

Pastor abused woman, saying she was 'gift to him from God'

Vic Rodrick

A church pastor has been convicted of sexually molesting a female parishioner while pretending he was "exorcising demons" from her body.

Walter Masocha repeatedly groped the married woman at his home in Stirling, a jury heard, telling her she was a gift to him from God. He also attempted to rape a young woman and indecently assaulted her during a campaign of sexual abuse spanning six years.

The Zimbabwean preacher was found guilty after a trial at the High Court in Livingston of the attempted rape, an indecent assault and a sexual assault against one woman, and indecent assault of his other victim.



Walter Masocha, 61, was convicted of attempted rape and three other assault charges

Masocha committed the offences at addresses in the Stirling area between January 1, 2006, and July 31, 2012.

The jury returned a majority verdict convicting him of the attempted rape and unanimous guilty verdicts on the other three charges.

The jury heard evidence from a 39-year-old woman, from Zimbabwe, who said she was 20 when Masocha began sexually abusing her in Stirling. She said Masocha sexually assaulted her the first time in his home in Bridge of Allan by grabbing her face and putting his tongue in her mouth. In the second incident she said he slapped her bottom as she was going upstairs.

She told the court: "Several times during so-called surgeries he said to me, 'God has given you to me... He told me to love you in any way you want to be loved. You don't need a boyfriend.'"

She told how he later tried to rape her after taking her into his bedroom. She said: "Next thing all I remember is he pushed me forward and pulled my trousers and pants down. I was on the front of the bed where I was standing."

She said she froze, but then managed to break free and fled. Another time, she said he took her hand and placed it on his erect penis over his clothing at his £500,000 home, Cosyneuk House in Sauchieburn, near Stirling.

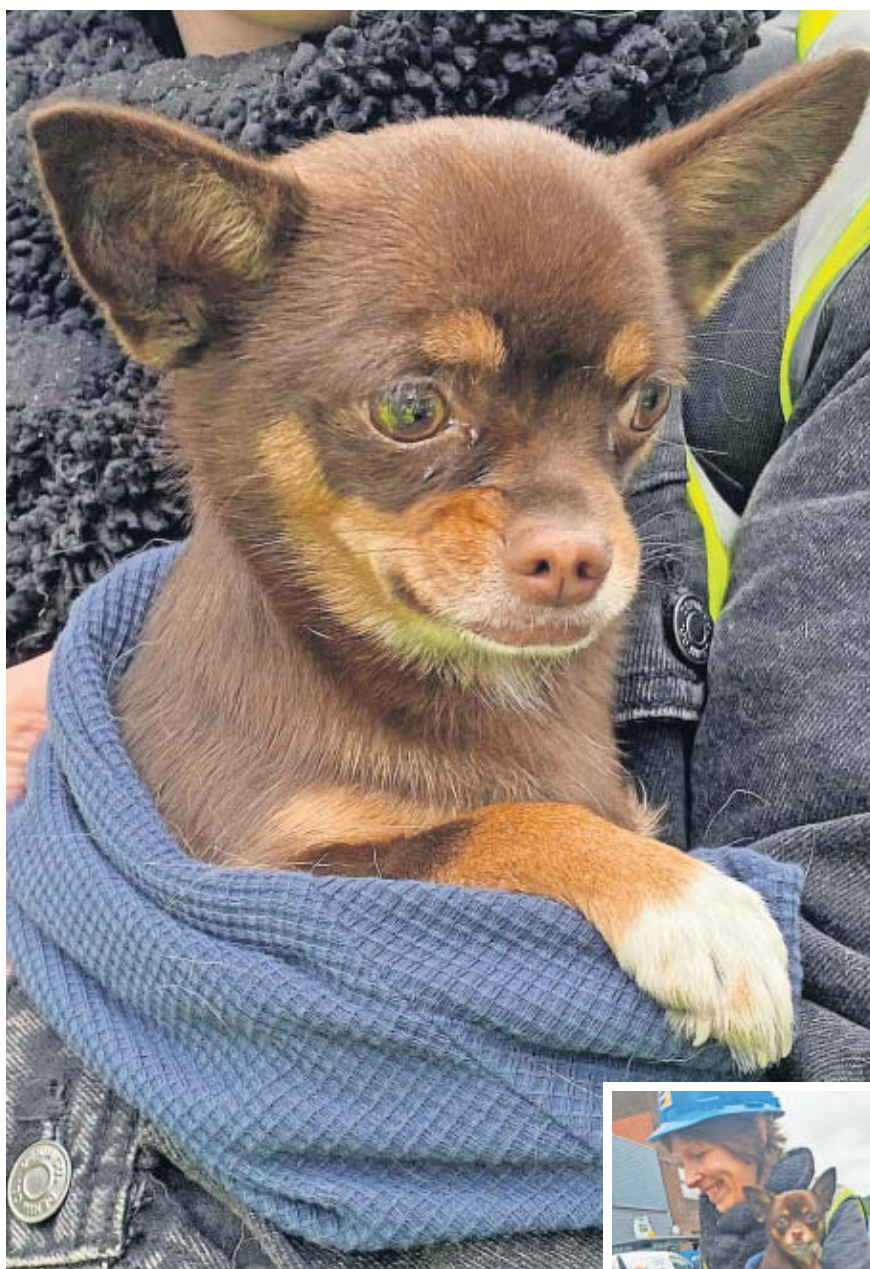
The jury also heard evidence from a 58-year-old married woman that Masocha repeatedly subjected her to inappropriate and unwelcome sexual abuse about 20 years ago. She said he tried to justify putting his hand in her pants and groping her private parts by claiming he was "removing demons" from her body and giving her blessings in return.

