



QUEENS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

DISBARRED ATTORNEY SENTENCED TO ONE TO THREE YEARS IN PRISON FOR STEALING \$1 MILLION FROM ASTORIA CHURCH

70-Year-Old Lawyer Took Escrow Money and Misled Pastor for Years

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Debra Hoskins was sentenced to one to three years in prison for stealing more than \$1 million dollars from an Astoria church. Hoskins, now a disbarred attorney, pleaded guilty to grand larceny in November 2025. Between 2018 and 2020, Hoskins improperly accessed escrow funds from a real estate transaction involving the House of Prayer and Deliverance Ministries, Inc. and misled the church pastor to delay the discovery of her crime.

District Attorney Katz said: “As an attorney, the defendant was expected to conduct herself with integrity. Instead of upholding the law and properly stewarding this church’s funds, she sought to enrich herself. For this admitted breach of public trust, she will now serve one to three years in prison.”

Hoskins, 70, of Queens Village, pleaded guilty in November to grand larceny in the first degree in full satisfaction of the indictment against her. Queens Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino sentenced her Monday to one to three years in prison.

DA Katz said that, according to the charges, Abraham Leathers Sr., pastor of the House of Prayer and Deliverance Ministries, Inc. in Astoria, retained Hoskins to represent him in dissolving the church’s corporation, closing on the sale of its property and disbursing the funds. On May 18, 2018, the property closing took place, and Hoskins received a check for \$1,019,394.65 to be held in escrow.

The check was deposited on June 7, 2018, into a lawyer’s bank account controlled by the defendant.

Between 2018 and 2020, Leathers questioned Hoskins several times about the availability of the funds. Hoskins told the pastor, in sum and substance, that court approval was required for disbursement of the money.

On August 19, 2020, Hoskins filed a false affidavit with the court that claimed there was \$1,110,789.65 in the escrow account related to the sale of the property. Leathers filed an affidavit requesting disbursement of the funds.

On June 23, 2021, the court issued an order for the disbursement of the money.

An investigation by the DA's office found that the escrow account was depleted by \$223,437.91 as of October 1, 2018. After the defendant deposited the complainant's check in June 2018, the defendant's escrow account never went back to \$1 million. And at the time Hoskins filed the affidavit with the court, the balance of the escrow account was down to approximately \$19,000.

Leathers received only \$20,000 from the proceeds of the real estate sale. Hoskins was disbarred in December 2023 on an unrelated matter.

Assistant District Attorney Vinnette Campbell of the District Attorney's Public Corruption Bureau prosecuted the case with the assistance of Investigative Accountant Barak Haimoff under the supervision of former Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

