

MEMO

TO: Archbishop Flynn, Bishop Pates and Bill Fallon
FROM: Fr. Kevin McDonough
DATE: February 22, 2005
RE: Father Mark Wehmann

file, please

Phyllis Willerscheidt notified me on Friday, February 4, that she had had a phone call from South St. Paul. Someone attending a youth sports event had seen Father Wehmann engaged in public touching of a young person in a way that, although clearly not illegal, was also making the girl uncomfortable. In spite of the fact that no one was alleging activity that was even arguably illegal, I asked Phyllis to call the South St. Paul police and to give the information to them. She followed up and did so.

Early the following week I called the family of the girl involved. I told them the steps we were taking and would like to take to follow up. They gave me the name of the South St. Paul police officer who had interviewed them, Detective John Sneitzer. I called Detective Sneitzer and left him a message, indicating our support for their investigating as aggressively as they thought necessary. I also asked him to let me know when the matter was concluded, especially if the department was not going to take action. I told him I was anxious for the Archdiocese to be able to take some corrective steps, but did not want to complicate his investigation by stepping in prematurely.

On about Thursday, February 10, Detective Sneitzer called me back. He let me know that his investigation was complete and that there was indeed nothing that would be criminally charged. I asked him if he would be willing, nevertheless, to meet with Father Wehmann and myself so that Father Wehmann would hear from an objective, third party what his interaction with the young girl looked like. He readily agreed to do so. Because of calendar conflicts, we were not able to schedule the meeting until Thursday, February 17. Nonetheless, I called the parents of the girl [REDACTED] parents of [REDACTED]. I spoke with both parents, and they appreciated the communication and the steps being taken. It turns out that [REDACTED] mother was a very close friend of one of my parishioners and I met her on several occasions. We made a very positive connection.

On Thursday, February 17, Father Wehmann and I went to the South St. Paul Police Department office in the South St. Paul Municipal building. Our interview with Detective Sneitzer lasted only fifteen minutes, but I believe it was very useful. Detective Sneitzer reviewed the information that he had received, and he did so in an objective and non-insulting tone. He challenged Father Wehmann to be aware of his position, but also indicated clearly that he did not believe Father Wehmann had engaged in any intentional misconduct.

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Re: Father Wehmann

Father Wehmann was clearly humbled and even humiliated by having to have the meeting. He was deeply apologetic at the discomfort he caused to the [REDACTED] family and the time being spent by other people to review his behavior. He thanked Detective Snetzer as he was leaving.

I intend to take two more follow up steps. First, I will arrange for a conversation or communication with the [REDACTED] family so that Father can apologize. He is very open to this. I have also proposed to him that he undergo some boundaries training to reinforce messages that he has received in the past but that perhaps have not taken root as well as they ought to. He is very open to that.

I believe that this is a sufficient course of responses to Father Wehmann's excessive, discomforting, but not sexual touch. Do any of you believe that there are other steps that should be taken?

↓
These are fine & positive steps.

I would inquire again as to whether
Father is considering these questions with
a spiritual director -
+ R&P

**ANOKA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION
REFERRAL OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

Please complete as much of the requested information as possible.

FAMILY INFORMATION

Date of Report 1-11-06
Date of birth 8-30-98 Second grade girl
or age 3-11-96 Fourth grade girl

Child's Name Second grade girl
Fourth grade girl
Name of School (or day care) [Redacted] Catholic School Grade 2 + 4

Parent(s)/Guardian Name They wish to
Address remain anonymous
Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Other children in the home (list names and DOB, if known) Preschool girl
15 or 16 year old boy (approx)

PERSONS NOTIFIED OF THIS REPORT:

_____	Child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Principal
_____	Parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nurse/health aide
_____	Alleged Perpetrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Counselor/School Social Worker
_____	Police	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other <u>Father Wehmann's immediate supervisor: Father Zerhen</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Archdiocese		

Name of alleged perpetrator Father Mark Wehmann Relationship to child Priest
Address [Redacted]
Phone [Redacted]

Reason for referral (please include conditions, dates, descriptions of injury, statements of child, etc. You may use the back of this page if necessary).
see attached

Please return white and yellow copies to:
Anoka County Human Services Division
Child Protection Intake
2100 3rd Avenue
Anoka, MN 55303-2264

To make oral reports or request forms please
call 763/422-7125 or fax report to 763/422-6925

SSMH-302 (4/98:3M; 6/99:5M; 2/01:5M; 9/03:5M)

CONFIDENTIAL - Filed Under Seal

ARCH-005254

Notes from conversation with Mr. And Mrs. Doe
1-10-06

Mr. Doe called from school office to see if I could meet with him. He got his wife and preschool daughter from mass and the three of them came to my office.

Mrs. Doe started by stating she had just taken the training on recognizing sexual abuse and had a very uneasy feeling about one of the church employees, Father Mark Wehmann. Mr. And Mrs. Doe shared their feelings about how helpful Father had been to them during a recent crisis in their lives. (Because of this crisis, Father Wehmann has been a frequent guest in their home).

