

Report: Married Pastor Stole Nearly \$22K From Church to Pay Off Mistress

A former pastor allegedly stole nearly \$22,000 from his church to pay off his mistress.

Police say Lindsay Lane Baptist Church's Ralph Sawyer confessed to using the church's ATM card and was charged with felony stealing.

According to the *Associated Press*, an investigation started after the church treasurer noticed the missing money. According to court documents, Sawyer made 35 withdrawals from the account in June and July, totaling nearly \$22,000.

KMOV reports Sawyer used his own finances at first, but eventually started using the church's money as well. The station says Sawyer claims the money was used to keep her quiet once she learned he was a married, church pastor.

"(Sawyer) said he initiated a relationship with a young lady, (and) as a result of that relationship, he withdrew the funds to help continue the relationship," Florissant Police Detective Andy Haarmann says. "Was she blackmailing him? It's unclear how their relationship progressed. He made some statements to indicate them (sic), and he made others to refute that."

Lindsay Lane suspended Sawyer's duties, and Sawyer later resigned.

"The members of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church are saddened by the actions taken by our former pastor," a church statement reads. "We believe this situation is between Ralph Sawyer, God and the Judicial Process. We respectfully request for privacy as our church tries to heal during this very difficult time."