

Priest barred from preaching at former churches

By Bethany Dunbar
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A priest convicted of lewd conduct with a teen-age boy will be forbidden from preaching at his former churches in Barton and East Albany, the statewide Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington announced.

And some townspeople who were supportive of the Rev. Michael K. Madden when he was arrested on a sexual assault charge in April 1988 said Thursday that they will not push to get the priest back now that he has pleaded no contest to a

lesser charge of lewd and lascivious conduct.

Madden, 46, entered his plea and was found guilty in Vermont District Court Wednesday in an agreement with prosecutors that called for the sexual assault charge and a second lewd and lascivious conduct charge to be dropped.

Authorities said Madden kissed and fondled a teen-ager. The judge deferred sentencing Madden to jail, instead ordering him to undergo counseling and to perform community service.

After the court hearing, Madden said

he hoped to return to his pulpits.

But church officials say no.

After his arrest more than a year ago, Madden was restricted from public ministry by the diocese. Thursday, reading a prepared statement attributed to Bishop John Marshall, the Rev. Jay Haskin said further steps would be taken.

Marshall "will impose further restrictions on the ability of Father Madden to function as a priest," the statement said. Haskin said because Marshall has not yet talked with Madden about the case, he could not be more specific about the

restrictions Thursday. He did not say when a decision would be made.

After Madden was pulled from the St. Paul's pulpit last year, parishioners voiced strong support for their pastor and said they hoped he would be able to return someday. Thursday, two people contacted said, although people are still supportive of Madden, they don't expect to see a local effort to bring him back.

Ad Taylor of Barton, who contributed to a fund raiser to help Madden defend himself in court, said the situation has been hard on everyone because Madden

was well liked. But he added that the Rev. Maurice Roy, Madden's replacement, is well liked also.

"I don't think there's any great movement to draft him back," said Gary Marcotte of Barton, another parishioner. But he said he thought most people in the area would wish Madden well.

Marcotte said Madden had a way of generating enthusiasm about the church and special projects. When he was preaching, Marcotte said, "You just felt like St. Paul's was the greatest thing going since life's bread."