

Pastor resigns after admitting plagiarism: Sermons found on the Internet

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A pastor in Keene, New Hampshire, has resigned after preaching sermons found on the Internet and consequently confessing to plagiarism. Robert C. Hamm stepped down in April from his post as senior pastor of Keene United Church of Christ.

According to church council president Carl A. H. Allen Jr., another minister on staff had noticed last winter that Hamm was claiming credit for sermons he hadn't written. When confronted by church leaders, Hamm promptly admitted to wrongdoing, Allen said.

"He had taken entire sermons from the Internet and presented them as his own," Allen said. "He was very forthcoming and clear that it was an improper thing to do. He asked for forgiveness."

Sermons published in full on the Internet are readily accessible to pastors who might feel pressed for time. But to avoid charges of plagiarism or copyright violations, pastors must either use the resources for background only or else give credit to the author.

Some in Hamm's congregation felt he had committed no infraction by preaching others' sermons, Allen said. But other members, including educators at the secondary and collegiate levels, were concerned their pastor had violated a tenet of integrity. "It's been very difficult for the congregation," Allen said, noting that Hamm had been senior pastor since 1989. *-Religion News Service*