engage in their kinds of sex.

They saw young and middle-aged men and women perform just about every kind of sex act offered in public porn theaters.

The St. Paul paper did not review what is in the films; the closest it got was to say "sexually explicit" Seabloom was quoted as saying that many of the films were obtained from Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco. He added that other films in the program were "vintage stag".

And, he insisted according to the St. Paul paper, the viewing by the adolescents and parents was followed by "intense discussion and thorough explanations".

The group also listened to a tape by George Carlin, reputedly one of the foulest-mouthed comedians on the nightclub circuit.

The young boy offenders in the group, including Tommy, were taken to see Seabloom's male helpers swim nude in the pool at Mount Olivet Retreat Center as part of the program, and were invited to strip naked themselves and join in the swim.

Those who didn't want to participate were chastized and questioned by the naked ones.

At one point during the program, Tommy's parents became so disgusted they left the room. Seabloom's helpers ordered them back, using the threat that uncooperativeness could mean that Tommy would be sentenced to confinement or assigned to foster homes.

That part of Rev. Barnhart's story conflicts with what Seabloom told the St. Paul paper: "If parents decide they cannot participate in the LSS program, they have the option of returning to court and negotiating a new treatment for their child."

After much of the sexually-explicit phases of the program, the young boys paraded in large hats with big letters "DFP" attached. The group was told that the boys were admitting to be "Demented F----- Perverts".

According to Rev. Barnhart's tape, Tommy's parents told him that when the LSS staff learned that there were two teenage daughters in the family, they were urged to enroll them in the program.

Rev. Barnhart's tape records that Tommy and his parents returned to the court appealing to the judge to relieve them of further participation in the LSS program. Lutheran Social Services also appeared at the hearing, in defense of Seabloom, his program and Tommy's sentence.

They said that Tommy's parents were not at all cooperative with them.

They told the court that neither Lutheran Social Services nor Seabloom himself could understand how the court could allow Tommy to be kept at home with his parents and questioned how Tommy could be properly raised in such a family environment.

The court, reports Rev. Barnhart, said it would take the matter under advisement and LSS told the Daily American it does not know the disposition of the case since the youngster and his parents are no longer in the LSS program.

Juvenile court proceedings are conducted privately to protect the youngsters.

In telling LSS's side of the story, the St. Paul paper quotes the Chief Judge of the Juvenile Division of Hennepin County Court, Allen Oleisky, as saying, "It's one of the best programs in the country. We've seen the results time after time with these young people.

"Rather than use psychiatric hospitals and take the children away from schools and family, we try to use the LSS program. We've been very pleased with the results. Experts across the country feel it's an excellent program. They're nationally renowned."

That assessment, however, would seem to conflict with what Executive Director of Lutheran Social Services Jim Raun told the Daily American.

Raun said the program has been operating for six years and it was just heading toward starting a measure or evaluation of its worth when the Rev. Barnhardt leveled his charges against the program.

Raun said evaluation of the program would have occurred long ago, but the agency has just been unable to get funding for its measurement or evaluation. As far as he personally knew though, Raun added, "No boy who has been in the program has been a repeater of the original offense" which got him sentenced to the program in the first place.

"Most of these boys who attend the program are under criminal indictment," Raun explained. "The purpose of these movies is to give them a healthy attitude toward themselves and toward sex, rather than the screwed or mixed-up ones they have when they come into the program."

It is Rev. Barnhart's contention in his tape that boys who call themselves "Demented F----- Perverts" are hardly expressing a healthy attitude toward themselves.

The minister vowed he would not contribute funds to Lutheran Social Services as long as the program continues.

But, Lutheran Social Services is getting money other than from Lutheran churches

Raun said money for the Personal Social Awareness Program brings in taxpayers and United Way money.

He said the annual program cost is \$70,000, of which \$54,000 is paid to LSS by the county juvenile system, which sentences youngsters to the program and \$16,000 is paid by the United Way.

According to the St. Paul paper's promotional story for Lutheran Social Services, Seabloom fears the controversy created by Rev. Barnhardt could threaten other successful programs of LSS.

"That's what makes this whole situation so infuriating," Seabloom told the St. Paul Pioneer Press/Dispatch.