

The Mario Moreno and get down J.R. Brown Chronicles

How would you like these guys speaking for your church?

Paducah Sun- 1-5-01

A spokesman at the church's headquarters in New York said there is no prohibition or discouragement in going to legal authorities in the event of child abuse.

J.R. Brown, public affairs director for Jehovah's Witnesses at the church's headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y., said in a statement that the members of the faith "abhor all forms of wickedness, including child abuse."

"If child abuse becomes known to our church elders, they strictly comply with applicable child abuse reporting laws. We also encourage the wrongdoers to do everything they can to set the matter straight with the authorities. Furthermore, we do not prohibit or discourage the victim or the victim's parents from reporting child abuse to the authorities even if the alleged perpetrator is one of Jehovah's Witnesses."

Jehovah's Witnesses abhor all forms of wickedness including child abuse. We do not condone the actions of those who exploit children by this terrible crime and such persons are disfellowshipped (excommunicated) from the congregation. A known child molester does not qualify for appointment as a church elder or for any other position of responsibility in any congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

PR Statement 1-5-01 Channel 6 News

If child abuse becomes known to our church elders, they strictly comply with applicable child abuse reporting laws. We also encourage the wrongdoers to do everything they can to set the matter straight with the authorities. Furthermore, we do not prohibit or discourage the victim or the victim's parents from reporting child abuse to the authorities even if the alleged perpetrator is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. If you would like to receive more information on how we report such matters, please contact Mario Moreno, Watchtower Legal Department. (845) 509-0416 or (845) 306-1000. A primary focus of Jehovah's Witnesses is to elevate the Bible's strong family values in all communities and to help willing ones come to know and serve God acceptably.

Paducah Sun 1-28-01

Mario Moreno, associate general counsel at the church's New York headquarters, said when church policy is applied to child molesters, "as a parent, an attorney and an elder, I'm comfortable with our policy."

Moreno said while he believes in the church's policy, he knows that some members have been hurt, and "my heart goes out to them." But he said that some elders don't follow the policy as they should, and that's where trouble begins.

Moreno said when a Witness goes to an elder with an accusation of abuse, the first step the elders should take is calling the church's legal department.

He said there are then three factors considered: protecting the child, complying with the law, and protecting minister-adherent confidentiality, with the last receiving the least weight.

The legal department will then advise the elders what is required by law. Twenty-two states, including Illinois and the District of Columbia, do not require clergy to report accusations of child abuse. In those states, Moreno said, the legal department generally advises the elders not to report the matter to law enforcement authorities.

J.R. Brown, public affairs director for the church, said the reason for this is "we do not think, as an ecclesiastical authority, we should run ahead of Caesar's laws," using a biblical reference to secular authority. "Even if secular authority does not require it, generally we have endeavored to be more zealous for enforcing and seeing that these laws are complied with. If Caesar has a law, and it does not conflict with God's law, we follow it."

Brown said the church does not necessarily equate reporting the matter to law enforcement to protecting the child because "not all the time does government authority provide the protection the child needs. We don't say automatically that, but unfortunately too many reports show that's the case. You can be sure they're going to take what action is necessary to see that the child is protected."

Both Brown and Moreno said that the elders, who volunteer and are essentially untrained clergy, might err in their application of a policy both believe puts protecting children first.

"It's a matter of trying to balance confidentiality and protecting the child," Brown said. "It's not always easy. Have mistakes been made? Very likely, they have. We're trying to see that everyone is educated to what needs to be done to see that innocent children are not victimized."

Moreno agrees with Bowen's claim that no investigation is initiated in the church if there is only one witness and the accused denies the charge, but he said elders have the responsibility to watch the accused more closely. He added that elders sometimes advise the accused to not put himself or herself in suspicious situations.

He also said that when members are disfellowshipped, the congregation is told but no reason is given in order to protect confidentiality. When asked if the parents of the victim would be allowed to tell fellow congregates why a member is disfellowshipped, Moreno replied, "That would be their choice. We don't tell them that, but it would be their choice. Is that encouraged? No."

He agreed with Bowen's charge that a congregation would also not be told if a pedophile had joined the flock. But he said because of the church's structure, the fact that such a member, if male, who would have fewer rights in the congregation, would not be serving in a leadership role would alert members that "he obviously lacks spiritual maturity."

Moreno said he believes that while some of the church's critics on this topic have legitimate concerns, most "have a problem with pride" and "want the organization to change for them. We go by what we believe the Bible says, and we don't change for anybody."

