

Church Staffer Steals \$500,000 to Pay for Wedding, Personal Expenses, Officials Say

A church's financial manager stole more than \$500,000 to pay for her wedding and many other personal expenses, authorities said.

Taisha Smith-DeJoseph, 43, of Willingboro faces numerous charges including theft, misapplication of entrusted property and failure to file personal income tax returns, the Burlington County Prosecutor's office announced Tuesday.

The charges stem from an investigation that began when officials with St. Paul's Baptist Church in Florence reported their suspicions to authorities.

The subsequent investigation determined that from 2014 to March 2019, Smith-DeJoseph opened bank accounts on behalf of the church and used that money for personal purposes. She also allegedly wrote checks to herself from the church and fabricated the church's monthly financial statements.

Smith-DeJoseph allegedly spent the money on rent, car loan payments, credit card bills, hundreds of online purchases and her wedding at a venue in Burlington County. She stole \$561,777 overall, authorities said.

It wasn't known Wednesday if Smith-DeJoseph has retained an attorney. A telephone number for her could not be located.

The Associated Press