

Pastor Facing Criminal Investigation Found Shot Dead Near His Home

A Michigan church mourns after its former pastor was found shot to death in the woods near his home.

The Benzie County Sheriff's Department is investigating the death of John Clark, pastor of West Side Community Church. Police say Clark died from a single gunshot wound in the head.

Authorities are unsure if Clark shot himself or, if someone else shot him, whether it was accidental or intentional.

Before his death, Clark was facing criminal investigation regarding financial misconduct at his church. He resigned on Aug. 29 after an audit of the church uncovered financial irregularities.

Church staff announced to the congregation on Sept. 8 that Clark had resigned, stating:

"Recently, our board of elders initiated an audit into our finances. This audit identified some financial irregularities which led us to seek counsel. We were advised to make the difficult and painful decision to turn our findings over to local law enforcement who began a formal investigation. At that point, Pastor John Clark submitted his resignation. There are no further comments at this time."

The ongoing investigation reveals that at least \$500,000 of the church's money was misused over a period of several years, reports The Ticker.

Clark founded West Side Community Church in Traverse City in 2002, according to the church's Facebook page.

The church released a statement on Facebook mourning the death of their former pastor.

“Our hearts are heavy today with the passing of our founding pastor John Clark,” the post said. “For those needing prayer, our doors will be open between 11:00am – 3:00pm Tuesday through Thursday. As well as 6:00 – 8:00pm Tuesday and Wednesday this week.

“Please continue to pray for the Clark family and our West Side Community Church family.”