

VA--Minister to hold meeting about “cover up charges”

OCTOBER 25, 2016

[HOME NEWS MEDIA STATEMENTS](#) VA--MINISTER TO HOLD MEETING ABOUT “COVER UP CHARGES”

For immediate release: Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2016 For more info: Barbra Graber, SNAP Leader, [540-214-8874](tel:540-214-8874), mennonite@snapnetwork.org

Support group posts info about lawsuit against him

On Wednesday, he will talk about concerns with congregants

A minister who was accused and sued for covering up sexual abuse within his church is reportedly holding a meeting Wednesday with his congregants to discuss the matter. A support group plans to email members of the congregation with information about the accusations.

Rev. Samuel G. Wenger is head pastor at Freedom Fellowship, an independent church he started in Broadway VA after he was denied a vote of affirmation from his congregation at Cornerstone Church also in Broadway.

In 1990, he was named in a civil lawsuit along with Living Word Christian School and Living Word Fellowship Church in Stryker, Ohio, where he was administrator and pastor, respectively. He and his co-defendants were charged by a victim of a predatory youth pastor at Living Word with "fail[ing] to act upon the supplied information of [perpetrator Curtis Monk]'s conduct and attempting to hide the guilt of Monk by directing the blame and humiliation upon the minor plaintiff and making her believe that the actions of Monk were caused by her behavior." The case was eventually settled out of court.

Members of *SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests*, are alerting Freedom Fellowship members about the lawsuit and encouraging them to “ask tough questions” on Wednesday and “insist that Wenger provide written proof of his claims.”

“We've heard the advice to ‘Trust but verify.’ We say ‘Verify first, before trusting,’ especially when dealing with a pastor who's been sued for ignoring or concealing sex crimes against young people,” says Barbra Graber, a SNAP Leader in VA.

Last month, *SNAP* posted information about the lawsuit against Wenger on the Mennonite Abuse Prevention List of SNAPnetwork.org

The group also recommends that the members at Freedom Fellowship make it safer for all victims of sexual misconduct within the church to come forward by demanding a comprehensive independent investigation into the prior and current actions of their pastor, Sam Wenger, especially in light of additional reports they have received.

SNAP Mennonite urges anyone who “may have seen, suspected or suffered harm” in any of the places Wenger worked to “please contact us confidentially at mennonite@snapnetwork.org or send documentation anonymously to MAP List, P.O. Box 442632, Lawrence, KS, 66044.”

Wenger has worked as pastor in multiple settings, both Mennonite and non-denominational, including: Cornerstone Church of Broadway, Pastor, Broadway, VA (2009-2012), North Greenville Christian Fellowship, Traveler's Rest, SC (2003-2009), DeWitt Community Church, DeWitt, MI (1999-2000), Mt. Zion Christian Fellowship, Greenville, SC (1988-1999), Living Word Fellowship Church, Stryker, OH (1976-1988) and Wooster Mennonite Church, Wooster, OH (1975-76).

Documentation: "Mother, daughter suing nine," The Bryan Times, August 25, 1990.

The *Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP)* is the world's oldest and largest support group for survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones. *SNAP* was founded by victims of Catholic priests in 1988 and now has more than 21,000 members in 79 countries. Even though “Priests” is in its title, *SNAP* is open to religious and nonreligious persons who were sexually violated by anyone inside or outside a faith community. The *SNAP Mennonite* chapter was established in early 2015. Their Mennonite Abuse Prevention List was launched in April 2016. A *SNAP* Survivor Support Group meets the first Thursday of every month in Harrisonburg, VA. Contact [540-214-8874](tel:540-214-8874)

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