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MINISTER SENTENCED TO 30 MONTHS FOR EMBEZZLEMENT OF UNION FUNDS

Tampa, Florida - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that U.S. District Judge Virginia Covington today sentenced Gregory Sims (age 38, of Dade City) to 30 months in federal prison for embezzling money from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 915. As part of sentence, the court also entered a money judgment in the amount of \$813,142.71. This amount represents the proceeds of the embezzlement. Sims pled guilty on September 27, 2010.

According to court documents, Sims is the pastor at The Crossroads Church of Dade City. He also managed the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 915's ("IBEW") union Health and Welfare Fund, Pension Fund and Vacation Fund from November 2007 through January 2009. As the fund manager, Sims was responsible for financial record keeping, account reconciliation, fund activity, check issuance and preparation of financial statements.

An audit of the IBEW funds resulted in the identification of eleven checks issued from the IBEW funds to The Crossroads Church totaling \$813,142.71, all of which were unsupported by proper documentation. Further investigation revealed that Sims deliberately and illegally misappropriated the \$813,142.71, by wrongfully diverting the money from the

IBEW Fund to the financial accounts of The Crossroads Church of Dade City, Florida, which he controlled. After unlawfully diverting the money from the IBEW Fund to the Crossroads Church accounts that he controlled, Sims disbursed the embezzled IBEW Fund money for his personal benefit and for the use of his parishioners and associates.

United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill stated, "Crimes of this sort erode both the confidence and contributions made by hard working employees and may serve to threaten the economic future of their families, as well. These types of crimes, where found, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

"Today's sentencing highlights the Office of Inspector General's efforts to combat schemes that compromise the integrity of union employee benefit plans," stated Richard L. Walker, Special Agent-in-Charge for the Atlanta Region of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations. "The OIG is firmly committed to working with our law enforcement partners to this end."

"This defendant's theft of employee benefit assets jeopardized the benefits of these workers," said Phyllis C. Borzi, Assistant Secretary of the Labor Department's Employee Benefits Security Administration. "Today's sentencing affirms our commitment to take strong enforcement action to protect the benefits of workers from abuse by those entrusted with the safekeeping of plan assets, including those who provide services to plans."

This case was investigated by Department of Labor Office of Inspector General - Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigations and the Atlanta Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA). It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laurel Moore Lee.