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Williams turned to a higher power.

Feb. 09, 2013

Feb. 08—TAMPA — When police made things in Tampa, Florida, too hot for tax refund fraud, Victor Williams turned to a higher power.

Williams asked his uncle, a pastor for an Alabama church, to help him by laundering fraudulent income tax refund checks through the church's bank account.

The uncle, Kenneth Faison, agreed, and deposited a total of more than \$235,000 of fraudulent Treasury Checks into a bank accounts for the Pentecostal Temple Church of God in Christ in Mexia, Alabama.

This week, Williams, 28, pleaded guilty in Pensacola to charges of conspiracy, theft of public money and aggravated identity theft. Faison pleaded guilty last month to the same charges.

Williams has been jailed since his arrest in November, after a federal judge noted Williams refused to surrender when IRS criminal agents phoned him about a warrant.

When agents found Williams, they found 49 different Social Security numbers and 37 money bands, according to an order issued by U.S Magistrate Mark Pizzo in Tampa.

Authorities said Williams obtained the fraudulent checks from others in the Tampa area, and mailed them to Faison, who then deposited the checks in banks in north Florida and south Alabama.

Faison kept 25 percent of the stolen funds for himself, and transferred the remainder to Williams. In one instance, Faison added the identity-theft victim's name to his

bank account, using stolen personal information.

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