

## Man with local ties charged in shooting death of Kansas priest

By Robert A. Cronkleton

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A 66-year-old man was charged Friday in the fatal shooting of a northeast Kansas priest, court records show. Gary Lee Hermes, a Nemaha County native, faces one count of first-degree murder in the death of the Rev. Raj “Arul” Balaswamy Carasala, the pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Seneca, according to a news release from Nemaha County Attorney Brad Lippert. Hermes’ bond has been set at \$1 million, and he made his first appearance at 2 p.m. Friday before Nemaha County District Magistrate Judge Scott Anson.

Deputies wheeled Hermes into court in a wheelchair. He was shackled at his wrists and waist and was wearing a black-and-gray, striped jail uniform and orange crocs on his feet.

Deputies from the Nemaha County Sheriff’s Office responded to the shooting at the church’s rectory at 411 Pioneer Street about 2:55 p.m. Thursday and discovered Carasala outside with gunshot wounds, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation said in a news release Thursday.

Carasala was taken to a hospital, where he died. Shortly after the shooting, KBI personnel and sheriff’s deputies arrested Hermes and booked him into the Nemaha County jail. Hermes is a resident of Tulsa, but Seneca residents said he grew up, and attended high school, in the area. Seneca, the county seat of Nemaha County, has a population of about 2,100 and is located about an hour’s drive north of Topeka.

Carasala grew up in Cuddapah, India, and was ordained there in 1994, according to the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas. He belonged to the archdiocese for more than 20 years and was the dean of the organization’s Nemaha-Marshall region, Archbishop Joseph Naumann shared on social media.

At the time of his death, Carasala had been a priest at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church for 14 years. “This senseless act of violence has left us grieving the loss of a beloved priest, leader, and friend,” Naumann wrote in a post on social media.

Read more at: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article303509331.html#storylink=cpy>