Masocha, 61, of Forth Park, Bridge of Allan, is a former accountancy lecturer at Stirling University. He founded his own church in Scotland in 2007 and built the Agape for All Nations Church into an international organisation with more than 2,000 members.

Judge Susan Craig called for background reports and a risk assessment before sentencing and adjourned the case until July 28. She remanded Masocha in custody and told him it was "completely clear" that he was facing a custodial sentence.

After the jury's verdicts were announced it could be revealed that Masocha was convicted in June 2015 of sexually assaulting a woman at the Church of Agape and engaging in sexual activity towards a schoolgirl. He was found guilty after a trial at Falkirk sheriff court of putting his hand down the trousers of the schoolgirl — telling her that he was trying to remove demons — and of groping a church deaconess.

He was sentenced at the time to 250 hours of unpaid work and placed on the sex offenders register for a year, but the conviction was quashed on appeal.



Dog rescued after two weeks in burnt-out flat

A chihuahua has been rescued after spending two weeks in a building ravaged by fire (David Leask writes).

Vilo made herself a nest in a wardrobe in the remains of a tenement in Perth that burnt down last month.

The fire in the top floor of the four-storey building on the corner of Scott Street and South Street left one man dead and several people, including an eight-year-old girl, injured.

It was feared that the dog had also died but she was discovered by charity workers using a drone



and thermal imaging technology.

Workers from Missing Pets Perth and Kinross then gave demolition workers traps to lure Vilo out of her hiding place with food and water.

Cameras inside the building showed that Vilo was taking enough to survive without venturing

Vilo, a chihuahua, was found in the Perth tenement by a charity using thermal imaging. Vets have ruled her fit and healthy

far enough to set the traps off.

It was only when clothes belonging to her owners, the Ridaj family, were placed in the crates that the rescue team were able to coax Vilo back down to ground level, more than two weeks after the fire on June 14.

Katie McCandless from the charity said: "This is a little bit of hope in some dark times. I've been running this charity for 14 years but this is the first type of case like this I've ever been involved in."

"We knew it was a delicate situation and had to be handled sensitively, a lot of residents have lost everything."

A vet has ruled Vilo fit and healthy.

McCandless added: "She does not have a single mark on her and her paw pads are completely fine. She smells a bit of smoke but had minimal smoke inhalation. She really is a miracle dog."

