



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER CHURCH SECRETARY SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON

(Beaumont, Texas) A Beaumont woman was sentenced Tuesday afternoon for forgery of a check as a result of an embezzlement scheme from her church, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church of Beaumont. **JULIA C. HARDY, 45**, received six months in federal prison for Forgery of a check of an organization operating in interstate and foreign commerce. **HARDY** was sentenced Tuesday by United States District Judge Ron Clark in a hearing that lasted over two hours and attended by many church members.

According to information prosecutors presented in court, **Hardy** was the church's financial secretary for approximately three years when discrepancies in the financial records in January 2003 prompted a review. Church officials discovered that over ninety checks had been forged over a two-year period by **Hardy** resulting in a loss of over \$122,222. A church elder addressed the court at sentencing and told Judge Clark how the loss had impacted the church's various ministries including its outreach program, foreign missions, youth groups, and the general operations of the church. **Hardy** entered a guilty plea in December, 2003, to a one count felony information pursuant to a plea agreement. As part of the plea agreement **Hardy** paid partial restitution to the church of approximately \$55,000 prior to her sentencing.

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Matthew D. Orwig, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, was pleased with the prison sentence, "Stealing from a church and its ministry programs is despicable. I hope this time in prison will allow Ms. Hardy to reflect on her actions and accept responsibility for the damage she has done to her church."

Upon release from prison, **Hardy** will have to serve six months of home confinement, three years of supervised release, and pay restitution to the church and their insurer for the remainder of the loss. Judge Clark ordered **Hardy** to report to prison no later than July 15, 2004.

The case was investigated by the Beaumont Police Department and the United States Secret Service. Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Rawls prosecuted the case.

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