

## NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## YOUTH MINISTER TO BE SENTENCED FOR SEX CRIMES IN ELMORE COUNTY; CHARGES PENDING IN MADISON AND CULLMAN COUNTIES

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced that a youth minister facing charges in Madison and Cullman counties for sex crimes against children is due to be sentenced on July 31 for similar crimes of which he has been convicted in Elmore County.

John A. Astorga was found guilty on April 11 by a jury in Elmore County Circuit Court for two counts of first-degree sexual abuse. During the trial, evidence that was presented by the Attorney General's Office that included the testimony of three separate victims as well as the pastor of Bethel Assembly of God in Wetumpka where Astorga had been employed.

At his July 31 sentencing, Astorga will face a penalty of one year and one day to ten years imprisonment for each of the two counts, which are class C felonies. State law also provides that he also will be required to register as a convicted sex offender and to abide by community notification requirements of state law.

"We urge the Court to consider the predatory nature of this man's crimes and the devastation caused to his child victims, and to impose a prison term," said Attorney General Strange. "We are deeply concerned about the damage that he has done and want to ensure that he does not have the opportunity to continue to prey upon innocent children."

Astorga, 37, is a resident of Wetumpka. He is currently free on bond.

In addition to the convictions for which Astorga will be sentenced in Elmore County, similar crimes are being prosecuted by the Attorney General's Office for charges against Astorga in Madison and Cullman counties.

Most recently, Astorga was indicted\* on June 22 by a grand jury in Cullman County for one count of first-degree sexual abuse. Charges also are pending against Astorga for three counts of first-degree sexual abuse involving three victims in an indictment\* returned in December of 2010 by a Madison County grand jury.

No further information or comment about the investigation or about these alleged crimes other than that stated in the indictments may be released at this time.

Attorney General Strange commended those involved in the cases, noting in particular Assistant Attorneys General Andrew Arrington and John Hensley of the Attorney General's Criminal Trials Division, Special Agents of the Attorney General's Investigations Division and of the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, as well as the Elmore County Sheriff's Office and the Cullman County Sheriff's Office.

*\*An indictment is merely an accusation. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty*

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