He also said he feels the church is "being picked on" and added that he would be willing to put the church's policy up against any other.

Christianity Today 01-26-01

J. R. Brown, director of the public affairs office of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS) in Brooklyn, says he shares Bowen's concern. "We abhor what [molestation] does to children," he tells Christianity Today.

Witness spokesman Brown says that the incidence of pedophilia is no worse in his religion than in others, but he admits that some elders have not reported suspicions of abuse. In 38 states, the law requires clergy and other professionals to report physical and sexual abuse of children. Some critics argue that even in the 22 states that do not require clergy members to report, Witness elders do not qualify for such a privilege because most are neither professionally trained nor paid employees of the organization.

Although Witnesses comply with secular laws when necessary, Witness spokesman Brown says, the group prefers to deal with such matters spiritually. "We handle wrongdoing, sin, and transgression," he says. "This is what a religious organization is supposed to do. We're not getting into law enforcement. We're just going to handle the repentance."

Louisville Courier-Journal, 1-4-01

Church officials say elders alert authorities to suspected abuse in states that require reporting. But in other states they prefer to take steps to protect children that don't breach what they see as confidential communication between elders and members.

A lawyer for the Jehovah's Witnesses church, which has nearly 1 million members nationally and 6 million worldwide, said it complies with those state laws that require church elders to report abuse.

"If there is a law that mandates reporting, that takes precedent over any confidentiality, whether in church policy or statute," said Mario Moreno, associate general counsel for the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, a legal corporation of the church.

"In states where there is no reporting requirement, it's a different scenario," Moreno said.

Elders might have the victim relocated away from the abuser or have the parent or guardian of the victim, or even the accused person, report the abuse to police, he said.

"The laws of this country, as well as people's moral values, tell you there are some things that should be kept private. That's why laws protect confidential communications between clergy and their flock."

But Moreno said elders who contact the church's legal department with cases of suspected sexual abuse -- as they must do -- are often advised to refer victims to police or other outside help, even if the law doesn't require it.

Victims and their parents are free, Moreno said, to seek help from police or therapists and should not blame the church if they choose not to do so.

"Parents are encouraged to do whatever they need to do to protect their child," said Moreno.

Church attorney Moreno said church members know they can go to the authorities on a matter of abuse. "They haven't committed a sin by turning in a Jehovah's Witness to the authorities," he said. "It's a very personal decision."

Moreno would not comment on whether elders violated the law in this case but said, "Once in a while, in a small minority cases, elders screw up. They screw up because they don't call here (the Watch Tower legal department). When they call here, they don't screw up."

Moreno said that eventually, the truth comes out. "Somebody else comes out of the woodwork and now you can take action," he said. Moreno said two separate accusers would count as two witnesses when making a sexual abuse accusation.

Church policy neither encourages nor discourages members to report suspected or admitted sexual abuse to police, Moreno said. Elders are instructed to always call the central legal department of the church in Carmel, N.Y., upon receiving an accusation.

When elders call, church lawyers tell them whether state law requires them to report abuse to police, Moreno said. A still-valid 1989 church memo also tells elders to call for legal advice before being interviewed by police, responding to a subpoena or voluntarily turning over confidential church records, unless police have a search warrant.

Moreno said church lawyers might advise elders to refer victims to police or other outside help. "That's a personal decision."

A Jan. 2 statement from J.R. Brown, director of public affairs for the Jehovah's Witnesses, said church elders "encourage the wrongdoers to do everything they can to set the matter straight with the authorities."

Ayers, Rees' stepfather, declined to comment, but church lawyer Moreno applauded the decision.

"There is no duty to announce to people that 'John Brown' is a child abuser," he said. If the court had ruled otherwise, he said, it "would basically discourage people from going to their ministers and getting help."

"If people could not count on confidentiality when they go and confess to a Catholic priest, there's going to be quite a chilling effect on religion," he said.

Church lawyer Moreno said it would be "ridiculous" for any elder to make such a threat, and if one did, it would contradict church policy.

"That's not scriptural," he said. "We teach the Scriptures. The Scriptures don't say, 'If you file criminal charges against an abuser you're going to have eternal damnation.' The one in danger of eternal damnation is the abuser."

Watch Tower officials are not consistent on how the church punishes child molesters.

