

COVID-19: Click to view our complete coverage, updates on the pandemic



## Charge against Amish bishop reduced in abuse case



PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Got a news tip? 412-263-1601

localnews@post-gazette.com 

JUL 13, 2020

4:44 PM

Lancaster County prosecutors on Monday reduced a charge against an Amish bishop from a felony to a misdemeanor for allegedly failing to report to civil authorities that a church member had confessed to sexual abuse.

Levi S. Esh Sr., 63, faces two misdemeanor counts for allegedly failing to report or refer a case of suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities. The charges center on his response after a church member, John G. Beiler, allegedly confessed to him in 2012 or 2013 of sexually abusing three girls.



MENU



felony to a misdemeanor. The relevant statute says a felony can be charged if, among other conditions, the alleged perpetrator faces first-degree felony charges.

ADVERTISEMENT

Mr. Beiler faces eight third-degree felony charges and one misdemeanor charge.

Both Mr. Esh and Mr. Beiler waived their preliminary hearings in Magisterial District Court on Monday and face Aug. 14 arraignments in the Court of Common Pleas.

According to Pequea Township police, Mr. Esh handled the case as an internal church matter, rather than as a crime to be reported — a practice that advocates for victims of [sexual abuse in Amish and Mennonite communities](#) say has been common. Two other Pennsylvania clergy members in such churches have been convicted on similar charges in recent years.

*First Published July 13, 2020, 4:44pm*

ADVERTISEMENT