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Prattville man pleads guilty to enticing a child for immoral purposes

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Written by
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PRATTVILLE — A Prattville man pleaded guilty in Autauga County Circuit Court on Monday to enticing a child for immoral purposes at a local church.

Zachary Emerson, 23, entered the plea before Circuit Judge Ben Fuller and will be sentenced Aug. 4, courthouse records show.

Emerson was a paid intern working with East Memorial Baptist Church's youth ministry when the crime occurred between July and October of 2009, records show. He was arrested by Prattville police Dec. 11, 2009, arrest reports show.

The victim was older than 12 and younger than 16, records show. Emerson admitted in court to asking the victim to go into a room in the church and touched him inappropriately. Emerson's attorney, William Blanchard, did not return a phone call or email Monday seeking comment for this story.

Emerson originally was indicted on three counts of enticing a child for immoral purposes, sexual abuse, a misdemeanor, but records show all charges, except one count of enticing a child for immoral purposes, were dropped. District Attorney Randall Houston said he was pleased with the deal that recommends a 10-year sentence.

"We are always very mindful of protecting crime victims, particularly victims of sex crimes," he said. "And in this case, we are also dealing with a minor. So for the victim not to have to testify in open court about what happened is beneficial for him and his family.

"We got what we wanted -- a long prison term hanging over

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Zachary Emerson's head," Houston said. "Hopefully now when he gets out of prison he won't ever be hired again to work with young people."

Emerson will have to register as a sex offender under the purview of the Community Notification Act, said Casey Biggs, the assistant district attorney who handled the case.

The investigation in the case began when church officials caught Emerson and the victim in a compromising situation, Houston said. Church officials informed the victim's family and contacted law enforcement, and they were cooperative during the investigation, he said.

The experience has been "heartbreaking," said the Rev. Glenn Graham, senior pastor at East Memorial.

"I know Zac and his family, and I know the victim's family," Graham said. "Our purpose is to minister to people before God. But when a law has been broken, our responsibility is to report it. Hopefully now we can begin to move past this heartbreaking situation."

Emerson will remain out of jail on a bond of \$15,000 until he is sentenced, court records show.



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