



# The Courier-Journal Metro

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Sunday, October 13, 2002

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## Alleged abuse victims offer support

Church scandal has prompted a group of ex-Holy Spirit students to help others.

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The Courier-Journal

*"We support our classmates in their pursuit of justice and want them to know they are in our prayers."*

— Excerpt from a statement by members of the Holy Spirit Elementary School class of 1962.

John Eifler remembers the eerie sound of crepe-soled shoes as the Rev. Louis Miller walked the quiet halls of Holy

Spirit Elementary.

"You could hear him coming; you'd sit there and think, 'Oh my gosh, where's he going and what's he got in mind?'" said Eifler, a 1962 graduate of Holy Spirit, the Roman Catholic school where Miller is alleged in lawsuits to have abused more than two dozen students.

Eifler, 54, and others from his class have organized a loose-knit group of about 20 former classmates — most of whom have not filed lawsuits, but claim Miller sexually abused

them.

They say memories of alleged abuse are still vivid and they are concerned about many people they believe have not come forward to report allegations.

By organizing, they hope to show the problem is broader than shown by the number of lawsuits and to support those who have filed abuse cases against the Archdiocese of Louisville.

They also hope to serve as a source of information and support for anyone alleging abuse

by Miller during his 46 years as a priest in Louisville. Though organizers are all Holy Spirit graduates, they invite anyone who alleges Miller abused them to contact them and attend meetings.

"I felt compelled to go forward, to do something," Eifler said. "I just could not stand on the sidelines any longer."

The group's members have drafted a statement to express their feelings about the alleged abuse by Miller. They plan further meetings to discuss how to

best handle allegations of abuse that many classmates had put out of their minds for decades.

"A lot of these fellows I haven't seen since grade school," said Charlie Kremer, 54, a Louisville dentist who helped organize the support group. "We got together and talked. There wasn't any real plan but as more people came forward and talked about it, they had some really strong

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# Support group forms for alleged victims of abuse

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feelings.”

Frank Diebold, 54, said getting together with the group and just talking about his experiences has been helpful.

“We’re kind of like group therapy,” said Diebold, who is retired from the manufacturing industry. “If we can bring more people into that fold and try to help them, I think that is accomplishing something.”

Kremer, Diebold and others are convinced there are more alleged victims who have not come forward and aren’t sure how to do so if they don’t want to file a lawsuit or seek criminal charges. That’s where their group can help, by serving as a contact for people looking for support, they said.

“I’m convinced there are a lot out there who aren’t talking to anyone but who are keenly interested,” Diebold said.

Miller is named as the alleged abuser in 70 of the 185 lawsuits filed against the archdiocese, alleging sexual abuse by priests or others connected with the church. Twenty-seven of those cases say Miller was pastor at Holy Spirit when the alleged abuse occurred. He also faces criminal charges that he sexually abused 24 children in Jefferson and Oldham counties.

Miller has pleaded innocent to all criminal charges except a new one



BY PAM SPAULDING, THE COURIER-JOURNAL  
**Charlie Kremer, Jim Cecil and Bernie Queenan, from left, have helped form a support group for alleged victims of abuse by the Rev. Louis Miller.**

brought Thursday. He and his lawyer, David Lambertus, have declined to comment on the civil or criminal allegations. Because he has not been arraigned, Miller has not yet entered a plea in Thursday’s charge.

Diebold has reported his allegations to police and is one of the alleged victims named in the Jefferson County indictment. But Diebold said he has no plans to sue the archdiocese.

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“I don’t think that’s right,” he said. “I don’t think money would make it right.”

Kremer said he, Eifler and Cal Pfeiffer, the three men who started the group, have not filed suit or sought criminal charges and they’re not pushing others to do so.

“It’s not a crusade to get people to storm the archdiocese,” said Pfeiffer,

54, a businessman. “It’s more for support.”

Public comments skeptical of those filing lawsuits led to the formation of the Holy Spirit support group. Kremer said the organizers heard or read comments from some people suggesting those who sued are just out for money.

“I know these guys; they’re good people,” said Jim Cecil, a member of the group. “There’s no chance they could be lying as far as I can see, absolutely none.”

They also are distressed by the apparent adversarial legal position of the archdiocese.

“I’d really like to see the church say, ‘We made a mistake here,’” Cecil said.

The archdiocese has declined to comment on the pending lawsuits but Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly has said publicly that he wants to beg forgiveness from victims, and when the litigation is over he hopes to “apologize personally and beg forgiveness from each of these victims.”

Anyone interested is invited to meet with the support group. To get information, call Cal Pfeiffer, 895-6669; John Eifler, 664-4062; or Bernie Queenan, 777-4956.