

1 ROOM FOR ABOUT 120 PEOPLE.

Pa. priest indicted on sex charges

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William O'Connell.

The incident allegedly occurred between the fall of 1989 and the winter of 1990.

However, it wasn't until last summer, when authorities began investigating a host of charges against O'Connell, that the allegations against Kohler surfaced.

Both men had homes in the Villas section of Lower Township.

O'Connell, an ex-priest, was arrested about a week before Kohler and charged with sexual assault against a minor, criminal sexual contact and endangering the welfare of a child.

O'Connell plead guilty in December to accusations of sexual assault and endangering the welfare of children on a number of occasions. He is currently serving a 10-year sentence at a treatment center for sexual offenders.

The investigation into Kohler

centered on a sexually explicit photograph of a minor found at O'Connell's residence, police said at the time.

The indictment against Kohler was handed up late Wednesday afternoon.

At the time of his arrest last summer, Kohler was on administrative leave from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

He had requested the leave after a civil lawsuit was filed against him alleging that he molested an altar boy two decades ago, authorities said previously.

A spokeswoman with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia said Wednesday that Kohler is still on administrative leave from the diocese.

Cape May County Assistant Prosecutor Barbara Bakley-Marino said, if convicted of the endangering charges, Kohler faces a maximum penalty of five-years in prison.

■ Thomas Kohler allegedly persuaded a young boy to touch himself while photographs of the child were being taken by another priest.

By MEG TORNETTA
Staff Writer

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE —

A Pennsylvania priest was indicted Wednesday on one count each of endangering the welfare of a child and conspiracy to endanger the welfare of a child.

The indictment charges that Thomas Kohler "did engage in sexual conduct which would impair or debauch the morals of a child under the age of 16."

Authorities allege that Kohler persuaded a young boy to touch himself while photographs of the child were being taken by