



< 3 of 5 > Full Text | Newspaper

## GUILTY PLEA ENTERED IN RAPE CASE: MUSIC DIRECTOR AT CHURCH ADMITS SEX WITH 12-YEAR-OLD

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**Full text** Abstract/Details

### Abstract

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### Full text

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The 31-year-old former music director of the influential West Baltimore Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church pleaded guilty yesterday to second-degree rape for having sex with a young female parishioner.

**Timothy D. Price** III of Owings Mills admitted in Baltimore Circuit Court that he had sex with the female parishioner who was 12 at the time. He is scheduled to be sentenced Aug. 1. Prosecutors said they will seek a sentence of 20 years, with all but seven years suspended, and five years of probation.



Assistant State's Attorney Katherine Moxley said Price and the girl had sex on three occasions in his car between Dec. 1 and Jan. 15. The meetings were all off church property, two in a West Baltimore alley and one in a parking lot near Druid Hill Park, Moxley said.

The encounters occurred after Price obtained permission from the girl's mother to take her to an outreach center and home from Bible study and a dance class, the prosecutor said. Moxley said the girl told her mother of the encounters, and her mother reported them to police Jan. 26.

After Moxley read the facts of the case aloud, Circuit Judge Robert B. Kershaw asked Price whether he was pleading guilty because he was guilty of the charges. Price responded, "Yes."

The victim, now 13, did not attend the hearing, but her mother and other relatives did. The victim's mother declined to comment, but Moxley said the family requested that the facts of the case be read in open court. Price has been held in the Baltimore City Detention Center in lieu of \$1 million bail since his arrest in February.

Kershaw sometimes handles cases involving sex crimes at the bench, but Jo Anne Stanton, chief of the state's attorney's sex offense division, said she has instructed her prosecutors to argue that they be handled in open court.

"Sex crimes generally are committed in secret, and the secretive nature is what gives perpetrators power over their victims," Stanton said in an interview. "When plea deals are handled at the bench, it continues the impression that the perpetrators are in control and gives the victim the impression that the matter is still a secret."

Bethel AME, on Druid Hill Avenue in Upton, has more than 17,000 members, including Mayor Sheila Dixon, Comptroller Joan M. Pratt and former Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke. It is a regular stop for politicians seeking city and statewide office.

Bethel's pastor, the Rev. Frank M. Reid III, attended yesterday's hearing with his wife, Marlaa'. The couple left after the hearing and did not appear to speak with Price's family.



Reid told The Sun in February that he had hired Price after a national search for a music director. He said Price's references were checked and that he had previously spent three years at Harvest Time Church in Houston.

Reid's wife said the couple had no comment, but she confirmed that Price is no longer the church's music director. "We're praying for the family," she said.

The case is considered an age-based sex crime, in that Price is not accused of using force or the threat of force to get the girl to have sex with him. The crime lies in the difference in age between Price and his victim. The delay in reporting meant that prosecutors were unable to collect DNA evidence from the victim, but they had Price's written and taped confession to police, along with text messages between him and the girl, Moxley said.

Price and the girl began communicating via text message and cell phone conversations in June or July last year, Moxley said.

Charles L. Waechter, Price's attorney, said his client is "extremely remorseful."

Yesterday, Kershaw granted Waechter's request that Price undergo a psychiatric evaluation before sentencing. Waechter said he believes the results will help him argue for less punishment.

"The issue is whether or not he is a threat to the community," Waechter said. "Those evaluations will address that primary issue."

Because it is Price's first offense, the sentencing guidelines recommend that he be incarcerated for four to nine years, Moxley said.

Waechter said Price's relatives, including his wife, did not want to speak to reporters. Price has three children, ages 12, 11 and 1, the attorney said.

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## **Illustration**

PHOTO(S); Caption: Price



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