Maros Ridaj, Vilo's owner, said: "We are very happy that the dog is safe and has been returned to us."

Eric Drysdale, deputy leader of Perth and Kinross council and the councillor for Perth City Centre, said: "This really is a remarkable story. I would like to thank everyone who helped return Vilo to her

family safely.

"We know there are people still grieving after the fire because of the loss of loved ones, the loss of their homes and the impact on businesses near by, but this amazing rescues is emblematic of the kindness people have shown in the wake of the tragedy."

Payout for director told to 'shut up'

Lowri Lewis

Telling a colleague to "shut up" in front of others at work could break employment laws, an employment tribunal has ruled.

Despite a claim that the phrase is "common parlance", a judge ruled that using it would "undermine" whoever it is directed at.

The conclusion came in the case of a company director who successfully sued after his boss tried to silence him during an online meeting.

David Ashe won almost £15,000 in compensation after complaining about the "unacceptable" behaviour of his managing director, Roger Topping.

Supporting his claim of constructive unfair dismissal, Judge Lucy Wiseman said: "The tribunal was satisfied that Mr Topping did not have reasonable and proper cause to tell a fellow director to shut up during a staff meeting and in front of other, more junior, staff. We say

that because such conduct would undermine [Mr Ashe]."

The tribunal in Glasgow was told that Ashe worked as a director of operations at Claims Equilibrium Club, an insurance claims assistance service for insurance brokers and their clients, from April 2022. Topping had headhunted him as a partner and successor to run the business. He had employed Ashe on the basis that he would "sell 50 per cent of the equity in the business to [Ashe] within five years for a set sum".

Cracks in the relationship between the two developed over Ashe's first year as a director. One of the problems was that he felt he wasn't being given enough work, while Topping thought he wasn't finding enough work.

In June last year the two had a meeting in which Topping said he "could not see the current relationship improving and therefore there was no prospect of the originally planned partnership of 50/50 working". He offered to sell Ashe

the entire company but Ashe did not want to do this.

Ashe raised a grievance with Topping, who consulted an HR specialist who partially upheld the grievance. Ashe went on sick leave and then resigned in September "in response to the breach of contract". He said Topping had "taken no proactive steps to resolve matters".

Topping told the tribunal that it was Ashe who had broken the contract by not being a good employee. The tribunal was told that Topping "acknowledged that perhaps he had said shut up but there had been no malice in this and it was simply common parlance".

The judge disagreed and ruled in Ashe's favour. The tribunal found that both men were responsible for the breakdown in relationship and therefore awarded Ashe half of what it otherwise would have. Claims Equilibrium Club was ordered to pay him £14,568 in compensation.

Police officer kicked, coerced and threatened two partners

Alexander Lawrie

A police officer convicted of domestic abuse against two women, including repeatedly kicking one and controlling what they wore, has been sentenced to 120 hours of unpaid work.

PC Tariq Mahmood was found guilty of kicking one of his victims and acting in an abusive manner towards a second woman, who was pregnant.

The charges against Mahmood, 45, said that he blamed one of his victims for their not having children, and accused her of having an affair. He threatened to set fire to the other partner's mother's home and spread lies that her step-father was a child molester.

Mahmood told the second woman, who was also a police officer when they met, that he would "strangle or stab" her as she slept and threatened to take

the couple's child away from her. The woman said Mahmood criticised her parenting skills, made derogatory remarks about her looks and accused her of dressing to impress other men.

She also claimed Mahmood refused to speak to her if she did not have sex with him during two years of abuse between December 2019 and November 2021.

Mahmood, from Livingston, West Lothian, denied the allegations but was found guilty of abusing the woman this year. He was also found guilty of engaging in an abusive course of behaviour towards the other former partner.

Sheriff John Cook sentenced Mahmood yesterday to a two-year supervision order and said he must complete 120 hours of unpaid work.

Mahmood's defence advocate said he intended to resign from the police.