However, Mr. And Mrs. Doe also shared the following concerns:

- Father Wehmann had their fourth grade daughter on his lap in the living room where there were no other people. Mrs. Doe reported she felt uneasy about this and went into the living room to check on the situation. Later, Mrs. Doe asked her daughter what was going on during that time. The daughter responded that Father was explaining the rules for the next game they were going to play.
- Father Wehmann was patting the bottoms of the fourth grade and the second grade girl. This past Sunday, the 8th of January, was the first time the parents noticed this behavior.
- Also on Sunday, both the fourth grader and the second grader were sitting on either side of Father Wehmann in the bay window seat. He put his cheek against the second grader's cheek and each of them was pushing their tongues against the cheek that was touching. Mrs. Doe asked what was going on. Father Wehmann said that this was called "root beer barrel kissing". Father Wehmann asked the second grader if she remembered the name. Later, Mrs. Doe asked her daughter about the root beer barrel kisses and if she had done them with Father Wehmann before. The daughter reported that she had done them before. See below.
- Over Christmas, Mr. And Mrs. Doe had a Christmas party to which Father was invited. According to Mr. and Mrs. Doe, he spent half to over half the time playing with the children as opposed to interacting with the adults in the house. (Mr. or Mrs. Doe stated something along the lines that Father Wehmann seems to act like he's 12 years old -- he definitely wants to be with the children). Father went up to the girls' bedrooms. During the time in the bedroom(s), he short sheeted the second graders' bed.

The second grader reported to mom that the day her bed was short sheeted that she and Father Wehmann lay on the bed and that was the first time they did the root beer barrel kissing.

- Father has asked the parents about the second grader's academic progress and stated aloud to parents that he was thinking of doing some tutoring over lunch with their daughter and a second grade boy in the same classroom. Parents asked this reporter if I knew anything about this other child and why Father Wehmann may have selected him. Parents stated that this knowledge about their daughter's academic progress felt very invasive and they stated unequivocally that they were not interested in having Father Wehmann take either of their children from any activity at any time. They specifically requested that all classroom teachers and specialists be explicitly notified of this request. They wondered aloud how staff might react if Father Wehmann tried to "pull rank" to see one of the girls. They requested clarification of this reporter regarding Father Wehmann's duties in the school and where the boundaries existed. Parents are very concerned about all the students in the school and stated that one of the main reasons they came forward with these concerns was to keep other students safe. They brought up the detail that Father Wehmann has been observed walking students to their piano lessons and should he have that kind of time alone with students?
- As part of her training, Mrs. Doe knows that the undermining of her parental authority is cause for concern. She said, "He undermined me." She then described a time when she was telling her daughter not to eat from the bowl. Father Wehmann told the preschool child "It's okay. Go ahead and eat it." Also, the family was at a graveside service for All Souls' Day. Father Wehmann was not paying attention to the service but was instigating with both girls a little production where they begged to be taken to Dairy Queen. The family went to Dairy Queen.
- Mrs. Doe stated that she thinks Father thinks the rules don't apply to him and then shared this information: The youngest daughter sleeps in bed with mom and dad. Father Wehmann was talking to their second grade daughter and said, "It is your job to get the preschooler out of bed with mom and dad. Let's get the whole second grade working on this." Additionally, she shared that Father Wehmann has a nickname for a fourth grade girl in girl scouts. This student has repeatedly asked father to not call her 'Giggles'. He will say, "Okay Giggles", completely ignoring her request. Mrs. Doe wondered, "Will he (Father Wehmann) listen?"
- Mrs. Doe spoke to Father Wehmann in the school cafeteria on 1-9-06. She told him that she does not want either of her children pulled from a school activity by him or to be singled out in any way by him. She also told him that there was to be no more root beer barrel kisses at all. He responded by saying, "I never do that in pub...". Mrs. Doe shared with Father that she was very concerned about him. He then offered her a high five to which she responded, but wishes she would not have.
- Mrs. Doe stated that perhaps Father Wehmann had already gone to Father Zehren to tell him that Mrs. Doe had concerns...to make it appear okay. Then she shared this example... Father Wehmann was comforting a very upset 6th grade female

after the tragic death of one of her classmates. Father Wehmann hugged this girl and kissed her on the forehead. He then called the 6th graders' parents to let them know that he had hugged and kissed her forehead in this context.

- Mrs. Doe is concerned that her sister has invited Father Wehmann to a family function and feels a need to express her concerns to her sister as she would want her sister to do for her. She is not sure what she will do about that at this point.
- Mrs. Doe asked her 9th or tenth grade son about anything he observed with Father Wehmann. The son stated that he had an uneasy feeling when Father Wehmann was around his sisters.
- Mrs. Doe was frequently tearful during this conversation and stated that she felt betrayed and wants some things she had given Father Wehmann back.

