



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Former Cobb County Church Leader Pleads Guilty to Child Sex Crimes,
Sentenced to 25 Years Without Parole
State vs. Marcus Kendall Turner**

February 20, 2026 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Marcus Kendall Turner, 34, of the Acworth area of Cherokee County, pled guilty on February 9 to sex crimes involving a teenage child. Turner admitted to all 11 counts he faced, including:

- 2 counts of aggravated child molestation
- 2 counts of child molestation
- 1 count of enticing a child for indecent purposes
- 1 count of obscene internet contact with a child
- 4 counts of sexual exploitation of children
- 1 count of cruelty to children in the first degree

Law enforcement first became aware of allegations of child sex crimes when the victim’s mother called 911. Cobb County Police launched the initial investigation, and Cherokee Sheriff’s Office became involved when evidence showed abuse also occurred in Cherokee County.

Turner held a leadership role in Worship With Wonders, a Cobb County church, where he initiated the relationship with the teenage victim.

Detectives determined that in May 2023 Turner invited a middle school boy to join a new church youth group called “Hangout Life Crew.” Within months, Turner began spending time alone with the child and communicating frequently with him by text and phone. Over five months, they exchanged 12,691 text messages, including sexually explicit content that Turner solicited and shared with the child. Then, in August and September 2023, Turner committed repeated acts of sexual abuse against the child at his Cherokee County home.

In September 2023, church leadership was informed of the allegations but did not immediately call law enforcement. The victim’s mother called 911 herself, prompting Cobb County Police Department to begin its investigation on September 18, 2023.

“Parents should be able to trust that church leaders will protect children, not victimize them. That trust has been shattered for this family. The defendant used his position to target and then groom a vulnerable child that culminated in horrific abuse,” said Assistant District Attorney Leyna Pope of the Special Victims Unit, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. “Silence and inaction only deepen the harm. Protecting children must always come first.”

During the hearing, the victim and his mother delivered powerful impact statements describing the profound violation of trust they experienced and the long-lasting effects the defendant's actions have had on their family.

Superior Court Judge Jennifer L. Davis sentenced Turner, as negotiated, to 25 years in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by life on probation with sex offender special conditions, including sex offender registration and no contact of any kind with anyone under the age of 18. He was also ordered no contact with the victim or any member of his family.

"This sentence delivers justice and ensures accountability. It honors a mother who stood firmly and refused to be silenced and her son who showed tremendous courage in coming forward," said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. "Sexual predators can be highly manipulative and strategic in gaining the trust of their victims. We will continue to aggressively prosecute those who prey on children in Cherokee County.

The case was investigated by the Cherokee Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Cobb County Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Leyna Pope of the Special Victims Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

Information About Sexual Abuse of Children

Child abusers often engage in a grooming process that allows them to perpetrate sexual abuse undetected. "Grooming" in the context of child sexual abuse is a manipulative process intended to secure the child's silence. Common characteristics of the grooming process include targeting the child, gaining the child and caregiver's trust, filling a need, using flattery and gifts, isolating the child, sexualizing the relationship, and maintaining control.

Children who have been groomed are often conflicted about their feelings for the abuser because he/she has methodically established a positive relationship with the child prior to introducing sexual touches. Children who have been groomed are also more likely to conceal the abuse and delay disclosing the abuse to others.

To report suspected child abuse, call Child Protective Services at 855-422-4453. If the child is in immediate danger, call 911.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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