

State of Alaska
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NEWS RELEASE



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BIG LAKE PASTOR INDICTED

The Department of Law announced today that on Wednesday, June 11, 2003, Phillip D. Mielke, 44, of Big Lake, was indicted by the Palmer Grand Jury in the deaths of Christopher Palmer, 31, and Francis Jones, 23.

According to paperwork filed in Palmer Superior Court along with the indictment, the investigation revealed that Palmer was shot once in the back, and Jones was shot in the back and ankle during the early morning hours of April 24, 2003 after they had broken into the Big Lake Community Chapel. Phillip Mielke, the pastor, who lives in a house near the church, had previously set up baby monitors in the church, with a receiver in his house. Upon hearing noises through the baby monitors that morning, he armed himself with a .44 Magnum revolver and went to investigate. He saw a car with the engine running on the church property. Mielke returned to his house to get a flashlight and then went back to the chapel. Once inside the chapel, he noticed the side door had been kicked in. Mielke was about to go downstairs, when he noticed two individuals coming up the stairs toward him. Mielke backed up and commanded them to stop. The two men did not stop and ran to the side door to leave. Mielke indicated to Alaska State Troopers that he fired two or three shots and saw both people fall down. He also stated that one of the men got up after being shot and was running to the car. At that point, Mielke said he fired his handgun at the fleeing man through a chapel window until the gun was empty. He then called the troopers.

Christopher Palmer was found dead in the roadway near the church. Francis Jones drove to a residence on Beaver Lake Road, where he died from the gunshot wounds. There was no evidence that either Palmer or Jones brandished any weapons in the church.

*Phillip Mielke was charged by the grand jury with two counts of Manslaughter, Class A felonies, and two counts of Criminally Negligent Homicide, Class B felonies. He is expected to be arraigned in Palmer Superior Court on these charges at 8:30 am on Friday.

**A charge is merely an accusation and the defendant, Mr. Mielke, is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

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