



John S. Foote, District Attorney for Clackamas County

Clackamas County Courthouse, 807 Main Street, Room 7, Oregon City, Oregon 97045
503 655-8431, FAX 503 650-8943, www.co.clackamas.or.us/da/

PRESS RELEASE

07/09/2018

For more information contact: Chris Owen (503) 655-8431

Today, July 9, 2018, defendants Travis Mitchell and Sarah Mitchell plead guilty to charges of Criminal Negligent Homicide and Criminal Mistreatment for their actions in the death of their newborn child, Ginnifer Mitchell, and her newborn twin, Evelyn Mitchell, who survived. In addition, they have both agreed to serve sentences of 80 months in prison.

As a condition of the plea and sentencing, both Travis Mitchell and Sarah Mitchell have signed written statements which read as follows: "We should have sought adequate medical care for our children and everyone in the church should always seek adequate medical care for our children." In addition, one of the patriarchs of the church, Walter White, has also signed a written statement which reads, in essence, the same. Finally they have agreed to have their letters prominently posted inside the Church for the congregation to see and read.

For far too long, children in this church have been needlessly suffering and dying because their parents, as a condition of their religious beliefs, have refused to seek medical care for their children. And for the past 17½ years, the Clackamas County District Attorney's Office has been working diligently to hold criminally responsible any parents who fail to provide adequate medical care for their children which causes their death or serious physical injury. This case is the fifth case this office has prosecuted in the past nine years. All of these prior cases went to trial without any admission of guilt or acceptance of responsibility. Here is a list of the cases by year of conviction:

- 2011: Shannon and Dale Hickman, convicted of manslaughter in the second degree and sentenced to 75 months in prison (their newborn son, David Hickman, died from untreated premature birth).
- 2011: Rebecca and Timothy Wyland, convicted of Criminal Mistreatment I and received 90 days in jail (their daughter, Alayna Wyland had a very serious growth on her left eye that resulted in permanent damage to her eyesight).

- 2010: Jeffrey and March Beagley, convicted of Criminally Negligent homicide and received 16 months in prison (their 16 year old son died from untreated blockage to his intestinal track)
- 2009: Timothy Worthington convicted of Criminal Mistreatment in the second degree and received 60 days in jail (his daughter, Ava Worthington, died from untreated bronchial pneumonia and a blood infection). The jury acquitted both Timothy and his wife, Raylene, of Criminally Negligent Homicide and Raylene was also acquitted of Criminal Mistreatment II)

All of the cases that have been filed and prosecuted by this office have served two purposes. First, to provide justice to the community and to the children who have died or suffered needlessly. In that sense, these cases are like all other cases we handle. However, the other purpose has been to convince The Followers of Christ congregation that they must stop this misconduct.

Today, we believe we have taken a large step forward in that respect. The family members in this case have, for the first, time, plead guilty and accepted criminal responsibility for their behavior. And they have also publicly acknowledged that they must seek adequate medical care for their children and they want all of their fellow church members to do the same. This kind of public declaration has never been made before by such central figures in the church as Walter White and his daughter and her husband. We believe this holds great promise moving forward.

We hope that this office is never again forced to prosecute parents in The Followers of Christ church for neglecting the medical care of their children. However, we continue to stand ready to do so if the members of that congregation do not heed the call of this family.