



## *U.S. Department of Justice*

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### PRESS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release  
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### **YOUTH MINISTER ARRAIGNED ON FEDERAL CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

**Matthew Nichols**, 58, a resident of Los Alamos, New Mexico, was arraigned on child pornography charges this morning by Chief United States Magistrate Judge Richard L. Puglisi. Nichols is charged in a six-count federal indictment that was unsealed on June 23, 2010 following his arrest in Los Alamos. He is detained pending a detention hearing scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on June 25, 2010.

The indictment charges Nichols with two counts of distribution and attempted distribution of child pornography; one count of receipt of child pornography; and three counts of possession of child pornography. According to the indictment, Nichols has prior convictions from Pennsylvania for corruption of minors and criminal solicitation (to commit involuntary deviate sexual intercourse). At the time of the crimes alleged in the indictment, Nichols was the youth minister of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Los Alamos.

If convicted, Nichols faces not less than 15 years imprisonment up to 40 years, up to a lifetime of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine for distribution and receipt of child pornography. Nichols also faces not less than 10 years imprisonment up to 20 years, up to a lifetime of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine for each count of possession of a visual depiction of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the charges against Nichols stem from an investigation led by U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security. According to search warrant affidavits that were unsealed after Nichols' arrest, ICE initiated its investigation in October 2009 based on a tip from America Online (AOL) and learned that an IP address subscribed to the Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Los Alamos had been used to transmit child pornography. Court records reflect that computers containing child pornography were seized from the Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and Nichols' home pursuant to court approved search warrants.

The case is being prosecuted by Charlyn Rees, Assistant United States Attorney, as part of the national Project Safe Childhood Initiative, and was investigated by ICE in partnership with the Office of New Mexico Attorney General Gary King. Anyone with any information relating to Nichols or the crimes charged in the indictment is asked to call Special Agent Anthony M. Maez, Office of the New Mexico Attorney General, at (505) 222-9161.

Project Safe Childhood is a national initiative of the United States Department of Justice designed to help protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse. The United States Attorney for the District of New Mexico has forged a partnership with federal, state, and local agencies to implement Project Safe Childhood in New Mexico.

An indictment is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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