Missing pastor's body discovered

Rick Dandes Apr 3, 2010

By Rick Dandes

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MILTON — A decomposed body found Thursday in a wooden area off Route 1005, in White Deer Township, Union County, was identified by police as the Rev. Jose "Joe" Rosa, 52, of Lewisburg, a pastor who disappeared in 2009.

Union County coroner Wanda Walters pronounced the victim, who was initially unidentified, "dead at the scene with the cause of death resulting from an apparent self-hanging."

Police did not say who found the body.

Rosa was first reported missing on May 23, 2009, a short time after Bishop Samuel Lopez, of the Spanish Mennonite Council of Churches — which oversees Congregacion Menonita Shalom in New Columbia, where Rosa was pastor for seven years — notified state police that he had received a letter from a young man claiming Rosa had touched him inappropriately.

Subsequent investigations revealed that he had indecent contact with other boys, including one as young as nine. The incidents occurred between 2005 and 2009.

Rosa was charged with five counts of indecent assault, two counts of recklessly endangering the welfare of children and four counts of corruption of minors

He was last seen on May 21, 2009 by a neighbor, who said he saw Rosa walking toward the U.S. Penitentiary grounds near the Rosa home.