

# 2 Church of Wells members sentenced in trespass case

By April Barbe editor@jacksonvilleprogress.com 5 hrs ago



Two Church of Wells members were sentenced earlier this week for criminal trespass charges stemming from a 2015 incident in Alto.

Cherokee County Attorney Dana Young said Mark Matthew Derouville, 27, and James Robert MacPherson III, 29, were each sentenced Monday to 90 days in jail and a \$2,000 fine. Young said if the men pay the fine within 14 days of sentencing, then they are only required to serve 45 days in the Cherokee County jail.

"They were very courteous, and they said they would take their sentence, but they did not believe they were guilty," Young said.

Derouville and MacPherson were asked to report to the jail at noon Tuesday, and they arrived escorted by a little more than 50 other members of the Church of Wells.

According to Cherokee County Sheriff's Detective Gina Battley, the group peacefully assembled at the sheriff's office.

"They didn't cause any problems at the sheriff's office. They were asked to move to the grassy area to clear the sidewalks, and they stayed outside about 45 minutes," Battley said.

A portion of the members went inside the lobby with Derouville and MacPherson to pray over them, according to officials.

Young said the criminal trespass case occurred on Dec. 28, 2015 at an Alto business.

"They went into the Alto Auto Parts store, and they started speaking with an employee there. They overstayed their welcome because the employee became uncomfortable," Young said. "The manager, who is also the owner, told them to leave several times, and they did not. They began to sing a hymn, and then the police escorted them away."

Young said she believes the two men, as is common with other members of the church, wanted attention. But she said "they truly do not think they did anything wrong, but the statute is very cut and dry. If someone you are asked to leave and don't, then you are guilty (of criminal trespass)."

Derouville and MacPherson pled not guilty in front of a judge with no jury in attendance.

The Church of Wells has been in the news in the past for various accounts of street preaching. In June 2015, six members of the church were arrested in Houston after disrupting a Sunday morning sermon at the megachurch lead by Joel Osteen.