



### **Thomas Stitts Summary**

Almost two decades after Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis officials told the media and parishioners that they had “no prior knowledge” of abuse allegations against Fr. Thomas Stitts, newly released documents show that Archdiocesan officials received previous allegations against Stitts. Stitts has been accused of abusing at least a dozen boys.

In a 1995 interview with the Pioneer Press, Joan Bernet, then-spokesperson for the Archdiocese, said, [“The archdiocese had no knowledge of the alleged incidents before 1993.”](#)

But the newly released documents show that before 1993 the Archdiocese received allegations involving Stitts.

Previous to his death in 1985, Stitts allegedly wrote a “scandalous” letter, outlining his own exploits and the sexual activities of other priests in the Archdiocese. Numerous priests were scared that they were included in the letter, and begged the Archdiocese to keep the letter secret. The letter was eventually destroyed.

The first lawsuits regarding Stitts were filed against the Archdiocese in 1993. Kevin McDonough claimed that the Archdiocese had no prior knowledge of abuse, and Carlson decided that parishes did not need to be informed. When the lawsuits became public in 1995, the Archdiocese told the press and public that they had no knowledge that Stitts was an abuser until 1993.

## THOMAS STITTS TIMELINE

### 1962 - Ordained

5/22/62 Letter from Archbishop to Stitts appointing him Assistant Pastor at Saint Matthew's. (ARCH-010617)

### 6/2/62 - Assistant Pastor, Saint Matthew's Parish, St. Paul

5/27/65 Letter from Archbishop to Stitts appointing him Assistant Pastor at Our Lady of Grace. (ARCH-010550)

### 6/9/65 – Assistant Pastor, Our Lady of Grace, Edina

2/3/66 Letter from Archbishop Binz to Stitts remarks that Stitts seemed like “an unhappy man or at least a worried man” the night before. “I would be pleased if you would call Father Pierre and arrange with him a time when you can call to see me.” (ARCH-010507)

5/24/66 Letter from Archbishop to Stitts appointing him Assistant Pastor at the Church of the Guardian Angels. (ARCH-010676)

### 6/7/66 – Assistant Pastor, Church of the Guardian Angels, Hastings

5/28/70 Letter from Archbishop Byrne to Stitts appointing him Assistant Pastor at Church of the Blessed Sacrament. (ARCH-010897)

### 6/12/70 – Assistant Pastor, Church of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Paul

9/11/70 Letter from Archbishop Byrne to Stitts appointing him Administrator at St. Leo's. (ARCH-010707)

### 9/21/70 – Administrator, Church of St. Leo, St. Paul

6/22/73 Memo from Bishop Roach to Archbishop Byrne saying Roach spoke with Stitts about Prokop and also about Stitts' conversation with Byrne, which Stitts said was unsatisfactory and Stitts couldn't figure out why Byrne was upset with him. (ARCH-010580)

9/14/73 Letter from Archbishop Byrne to Stitts appointing him Pastor of the Church of St. George. (ARCH-011061)

### 10/9/73 – Pastor, Church of St. George, Long Lake

1/6/79 Letter from Stitts to Archbishop – he was told that “the entire investigation had been dropped” because “the story had been contradicted by several others and

there was no reason to believe the accusations.” The past month was most traumatic. I think I’ve learned a number of things I could not have otherwise” (ARCH-010562-010563)

1/17/79 Letter from Roach to Stitts states “very pleased to hear that the whole issue that you and I discussed has worked out” and “if there is something you feel you ought to be facing that you be sure to get some help in it.” Says Stitts is “too good a man and too good a priest to have to face that kind of trauma.” (ARCH-010215)

5/27/80 Letter from Archbishop Roach to Stitts accepting Stitts’ resignation from the Church of St. George and appointing him Pastor at Church of St. John the Baptist. (ARCH-010677)

6/17/80 – Pastor, Church of St. John the Baptist, New Brighton

8/27/80 Stitts seeks sabbatical. (ARCH-010909)

9/1/80 Letter from parishioners to Roach- they were recently informed of an anonymous letter to Roach that included facts about the molestation of their son in 1973 by Stitts at St. Leo. At the time of the incident, they talked to a psychologist and a Catholic Social worker, who suggested they discuss the incidents with Stitts. They have documentation of their visit with Stitts, which they shared with Archbishop Byrne. They did not give permission for their names to be used in an anonymous letter. They share the concerns of the author of the anonymous letter that other boys continue to be victimized by Stitts. Their son is now 18 and is confused over his sexuality, which could be explained by his sexual experience with an important authority figure such as Stitts. (ARCH-010559)