In a Jan. 2 statement, church public affairs director Brown said that child abusers are "disfellowshipped," or expelled from the congregation. Later, he acknowledged the church can use less severe penalties.

He defended his original statement, saying that for "mass consumption it conveys the thought (that elders) do institute this discipline. They're not soft on abusers."

Said Moreno: "I wouldn't be too happy myself if somebody abused my child and was reinstated. The bottom line is if an elder determines a former child abuser has demonstrated repentance, (he has) a scriptural obligation to reinstate him."

Brown said pedophiles are restricted from working with minors and must also be with a well-respected church member when they go door to door.

Pedophiles also might not be sent into neighborhoods where they might be recognized as molesters, Brown said.

According to church lawyer Moreno, the system worked. Elders did their job, and victims and police did theirs, he said.

"What was the harm?" Moreno said. "The report got made."

"You've got a teen, who has been molested, upset at the elders for not calling the police?" he said. "You can call the police. You're the one injured."

"Who makes the laws? Not us. Don't blame us for the laws, please. Talk to the state legislators of Colorado."

Associated Press 2-11-01

J.R. Brown, spokesman at the Jehovah's Witnesses' headquarters in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, said he believes Bowen does not have a full understanding of church policies.

Members are free at all times to report abuse to secular authorities, Brown said. "This is a personal decision on how you want to handle this," he said.

What is revealed to church leaders is generally kept confidential unless state law requires that allegations of abuse be turned over to police, he said.

"We deal with sin, and law enforcement deals with crime," Brown said.

In some cases, however, the matter is turned over to secular authorities regardless of the law, Brown said.

Of Bowen, he said: "He's concerned about victims of child abuse, and we are, too."

Brown said the faith does require at least two witnesses to prove any kind of wrongdoing -- including child molestation -- because that is what is taught in the Bible. But corroborating evidence can be used instead of a second witness to prove wrongdoing, Brown said.

Paducah Sun 2-12-01

Editorial Page JR Brown Response to William Bowen

We are writing regarding allegations made concerning our policy about handling accusations of child molestation. Some of these allegations have been reported in the media.

We were very surprised to see that these statements were made, and we noted how inaccurate they are. Our position on pedophilia has been well-publicized for decades. Back in 1985, the Jan. 22 issue of Awake! devoted several pages to the subject and stated that the priority was protection of the child. It stated:

"First, the child — and other children too — must be protected from any further abuse. This must be done, whatever the cost. In many cases the accused molester will have to be confronted. But whatever it takes, it is important that the child should feel confident that the molester will never be able to get at her (or him) again."

Our Oct. 8, 1993, issue of Awake! featured a cover series of 14 pages entitled, "Protect Your Children!" In part it stated:

"If your child discloses sexual abuse, you will no doubt feel shattered ... Praise the child for being so brave as to tell you what happened. Repeatedly reassure the child that you will do your best to provide protection; that the abuse was the abuser's fault, not the child's; that the child is not 'bad'; that you love the child.

"Some legal experts advise reporting the abuse to the authorities as soon as possible. In some lands the legal system may require this."

"Parents must therefore make every reasonable effort to protect their children! Many responsible parents choose to seek out professional help for an abused child. Just as you would with a medical doctor, make sure that any such professional will respect your religious views. Help your child rebuild his or her shattered self-esteem through a steady outpouring of parental love."

Following are excerpts from the Jan. 1, 1997, issue of The Watchtower:

"Depending on the law of the land where he lives, the molester may well have to serve a prison term or face other sanctions from the state. The congregation will not protect him from this."

"A child molester is subject to severe congregational discipline and restrictions."

"For the protection of our children, a man known to have been a child molester does not qualify for a responsible position in the congregation."

In conclusion, we reiterate that Jehovah's Witnesses do not shy away from informing people about pedophilia. We abhor the practice and actively work to keep our congregations free from such harmful influences. Millions of copies of our journals, which contain numerous articles that decry child abuse in any form and instead promote safe, trusting, and strong family relationships, have been read by our members and distributed to the public internationally. (Currently, The Watchtower has a circulation of more than 23 million copies per issue, and for Awake! it is more than 20 million.) Through these magazines and in other ways, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to contribute to the safety of children and to the building of strong families in the community.

J.R. BROWN

Director, Public Affairs Office

Jehovah's Witnesses

AP

Tuesday, January 22, 2002

Lawsuit claims Jehovah's Witness church protects pedophiles

Church spokesman J.R. Brown said he could not comment on Rodriguez's lawsuit because lawyers had not received paperwork.

