By Tim Huber
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A former Mennonite Brethren leader who pleaded no contest to a charge of agreeing to engage in prostitution says he will change his plea to not guilty.

In a December statement, former Pacific District Conference district minister Gary Wall said he had never been arrested. A Dec. 9 *MWR* article stated he was arrested Jan. 23, 2019, in Fresno, Calif., as part of a prostitution sting operation. Law enforcement officials have neither confirmed nor denied Wall was arrested.

Wall was formally charged on April 22 with agreeing to engage in prostitution, a misdemeanor, on Jan. 23. Local media reports from the time stated 19 people were arrested or detained at a Fresno massage parlor during an operation in which people were detained for soliciting an undercover officer for sex acts in exchange for money.

"I have never been arrested," Wall stated. "Based upon the plea agreement, in May 2020 the

draw my no contest plea and enter a plea of not guilty. The judge will then grant the prosecutor's motion to dismiss the case. Because the case is pending until the next hearing, I have been advised not to discuss the facts of the case at this time."

Efforts by *MWR* to reach Wall through PDC and USMB leaders were unsuccessful until Dec. 27.

Fresno County assistant district attorney Jerry Stanley would not discuss the nature of the charge, nor evidence it is based on, because the case is pending a May 27, 2020, sentencing hearing, and only confirmed details available in public county court records.

A Fresno Police Department representative indicated jail records only cover people for 72 hours currently in custody, and there is no police report because it is not that department's investigation. The sheriff's office deferred questions to the district attorney.

On May 21, Pacific District announced Wall was resigning as district minister in order to work

ning in 2020. He concluded that role July 2. A severance package ran through the end of the year.

Wall had accepted the role of U.S. national director with ICOMB. ICOMB executive director Rudi Plett told *MWR* the organization was not aware of the situation when it announced in May that Wall was joining ICOMB.

Pacific District moderator Pat Coyle announced Wall's decision in a letter to PDC pastors. About three months later, on Aug. 26 in county court, Wall pleaded no contest to the charge. On Nov. 5, ICOMB announced Wall had withdrawn from plans to serve with that organization.

Neither organization mentioned Wall's charge or plea in public statements.

When contacted by *MWR*, Coyle said Wall's conclusion of service with Pacific District was a private personnel matter. He would not comment on when PDC learned of the alleged January incident, whether people should know about the charge and Wall's plea or whether Pacific District