

Inside the secretive Church With No Name sect that's under FBI investigation over decades of child sex abuse claims

Known as the Two by Twos (2x2) or The Church with No Name, ministers travel in pairs to member homes to spread the gospel. But now, disturbing allegations are coming to light. **Andrea Cavallier** reports

3 days ago



Sheri Autrey shared her story with ABC News about being sexually abused as a child (*ABC News*)

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Disturbing allegations of child sex abuse within a secretive religious sect of **Christianity** are being brought to light after several former members came forward to share their stories.

The sect is known as the Two by Twos (2x2) or The Church with No Name, and its ministers – who are called “workers” — travel in pairs from home to home of church members to spread the gospel.

But a recent year-long investigation **conducted by ABC News**, which aired on the season finale of *IMPACT by Nightline*, revealed that hundreds of people in the religious organization were sexually abused as children.

The allegations are so widespread that the **FBI** has started an investigation into the church, **it announced in February**.

Dozens of alleged victims, from at least 34 states, shared their stories with ABC News. There were claims of abuse that dates back to the 1950s and some victims accused the same person of abuse decades apart.

The outlet also reached out to over 20 former and current leaders, known as “overseers,” but all denied knowing about the widespread abuse.

‘If you ever get pregnant, then I’ll marry you’

Sheri Autrey grew up in the religious sect and was just 14 when she says she was abused by a 28-year-old man who was a minister in her church.

Autrey, now 55, told ABC News in a recent interview that the abuse happened every night for two months.

“He’d be touching me everywhere, kissing me,” Autrey said.

“And it was scary. It was scary because I knew if we got caught, I would be in trouble. I was the one doing something wrong.”

But the fear was so great, she never thought of reporting him.

“You would get gaslit profusely and accused of having a bad spirit, or the devils getting into you... how dare you question God?” Autrey said.



Sheri Autrey and her family, who were part of the 2x2 religious sect (*ABC News*)

In 1986, Autrey wrote a high school research paper about her alleged abuser Steve Rohs claiming that he repeatedly told her not to tell her parents.

She said he promised her, “If you ever get pregnant, then I’ll marry you. He said what he was doing to me was right. Everyone in the church and public thought he was nice.”

According to ABC News’ investigation, Autrey’s parents wrote their overseer, Eldon Tenniswood, to inform him about the alleged claims.

Tenniswood then wrote Rohs in a letter obtained by ABC News, in 1986 that read: “Remember, Steven, at that time you were 28 years old and she was 14 years old, which would make what you did a felony.”

Rohs responded with his own letter, writing: “We did... kiss and touch each other intimately. This did not happen with anyone else... I did not intend to

cover this up, but I did not know how to handle it other than to leave the area and beg God to forgive me. I was old enough to know better, but still weak in the flesh.”

Rohs also denied promising to marry Autrey, adding “This did not happen with anyone else.”

According to the Tulare County District Attorney’s Office, Rohs never faced criminal charges in this case, and likely never will.

“Prosecutors have meticulously reviewed reports and victim accounts in this case and have determined that any potential crime falls outside of California’s Statute of Limitations,” the office said in a statement.

“Unfortunately, the charges can’t be filed in this case due to the running of the statute of limitations,” he said, adding that the charges were not filed prior to the alleged victim’s 40th birthday.

Only seven states have eliminated the statute of limitations for all felony sex crimes, according to the anti-sexual violence organization, RAINN. The seven states are: North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky and Wyoming.

For now, the only law on the books that victims could use is one that allows alleged victims who file a claim within five years or by age 40 to seek civil damages for childhood sexual assaults that occurred before 2024.

What is the 2X2 religious sect?

A 2x2 non-denominational Christian religious sect was founded by Scottish evangelist William Irvine in the 1800s.

Worship services are typically held on Wednesdays and Sundays inside the private homes of members.

Former members told ABC News that the ministry frowns upon makeup, jewelry (other than a wedding ring), cutting your hair, adorning yourself, and that they expected women to wear conservative clothes, particularly dresses instead of pants.

Lauralee Brown, a former member said it wasn’t “womanly” to wear pants, or go to college. She said she wanted to be an attorney, but was told by the ministry, “That’s too worldly, we don’t think you should do that.”

Former member Michael Day told ABC News that “it’s a very persuasive type of religion.”

LaNette Burrage Flanigan, another former member, said: “They use fear and manipulation, they manipulate people and the fear of the Lord to control people. They tell you, we are the only true way.”

According to the ministry’s doctrine, being part of the Two by Twos is the only way to find true salvation.

"They go two by two, that’s where we get the name,” Cherie Kropp, a former member and author of a historical biography on the religious sect, told ABC News.

She said “Overseers” are at the top, and considered to be church leadership, then below them are the “Ministers” or “Workers” who travel in pairs of two men and two women as they evangelize and preach to members in their homes.

“Elders” and “Friends” come next in the hierarchy to complete the members of the congregation.

“The ministers stay in homes, they groom the family,” Mitchell Garabedian, an attorney who represents child sexual abuse victims, including one ex-2x2 member, told ABC News.

“The parents seem to have this enormous amount of trust, which is misplaced, in the religious person. And the parents are blind. Religion can be blind. Religion is great if it’s used properly. But if it’s not used properly, it’s a disaster, it’s evil.”

After years of allegations, the FBI is getting involved and investigating the religious sect.

“The FBI focuses, in general, on bringing cases from local to global,” Eugene Kowel, Special Agent in Charge of the Omaha Field Office which is leading the investigation, told ABC News.

“I’m trying to build an enterprise case. So, in general, the FBI doesn’t stop at just an initial arrest. We will follow the evidence wherever it leads to ensure children are protected and to ensure anyone who can be held accountable is being held accountable by the criminal justice system.”

The FBI asks that anyone with information or if you believe your child or other children may have been victimized by individuals affiliated with 2x2, to complete a short online questionnaire or to report directly to the hotline (402-493-8688).

Autrey told ABC News it's fear keeps so many from coming forward – until it's too late.

"If they didn't talk to God's true people, his chosen people, they're going to hell," Autrey said she was told by members of the ministry. "It was brainwashing from such an early age.

Autrey now says that if she could tell her 14-year-old self anything, she would say: "You're amazing. You're precious. You did not deserve this. And you will have a good life. This will not define you. I will overcome."