



ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

NEWS RELEASE



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Former Pastor in Oxnard Sentenced for Stealing \$200,000 from Church

VENTURA, Calif. – The Ventura County District Attorney's Office announced today that Curtis Frank Lemons (DOB 12/31/56), currently living in Atoka, Tennessee, but formerly from Camarillo, was sentenced to two years in state prison for misappropriating \$200,000 from an Oxnard church. Lemons previously pleaded guilty on April 4, 2025, to three felony counts: two for grand theft and one for money laundering.

Senior Deputy District Attorney Howard Wise, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Fraud & Technology Crimes Unit, prosecuted the case.

"This is a sad case. Mr. Lemons stole from a vulnerable victim at a vulnerable time," Mr. Wise said. "The patriarch of the Church was near death when this happened at the onset of COVID. Mr. Lemons made a terrible decision but has accepted responsibility for his significant theft."

In December 2020, Lemons issued himself a \$200,000 cashier's check from a bank account belonging to New Progressive Christian Baptist Church in Oxnard, where he served as an assistant pastor. Between January and April 2021, he used the stolen funds for personal expenses, including dental work, airline tickets, a vehicle, a new cell phone, and property in Tennessee. Oxnard Police Department detectives investigated the church's missing money. Among other claims, Lemons said he gave the money to charity. That claim proved to be false.

Along with the state prison sentence, Lemons was ordered to pay \$200,000 in restitution to the church.

Case: 2021028643

Defendant Information:

Curtis Frank Lemons (DOB 12/31/56)

Atoka, Tennessee (Formerly of Camarillo)

Charges pled guilty to:

- PC 487(b)(3) – Grand theft
- PC 487(a) – Grand theft
- PC 186.10(a) – Money laundering