

Chris Brain Guilty of Indecent Assaults

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Chris Brain, a 68-year-old former priest from Wilmslow, Cheshire, has been convicted of 17 counts of indecent assault against nine women at Inner London Crown Court. The assaults relate to his leadership of the Nine O'Clock Service (NOS), an evangelical movement in Sheffield during the 1980s and 1990s. Brain, who showed no emotion as the verdicts were delivered on 20 August 2025, was acquitted of 15 other indecent assault charges. The jury continues to deliberate on four additional counts of indecent assault and one rape charge, with further proceedings expected.

The trial revealed that Brain, ordained as a Church of England priest in 1991, abused his authority within the NOS, a movement initially praised for its innovative, nightclub-style services that drew hundreds of young worshippers. Prosecutors stated that the assaults occurred after Brain recruited women to a “homebase team” tasked with household duties at his family residence. Some team members, derogatorily referred to as “Lycra lovelies” or “Lycra nuns” by NOS members, were subjected to sexual assaults, often during massages Brain claimed were for physical tension but admitted could involve consensual “sensual touching.” He denied all charges, asserting that any interactions were mutual.

Founded in 1986, the NOS gained prominence for its appeal to younger congregations, moving to Sheffield’s Ponds Forge leisure centre in the early 1990s to accommodate growth. The Church of England fast-tracked Brain’s ordination due to the group’s success, with significant funds spent on ceremonial robes. However, prosecutors described the NOS as having evolved into a cult-like environment where Brain exploited his position to target numerous women. Concerns about his conduct led to the group’s dissolution in 1995, following which Brain admitted in a BBC documentary to “improper sexual conduct” with several women. He resigned his holy orders shortly before the broadcast.

The convictions highlight significant failures in oversight within religious institutions, raising questions about safeguarding vulnerable individuals in positions of trust. The case has drawn attention to the long-term impact on victims, many of whom came forward years after the assaults due to the power dynamics at play. The ongoing deliberations on the remaining charges, including the rape allegation, underscore the complexity of addressing historical abuse cases.

The trial’s outcome may prompt renewed scrutiny of how religious organisations handle allegations of misconduct. As the jury continues its work, the court’s final rulings will likely influence discussions on accountability and victim support within the UK’s faith communities. Brain remains in custody pending further court proceedings, with the public and authorities awaiting the resolution of this high-profile case.