9/9/80 Letter from Roach saying that proper therapy has taken place so that what apparently was a problem will not happen again. (ARCH-010506)

9/19/80 Letter from Carlson to Stitts granting vacation from October 5, 1980 to November 6, 1980. (ARCH-010556)

3/9/82 Memo between Korf and Roach says that Stitts “is terribly upset at New Brighton. Apparently he is over his head. When he gets uptight it’s not very good news. I suspect that we ought to move in on that. Bishop Kinney knows something about it as does Bishop Bullock.” The memo continues, “It’s possible that Tom ought to be invited to request another parish. Please talk to me about this when we next meet.” (ARCH-010510)

4/15/83 Memo from Bob Schwartz to Roach re: fact sheet and assignment letters for Stitts’ sabbatical for his Master’s in Applied Spirituality at the University of San Francisco from May 1, 1983, to August 1, 1983. (ARCH-010598-010599)

- 4/15/83 Letter from Carlson (“to whom it may concern”) states that Stitts is a priest in good standing, and that this recommendation is valid through December 31, 1983. (ARCH-010724)
- 10/25/83 Memo from Carlson to Roach – Stitts told Pat Jorisson that he was afraid Kevin Clinton knows about his sexual relationship with two boys that stayed at the parish from time to time. (ARCH-011108)  
Clinton says that the boys came from troubled family at St. George’s in Long Lake and stayed on Stitts’ couch in the study even though there was an extra guest room. “Once when [Tom] was at the Jorisson home, after having a few drinks he told the couple about the sexual favors Tom was requesting” (ARCH-011108)
- 5/22/85 Letter from Stitts to Carlson thanks Carlson for dinner the other evening and for celebrating the sacrament of Confirmation at St. John’s. “I will be calling on your friendship and support during the upcoming months.” (ARCH-011085)
- 8/6/85 Memo from Roach to Bill Kenney states the following: “Bill, I will want to talk to you about Tom Stitts. I’m very concerned about that. I’ve thought a great deal about that situation during Evelyn Woodward’s presentation on Monday. At our next meeting let’s get back to that. It’s clear to me that there is going to have to be a meeting of that head on.” (ARCH-010721)
- 10/13/85 Died
- 11/22/85 Memo from Carlson to Roach - Stitts wrote ‘scandalous’ letter prior to death with information about his moral life and also implicating several other priests. The letter was to be sent to Fr. Dick Rice after Stitts’ death. Carlson and Bishop Bullock looked into the matter, spoke with Sylvia Thorn, a parish trustee, who said that Pat Jorissen, the choir director, had the letter. Jorissen contacted Fr. Kevin Clinton to ask him what she should do with the letter. Father Clinton asked Fr. Freeman, who suggested Jorissen contact the Archbishop about the letter. Other priests, Campbell, Sochacki, and Kittock, also knew about the letter. Jorissen approached Clinton at Stitts’ funeral and Jorissen told Clinton that she talked to Fr. Bill Kenney and read him the letter. Kenney told Jorissen to burn the letter in the fireplace. Other priests discussed in the letter were Frs. Parkos, Murtaugh, Kenney, and Nygaard, but it’s not clear if there were rumors about these men or if they were discussed because they are friends of Stitts. (ARCH-010455-010456)
- 2/9/93 Letter to staff at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton about a lawsuit accusing Stitts of sexual abuse when he was pastor at Guardian Angels Church in the late 60’s and early 70’s. Guardian Angels later merged and became St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. (ARCH-010730)
- 1/4/95 Letter from McDonough to Hunstiger and Muggli saying that two years ago two men accused Stitts of abusing them at Guardian Angels in the 1960s and **St. Leo’s**

in the early 1970s. The Archdiocese “had no word of these complaints” until the lawsuits. McDonough is writing because the lawsuits may be publicly disclosed. Archbishop Roach believes that public discussion of the accusations in the parishes is not necessary. McDonough would like a coordinated approach as to if and/or how to tell the parishes about the lawsuits. Copies of the letter sent to pastors at the parishes where Stitts was assigned and to Archbishop Roach and Archbishop Flynn. (ARCH-010918-010919)

- 12/11/02 Letter from McDonough to parishioner that they did not know of Stitts’ abusive behavior while he was alive but have heard at least two credible reports since his death. (ARCH-010701)
- 3/16/04 Email from Kevin McDonough to a Stitts survivor responding to the survivor’s questions and saying that the Archdiocese has identified Stitts as an abuser. (ARCH-010142)
- 12/3/13 Letter from Nienstedt to Stitts’ relative letting him know of upcoming disclosure of his name as part of the Archdiocese’s commitment to transparency. (ARCH-010400)