



## TRIAL

■ Court told how methodist minister touched teenager

# Sex assault allegations are denied

A METHODIST minister has been accused of sexually assaulting a teenager after claiming God would then save her parents' marriage if she let him abuse her.

David Cooper served as the minister of Burbage Methodist Church in the early 1980s and he is charged with six counts of indecent assault against the girl in that time, when he in his mid-30s.

Yesterday, a jury at Leicester Crown Court heard evidence from the woman, who cannot be identified for legal reasons.

She said she tried to kill herself after every sexual encounter with Cooper.

Describing the first sexual assault during a piano lesson inside the church in Burbage, near Hinckley, she said: "We would have spoken about my parents.

"If you believe in God you believe in miracles. Reverend David Cooper worked with God and I thought God might listen to him more than me.

BY TOM MACK

"He said he would try and help. I got off the piano stool and he led me over to a platform, then my lower clothes were removed and he touched me.

"I didn't like it. I just wanted to go home and have a shower.

"He promised my parents would be okay. He implied if I did what he wanted my parents would stay together.

"That's all I wanted, more than anything in the world."

She said she went home on her bike and scrubbed herself

“I got off the stool and he led me over to a platform, then my lower clothes were removed

**Alleged victim**

in the shower before taking a number of her mother's co-codamol painkillers.

She said: "I tried to make it go away. I just wanted to die but I was just sick and had the shakes."

She said Cooper, now 66 and living in Thomas Street, Elland, West Yorkshire, had abused her both in the church and in his car.

She described being taken home from Bible study sessions with other children and said Cooper would drop off all the other children and then make her sit astride him in the driving seat.

Prosecutor Vanessa Marshall said Cooper denied having any sexual contact with the girl.

He was arrested after a 2013 survey by the national Methodist church calling for information about possible abuse cases and one of the alleged victim's childhood friends came forward and told her minister what she had been told about Cooper.

The trial continues.



**ACCUSED:** David Cooper outside court yesterday



## LEICESTER CROWN COURT

■ Girl described as “attention seeker” who made outlandish claims

# Minister cleared of sexual assaults

A METHODIST minister has been found not guilty by a jury of sexually assaulting a teenager during piano lessons and in his car.

David Cooper, who served as the minister of Burbage Methodist Church between 1979 and 1986, denied any wrongdoing towards the girl, claiming she was an “attention seeker”.

He was acquitted of six counts of indecently assaulting her.

Mr Cooper, who has no convictions, thanked the jury as he left the dock at Leicester Crown Court.

The complainant earlier told the court the defendant, then in his mid-30s, assured her that God would save her parents’ marriage if she let him abuse her.

BY SUZY GIBSON  
Court reporter

Now an adult, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, she claimed she tried to kill herself after sexual touching encounters with Cooper during two piano lessons inside the church in Burbage and when her gave her lifts home in his car – when she was under 16.

Cooper, now 66 and living in Thomas Street, Elland, West Yorkshire, told the jury he never inappropriately touched the girl, other than putting an arm around her shoulders to comfort her when she was upset about her parents’ marriage breakdown.

He said she was an “attention seeker” who was prone

to saying outlandish things and had fabricated the allegations against him.

The court heard that when the girl told some people, including her mother, about being allegedly abused she had wrongly claimed to have been raped – but told the jury intercourse never took place, only alleged indecent touching.

In her summing up to the jury, Judge Lynn Tayton QC said: “She said to some people she had been raped and to others that she had been touched and was being vague about when it actually happened and the sequence of events.

“Defence counsel say she’s unreliable in her evidence.”

The judge went on to say that if someone suffered

trauma after an ordeal their memory might be affected and inconsistencies did not necessarily mean she was not telling the truth.

The alleged victim claimed she used the word rape as a shorthand for sexual activity because she did not want to go into the detail of what happened.

Glyn Samuel, defending, told the jury the complainant did not report the matter to the police at the time because “she knew she was lying about what happened”.

Mr Cooper was arrested after the Methodist church appealed for information about possible abuse cases.

One of the alleged victim’s childhood friends told her minister what she had been told about Cooper.



**NOT GUILTY:** David Cooper outside Leicester Crown Court