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Downriver minister charged in child sex case

Pastor of Detroit church may have harmed other children, River Rouge police say

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The Detroit News

River Rouge --A minister who police say has a reputation for reaching out to troubled teens was charged Monday with six counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct for allegedly having sex with an under-aged boy.

The Rev. Russell Schaller, 35, of River Rouge, senior pastor at Greater St. Johns Missionary Baptist Church on Detroit's east side, was arraigned in 26th District Court and ordered held in the Wayne County Jail in lieu of \$100,000 bond.

Schaller is a River Rouge resident and the events he is accused of took place there over the past six months with a youth under the age of 16, police said.

"There have been other accusations over the years from other communities around here," River Rouge Police Chief Robert Alderman said.

"Now that he's locked up, we believe others will step forward. We definitely believe there are other victims. In our initial contact with him, he told an officer, 'Age ain't nothing but a number to me.' "

Schaller describes himself on his Internet site as "different" from other religious types. Statements attributed to Schaller on his Myspace page include: "Hymn books are made to throw at people who fall asleep. Not a religious freak. Can have a conversation without ever bring in church or God."

Alderman said Schaller has temporarily taken numerous troubled teens into his home over the past several years. Alderman asked people with information about Schaller to call the River Rouge Police Department at (313) 842-8700.

"Now it's just a matter of finding out who is willing to come forward now that he is locked up and they are safe," Alderman said.

"This may encourage some parents to talk to us."

Schaller was ordered to be returned to court on Feb. 19 for a preliminary examination of the evidence authorities claim to have against him.

If convicted, Schaller faces imprisonment of up to 15 years.

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