



BCPO News

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Financial Secretary Charged with Stealing \$561K from Florence Church

FLORENCE - Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina and Florence Township Police Department Officer in Charge Jonathan Greenberg announced that a financial secretary has been charged with embezzling more than \$561,000 from the church where she served as a volunteer.

Taisha D. Smith-DeJoseph, 43, of Baldwin Lane in Willingboro, was charged with Theft by Deception (Second Degree), Computer Criminal Activity (Second Degree), Misapplication of Entrusted Property (Second Degree), four counts of Failure to File Personal Income Tax (Third Degree), five counts of Failure to Pay Income Tax (Third Degree) and Filing a Fraudulent Income Tax Return (Third Degree).

The investigation began after officials from St. Paul's Baptist Church who suspected the theft contacted the BCPO Financial Crimes Unit. The investigation revealed that over a five-year period ending in March 2019, Smith-DeJoseph, who was responsible for overseeing the church's finances, opened electronic bank accounts for St. Paul's and used the funds for personal purposes.

In addition to the unapproved electronic spending, Smith-DeJoseph also issued payroll and supply reimbursement checks to herself from St. Paul's bank accounts. She fabricated monthly statements to hide the church's true financial state.

The investigation revealed that Smith-DeJoseph used the money to pay her car loans, rent, credit card expenses, satellite television and cell phone bills, to make hundreds of online purchases and even to pay for her wedding at a Burlington County venue. The investigation determined that Smith-DeJoseph embezzled a total of \$561,777.

In an attempt to hide the embezzlement scheme from the government, Smith-DeJoseph failed to file income tax returns for 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2018. From 2014 through 2018, she failed to pay the appropriate amount of taxes, and in 2017, filed a fraudulent tax return.

The case will now be prepared for presentation to a Burlington County Grand Jury for possible indictment. Smith-DeJoseph will be prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Andrew R. McDonnell, supervisor of the Financial Crimes Unit.

The investigation was conducted by the BCPO Financial Crimes Unit, the New Jersey Department of the Treasury and the Florence Township Police Department. The lead investigators are BCPO Detective Nicholas Schieber and Florence Police Detective Nicole Bonilla.

All persons are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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