

Former Account Manager for Two Churches in Belleville Sentenced for Embezzling Funds

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BENTON – A U.S. District Court judge sentenced a Freeburg woman to 15 months in prison after she admitted to committing bank fraud while employed by St. Teresa and St. Luke Catholic parishes in Belleville.

Michelle N. Miller, 45, pled guilty to one count of falsely obtaining money owned by a financial institution. In addition to her prison sentence, she will receive two years of supervised release and is ordered to pay \$153,940.38 in restitution.

“The defendant selfishly chose to put herself and her greed over the needs of the students, parishioners and the religious community at St. Teresa and St. Luke,” said U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe.

“She decided to embezzle more than \$150,000 from her employer, friends, and neighbors. It’s shameful, and I’m relieved she was brought to justice.” “The U.S. Secret Service and our law enforcement partners remain committed to identifying, investigating, and pursuing those who attempt to enrich themselves through fraudulent means,” said Stephen Webster, the Resident Agent in Charge of the U.S. Secret Service. “We are proud of our partnerships with the federal, state, and local agencies who work collectively to hold this individual accountable for their actions.”

According to court documents, Miller worked from September 2017 to February 2020 as a business manager for St. Teresa Catholic Church as well as St. Luke Catholic Church. During her time as an employee, she was an authorized signatory on both bank accounts and wrote numerous checks payable to herself. In total, she stole an estimated \$153,940.38.

To conceal her fraud, Miller forged signatures and made false bookkeeping entries. The investigation was conducted by the U.S. Secret Service and the Belleville Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter T. Reed.