For my part, I thanked the Doe's for coming into report their concerns. I shared that given the information in front of me that they had ample reason to be concerned. I tried to empathize with them regarding how painful this situation must be for them especially considering the previous crisis. I assured them that I would work with the school and the parish to keep not only their daughters but all the school students safe and that I would get back to them to let them know that the issue was being handled. I said I would do my best to maintain their confidentiality but that it really didn't look too hopeful due to several factors – the nature of the relationship between Father Wehmann and this family, the precise description of the root beer barrel kiss and that fact that Mrs. Doe confronted Father Wehmann regarding his behavior.

I immediately went to Father Zehren and shared all of the concerns that had just been shared with me. While I did not use any names, Father Zehren guessed who the family was. He was very concerned and said he would call the Archdiocese. Father Zehren spoke with the school principal and Father Wehmann.

Kevin, File, please 3-6-06

MEMO

TO: Archbishop Flynn, Bishop Pates, Andy Eisenzimmer
FROM: Fr. Kevin McDonough
DATE: March 6, 2006
RE: Fr. Mark Wehmann

I agree with your recommendation to "hold" Mark in place as an associate until he has had the opportunity to work in the issues outlined in Dr. Barron's report. Also, while working serving in the Review Board - I was very impressed with the work of Dr. Seabloom. I believe

Recently Dr. Robert Barron completed an assessment of Fr. Mark Wehmann. He sent me a written summary of that assessment, and I am attaching a copy.

Here are a couple of critical points in that summary.

he is a competent therapist who has great respect for Faith issues.

First, although he underwent intensive psychological testing, there were no valid indications of significant or serious emotional problems. ^{+ RSP}

Second, Fr. Wehmann repeatedly denies sexual attraction toward minors of either sex, and Dr. Barron could find no evidence to conclude to the contrary. Third, and more negatively, there are some indications in the testing of a mild proneness on Fr. Wehmann's part to impulsivity combined with immature psychosexual development and a lower than average degree of empathy and sensitivity toward others.

Dr. Barron suggests that Fr. Wehmann begin to address the issues of appropriate boundaries and his own sexual maturity in a counseling setting. That sounds to me like a useful and proportionate recommendation. For some period of time, while he is undergoing that sort of work, I recommend that he would remain in an associate pastor position.

There is nothing in all of this that indicates that he is permanently barred from being pastor. Rather, I am recommending that we work to make him the best possible pastor and priest that he can be. In particular, he is going to have to learn to read much more attentively the kinds of signals that people give us when we are acting or speaking inappropriately. This not only includes concerns about sexual boundaries, but about our speech, our touch, and the degree to which we can push people to go along with our plans and intentions. Fr. Wehmann has some important work to do before he is prepared to be a community leader.

Unless any of you objects, I would like to get to work with him on this as soon as possible. I would also bring Fr. Zehren in on all of this. I have already spoken with Fr. Dennis about the limitations on Fr. Wehmann's ministry at Epiphany. I would keep those in place until he has made some progress in his psychotherapy.

cc: Fr. Mark Wehmann

Enclosure



EPIPHANY CATHOLIC SCHOOL
11001 Hanson Blvd.
Coon Rapids, Minnesota 55433
Phone: 754-1750

MANIFEST CHRIST TO ALL

*Fr. Kevin -
This is your copy
of our decision.
M Strauss
We discussed this
today w/ Fr. Zehren
who agreed.
3/20/06*

March 20, 2006

Fr. Dennis Zehren,

You recently asked us how we feel regarding Fr. Wehman's possible renewed contact with Epiphany School students. We take the concerns from teachers, staff, parents and students about his alleged inappropriate behavior with students very seriously. We still feel it is very inappropriate for Fr. Wehman to have contact with our students even if there are not any criminal charges filed against him. We've reached our decision after careful consideration of the following alleged behaviors by Fr. Wehman:

- a. Giving "root beer barrel kisses" to a young female student while in her bedroom.
- b. Allowing a student to sit in his lap while in her home.
- c. Patting a student on her butt while in her home.
- d. Hugging a female adolescent student in school.
- e. Putting his arm around a female adolescent's shoulders while walking down a school hallway.
- f. Kissing a female adolescent student on her forehead.
- g. Flirting, as a parent alleged, with a female adolescent student.
- h. Playing in the gym in sports games with students, especially girls, in which there was too much physical contact.
- i. Asking teachers to "hang out" with him and adolescent students at after-school or at non-school activities. Teachers complained that they felt pressured to accept his invitations to "hang out" with him and students, and felt uncomfortable about that type of behavior.
- j. Keeping a Junior High boy out of class without the teacher's knowledge or approval.

As we said above, we take these concerns about Fr. Wehman by staff, parents and students very seriously and do not want his renewed involvement with school students or activities. We are obviously willing to discuss this matter with you and Fr. McDonough.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,

Michael P Strauss

Michael P Strauss, Ed. S.
Principal

Pat Bredenkamp

Pat Bredenkamp, Ed. S.
Associate Principal

Jeri McCorkle

Jeri McCorkle, M.A., L.P.
Assistant Principal

Cc: Fr. Kevin McDonough