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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Charges Elementary School Teacher with Possession and Promotion of Child Pornography

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution is charging Joseph Watson, a Pasco County elementary school teacher and active church leader, with several counts of possession and promotion of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Watson admitted to authorities that he received images and videos via a transmission from an acquaintance on the Telegram messaging app and then sent the files to another individual on X (formerly Twitter).

"Mr. Watson is a soon-to-be former elementary school teacher in Pasco County, a leader in a local church choir, and was involved in the church's summer youth program," said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. "It's hard to find a more depraved example of someone who betrayed the local community's trust than Mr. Watson. My prosecutors will bring down the full weight of the law on this predator."

The joint Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Pasco County Sheriff's Office investigation into Watson began after the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported a cybertip from X about an account sending suspected child pornography. FDLE agents conducted an interview with Watson at his place of employment, where the defendant admitted to viewing and sending CSAM to another individual on X.

Watson is charged with two counts of possession of child pornography, two counts of transmitting child pornography by electronic device, and two counts of unlawful use of a two-way communication device, all felonies.

Special Counsel Rita Peters will be prosecuting this case.

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