

**NATIONALLY REPORTED BY
VERDICT SEARCH AND TEXAS LAWYER
-JUNE 2004-**

NEGLIGENT HIRING

CHURCH ORDAINED PASTOR WITH A PAST

VERDICT **\$37,000,000.00**

SETTLEMENT **\$31,750,000.00 (as to other Defendants before trial)**

CASE *John Alfred Doe No. 1, et al v. Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Northern Texas Northern/Louisiana Synod, Rev. Earl Eliason, Rev. Mark Herbener, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, et al, No. 02-0157*

COURT 71st Judicial District, Harrison County, TX

JUDGE Bonnie Leggat

DATE 4/22/2004

PLAINTIFF

ATTORNEY(S)

JASON B. STEPHENS, Stephens & Anderson, LLP
Fort Worth, TX
Edward L. Hohn, Nix, Patterson & Roach, LLP
Daingerfield, TX

FACTS & ALLEGATIONS

A Harrison County Jury awarded nearly \$37 million to nine boys (another five previously settled out) who were sexually assaulted in Texas and Ohio by former Lutheran minister Gerald P. Thomas Jr. Settlements paid by some defendants to all 14 boys bring to about \$69 million the sum to be paid by the Northern Texas/Northern Louisiana Synod; the Evangelical Church of America; the seminary where Thomas was ordained; a minister candidacy committee; and the Good Shepherd Church in Marshall. All but one of Thomas' victims was under the age of 15 at the time and the youngest was 7. Two of the most severely abused victims got nearly 10 million each. The plaintiffs alleged that the church "cloaked Thomas with the authority of God," while he molested them, videotaped them and threatened to kill them if they spoke up. Thomas is serving time for possessing kiddie porn before his 397 year Texas sentence for sexual assault kicks in. On April 22, the jury rendered its verdict against the last remaining defendant, the synod.

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