But he said there is no policy preventing notification of civil authorities of a crime.

"What we handle is the transgression, or the sin, of child molestation. We distinguish that from the criminal aspect," Brown said. "Our view is, the church handles the sin, the secular authority - Caesar, if you will- handles the criminal activity."

The church - which has about 6 million members worldwide, including 1 million in the United States - requires two witnesses because the Bible requires it for establishing a sin, he said.

"Where the state requires that this be reported, we comply fully," he said. "We have designed a policy to protect the victim of child molestation; to protect innocent children and to not allow pedophiles to circulate among us."

THE SPOKANE REVIEW

Wednesday, January 23, 2002

Lawsuit accuses church of fostering sexual abuse

Church officials deny that charge.

In an interview from his home in New York on Tuesday, church spokesman J.R. Brown said elders are told to comply with the laws requiring professionals to report all allegations of child abuse.

"It ought to be clear, the church handles all sins and transgressions in house," he said. "If such sins are criminal, then it's up to the police."

Brown said he could not comment specifically on the lawsuit.

Brown, the church spokesman, denied that victims are discouraged from reporting abuse or other crimes.

"We make it clear that it is up to the individual whether to report. As you know, many choose not to," he said. "We don't chastise them."

UPI

Tuesday, January 22, 2002

Sexual Abuse Suit Filed Against Jehovah's Witness Leaders; Denomination's NY Headquarters Called 'Negligent'

No Comments

TRI-CITY HERALD

Wednesday, January 23, 2002

Jehovah's Witnesses congregation in Othello sued in sex abuse case

However, Watchtower spokesman J.R. Brown, who had not yet seen the lawsuit and couldn't comment specifically, said the church does not interfere with the reporting of a crime.

He said church elders are supposed to contact headquarters if they have questions about a case.

"When we are contacted, we tell elders if they are in a state where (reporting pedophilia) is required," he said. "We want to make sure we are legally compliant."

Brown said he is aware that numerous cases have been posted on Internet sites such as www.silentlambs.org or www.freeminds.org detailing pedophilia within the Jehovah's Witnesses church.

But he maintains most of the stories were posted by people who underwent abuse back in the 1980s, when all of society was grappling with the issue.

"Regrettably, many children probably were molested," he said.

He said the church has made strong policy changes since then, including taking suspected or convicted pedophiles out of any position in the church, not allowing them to be alone with children and various other restrictions.

Seattle Times

Thursday, January 23, 2002

Church protects pedophiles, victim charges in lawsuit

J.R. Brown, a spokesman for the Brooklyn, N.Y.-based denomination, said he could not comment on the lawsuit because lawyers had not received paperwork.

But "we have designed a policy to protect the victim of child molestation; to protect innocent children and not to allow pedophiles to circulate among us," he said of the church, which is officially known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

Brown said the church — which has about 6 million members worldwide, including 1 million in the United States — requires two witnesses because the Bible requires that for establishing a sin.

"Where the state requires that this be reported, we comply fully," he said.

CNS News

Friday, January 24, 2002

Jehovah's Witness Church Accused of Hiding Sexual Abusers

Jehovah's Witness church officials in New York deny that the church hides criminal activity. "We have no such policy. Our policy allows for anyone who wishes to report the matter to the authorities to do so," J.R. Brown, national spokesman for the Jehovah's Witness organization, said. "We strictly comply. We are not in any way resistive to the proper authorities being notified."

Brown said that while he could not comment on the specifics of the case, the church typically follows general policy guidelines in such matters.

"We follow a general policy that we do not support legally any Jehovah's Witness charged with a crime. We do not use our donated resources to defend any Jehovah's Witness accused of a crime," Brown said.

But Brown said the core issue is not the church's image.

"If someone were to feel that our concern for our resources were greater than that for innocent victims, that simply is not true," Brown said. "We are concerned, just as any other organization, about our public image. We are concerned about our resources because we are recipients of donated funds for non-profit charitable work. But we are primarily ministers who are concerned to act as shepherds in a protective and spiritual sense over the members of the congregation," he said.

"If anyone has been abused by anyone else in the congregation or whether that person is an appointed elder or not, we view this as a horrific crime to inflict on a child or anyone else," Brown said.

