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DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
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PRESS RELEASE

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Former Saddleback Church Youth Pastor Charged with Molesting Fourth Teenage Boy

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A former Saddleback Church youth pastor who was featured alongside his twin brother on a YouTube channel dedicated to gaming and music production has been charged with molesting a fourth teenage boy he met through the church.

Ruven Meulenberg, 39, of Lake Forest, was convicted in 2018 of molesting twin brothers, John Doe 1 and John Doe 2, who were between the ages of 13 and 14 years old while they attended his youth ministry at Saddleback Church, but the conviction was overturned after an appellate court ruled a juror had engaged in juror misconduct by sharing information with other jurors regarding psychiatric testing of subjects in criminal trials.

Meulenberg is awaiting retrial on those charges – Orange County Superior Court Case #17HF0707. In that case, Meulenberg has been charged with one felony count of a lewd act on a child under the age of 14 and two felony counts of a lewd act on a child 14-15 years old and at least 10 years younger than the defendant.

Meulenberg is accused of molesting John Doe 1 and John Doe 2 between May 2016 and May 2017, including during visits to a local movie theater and while hanging out together in the pastor's car.

While the retrial of Orange County Superior Court Case #17HF0707 was still pending, a new victim, John Doe 3, came forward to report that he met Meulenberg through Saddleback Church and was invited to the movies and dinner by the youth pastor between August 2016 and September 2017 when the boy was 13. On one or more occasions Meulenberg is accused of molesting John Doe 3 while hanging out with him privately.

As it relates to John Doe 3, Meulenberg has been charged with four felony counts of a lewd act on a child under the age of 14 in Orange County Superior Court Case #23HF0526. After those charges were filed, a fourth victim, John Doe 4, disclosed to law enforcement that he too had been touched inappropriately by Meulenberg between June 2017 and June 2018 while the youth pastor drove him home from a church event. He was 14 at the time.

As a result of John Doe 4's disclosures, last week, Orange County prosecutors amended the 23HF0526 complaint to include a criminal charge of one felony count of a lewd act upon a child 14 or 15 years old who is at least 10 years younger than the defendant.

"Strong mentors are meant to help our children navigate the difficulties of growing up and realize their full potential," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "Instead of providing the spiritual guidance he pretended to provide, this youth pastor seized on the vulnerabilities of these children for his own sick sexual gratification. He has not only forever shaken their belief in anyone in a position of trust and authority; he has irreparably damaged their faith and the faith of countless other parishioners who believed their children were safe with him and youth pastors everywhere."

Prosecutors have also alleged in the complaint that Meulenberg molested multiple victims, which makes him eligible for a life sentence if convicted. He faces a maximum sentence of 100-life, + 10 years, 8 months if convicted on all charges in both cases.

Meulenberg remains released on GPS monitoring while awaiting trial on both criminal cases.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Juliet Oliver of the Sexual Assault Unit is prosecuting the cases.

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