

# Woman accuses member of West Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lorain of sexual abuse

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• By: Deb Lee, newsnet5.com

LORAIN, Ohio - A former member of the West Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lorain filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the congregation, alleging she was sexually abused by one of the church leaders.

"I want to expose how they treat children and how they do not protect them," Elizabeth McFarland, 26, said at a news conference in Cleveland.

McFarland claims Scott Silvasy, who served as a "Ministerial Servant," gained her trust then sexually abused her for five years, beginning when she was 9 years old. She said Silvasy committed suicide on her 16th birthday.

Her attorney, Irwin Zalkin of San Diego, said the elders of the church did nothing when they learned of the abuse.

"Jehovah's Witnesses believe in what is called the Biblical Two Witness Rule," Zalkin said. "According to the Biblical Two Witness Rule, as they interpret it, unless the perpetrator confesses or alternatively there are two eyewitnesses to the abuse, they can do nothing about it."

McFarland, who resides in West Virginia now, said she was disfellowshipped about eight months after she told the elders of the abuse. Her family in Lorain are still members of the congregation.

"In my own way I'm at peace with what happened," she said. "I wouldn't go so far to say I've forgiven him for what he's done. But in my own way I guess I have because my heart is not in turmoil anymore."

Willie Walker, one of the congregation's elders, had no comment when contacted by NewsChannel5.

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