SACRAMENTO BEE

Saturday, January 26, 2002

Woman sues Jehovah's Witnesses in sex abuse

Church officials would not comment on Rodriguez's lawsuit, but did say they report crimes to the proper authorities.

"We have no objection to a crime being handled," said J.R. Brown, director of the Office of Public Information for the national organization. "In no way do we conflict with how police or other authorities handle these cases."

But church officials strongly denied Anderson's allegation.

"The two-witnesses requirement applies to how we handle transgressions or sins as a church," Brown said. "It has nothing to do with how we handle a crime.

"We are a church made up of families ... We would not allow predators to get away with this," Brown said.

THE SPOKANE REVIEW

Sunday, January 27, 2002

Spokane

Reluctant Witness feels betrayed

Members of the faith found guilty of wrongdoing by church elders can be disfellowshipped, said church spokesman J.R. Brown in New York City. When that happens other members are encouraged to cease all contact with the individual.

"That is a biblical standard," Brown said. "We are pretty strict when it comes to interpreting the Bible."

While Brown said he can't comment on the lawsuit, he said the church has published several articles over the last 20 years encouraging members to report sexual abuse and child molesters.

"We handle transgression and sin," he said. "But if that involves criminal activity, we say that should be reported to the government."

NEW YORK POST

Monday, January 28, 2002

SUIT ALLEGES JEHOVAH'S KIDDIE-SEX COVERUP

A church spokesman yesterday insisted that the church does not hide abuse.

LOUISVILLE-COURIER

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Jehovah's Witnesses act against abuse-policy critics

The Jehovah's Witnesses Office of Public Information declined to comment specifically on the four cases, citing confidentiality policies.

Leaders of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, as the organization is formally known, have disputed these claims, saying they obey all laws requiring the reporting of child abuse and do not interfere with police investigations.

They say that in states that do not require reporting of abuse, they prefer taking steps to protect children while not breaching what they see as confidential communications between elders and members.

Church officials say they might advise elders to move victims out of abusive homes or refer them to counseling.

In its statement, the Jehovah's Witnesses Office of Public Information quoted biblical references in saying elders must use church discipline to "shepherd the flock of God in their care." "In fact, they are required by the Holy Scriptures to see to it that the congregation remains clean and unified," the statement said. "No hasty decision is made in this process." The goal is not to expel a member, but to follow the Apostle Paul's injunction to "try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness," the statement said.

One suit filed in January by Erica Rodriguez, who said she was repeatedly abused by a church member years ago, claims an elder at her former congregation in Washington state threatened her with excommunication if she reported her abuser to police.

A Watchtower statement denies this, saying that there are no sanctions against anyone who chooses to go to police, and that church elders and Watchtower did not know of the abuse until years after it had occurred.

PRESS STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
May 8, 2002

In harmony with what the Bible teaches, elders of Jehovah's Witnesses 'shepherd the flock of god in their care.' They have the spiritual welfare of each congregation member in mind. (1 Peter 5:2) This pastoral work is done confidentially, out of respect for the congregation and the individual(s) involved.

Even as the local elders are concerned about the spiritual health of each member of the congregation, they are also concerned for the spiritual welfare of the congregation as a whole. In fact, they are required by the Holy Scriptures to see to it that the congregation remains clean and unified. (1 Corinthians 1:10) No hasty decision is made in this process. It is never the goal of local elders to remove someone from the congregation. Rather, every effort is made, in harmony with Paul's words, to "try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness." ---Galatians 6:1

Contact J. R. Brown, telephone: (718) 560-5600

NEWSDAY-NY

Jehovah's Witnesses Allege Sexual Abuse

Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Pandelo and the others say they are being targeted because of their outspokenness, especially on sexual abuse of minors.

A national spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses, which says it has 6 million members worldwide, categorically denied the allegations.

"You cannot be a known sex offender and hold any position of responsibility within the organization," said J.R. Brown, the spokesman. "We have a very strong and aggressive policy for handling any sexual molestation that might take place."

Jehovah's Witnesses spokesman Brown said only one hearing has been held so far and no action has been taken yet against anyone.

Bowen fights excommunication for criticizing witnesses

NewsChannel 6

Bowen fights excommunication for criticizing witnesses

Members at Bowen's old Kingdom Hall in Draffenville say the church does not bar them from reporting abuse. They say they may council abusers to report their actions to authorities. But they admit discouraging members from telling just anybody. "The difference between needless gossip, let's say, and withholding information from those who have a right to know is two different things completely," says Jehovah's Witness Bruce Waite.

J.R. Brown, national Jehovah's Witness public information director, says proceedings against Bowen are confidential.

New York Post

FOUR FACING JEHOVAH OUSTER

Thursday, May 9, 2002

A spokesman for the Brooklyn-based religion called that claim "absurd."

Both sides agree that all Witnesses - including relatives of the four - would risk excommunication by having contact with any excommunicated person, except under certain circumstances.

While the four believe the show's impending broadcast has spurred the church's actions, church spokesman J.R. Brown said that before Tuesday, church headquarters had no idea that these people would be on the show.

He also said local congregations decided to charge them with various spiritual violations.

AP/CNN

Four Jehovah's Witnesses fight church's handling of child abuse cases

Thursday, May 9, 2002

In a statement issued from their headquarters, the Jehovah's Witnesses said that church leaders are "required by the Holy Scriptures to see to it that the congregation remains clean and unified."

J.R. Brown, a spokesman for the denomination, said that parents are not punished by the church for going to the police first in cases of child molestation.

And he said that anyone found guilty of molestation by a church judicial committee is removed from all positions of responsibility and cannot evangelize door-to-door without being accompanied by a fellow Jehovah's Witness.

Steve Lyons, an elder at Bowen's Draffenville church of about 60 members, said Jehovah's Witnesses are responsive to allegations of child abuse.

"I think we do as well as we can do," he said. "We comply with all local laws when it comes to reporting. We do our best to protect children in cases where even there's just been an alleged abuse."

The Tullahoma News

Whistleblower could lose her church, family

May 11, 2002

In an interview with the New York Post, JH spokesperson J.R. Brown stated that the threatened excommunications had nothing to do with the Dateline interview and that "church headquarters had no idea that these people would be on the show."

Yet research displayed more than six internet announcements on the program, updates and names, all linked to the Silent Lambs and the Watchtower sites.

Brown also said that local congregation decided to charge the members with various spiritual violations.

Molestation case leads to church fight

Published in the Asbury Park Press 5/14/02

A Jehovah's Witnesses national spokesman, David Semonian, cited confidentiality rules and said the church could not discuss the Pandelos' case. "The proceedings may focus on sins unrelated to any public comments on sexual abuse," he said.

Semonian said the church does not have specific rules against talking to the media, but churches could take action against those who disrupt the unity of the church.

Semonian said he did not know about the Pandelo case. He said anyone convicted of child molestation cannot hold a position of authority in the church and cannot perform church work alone.

Washington Post

Saturday, May 11, 2002;

Ouster Looms for Critics Of Sex Abuse Policy

J.R. Brown, a national spokesman for the Jehovah's Witnesses, confirmed that the four had been called to the hearings, but he said the proceedings may focus on "sins" unrelated to public comments on sexual abuse. He provided no specifics.

The judicial committees will decide whether the four should be "disfellowshipped," the group's term for excommunication.

Tennessean/ Nashville

Abuse charges put Witness at risk of shunning

Saturday, 05/11/02

"What she (Anderson) alleges is not true at all," said J.R. Brown, a spokesman for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc., the incorporated name of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Brown said he had been talking to Dateline about the show's story for a year but said he and other organization leaders did not know which members television producers had interviewed.

"We have no idea what she told Dateline," Brown said of Anderson.

The consequences of excommunication are severe for a reason, Brown said. It is hoped that the harsh isolation that disfellowshipped members feel will draw them back to the organization.

Other members of the faith are not allowed to speak to disfellowshipped members. They can't greet them in a store or share a meal with them. Live-in family members can speak to the person but never about spiritual issues.

"Our statistics bear out that you have many people every year be reinstated," Brown said.

Brown said Jehovah's Witnesses have a strict policy about child sexual abuse. If parents come to congregation leaders with concerns that their child is being abused, the leaders follow state law, he said. If state law requires parents to report the abuse, congregation leaders tell them that.

People in the organization who are accused of sex abuse are subject to a hearing like the one Anderson attended yesterday, Brown said. They are automatically removed from leadership positions and can't go door-to-door without other members' being present.

Anderson said she knew of pedophiles in four Middle Tennessee congregations who had confessed to elders and who had not been disciplined. She said those elders did not go to authorities with what they knew.

There was no way yesterday to corroborate the accusations that Anderson made. Brown said they were false. A call to the local district attorney at his home yesterday did not yield a return call.