Gift Card Scams

There is a new spin on gift card scams. This time, scammers pretend to be a pastor, rabbi, priest, imam, or bishop. They ask worshipers for gift card contributions for a worthy cause. Appeals are often made by email, texts, or phone calls.

The bogus emails often include the name of the local pastor and a legitimate looking email address. But a closer look should raise some red flags. For example, the email address isn’t the one normally used by the church, and the service provider is different, too. The message may begin with a simple “Hi,” but doesn’t include a recipient’s name.

The imposter asks you to buy a popular gift card — frequently, iTunes, Google Play, or Amazon — and then asks for the gift card number and PIN on the back of the card. Those numbers let the scammer immediately get the money you loaded onto the card. And once that’s done the scammer, and your money, are gone, usually without a trace.

If you or someone you know paid a scammer with a gift card, report it as soon as possible. Call the card company and tell them the gift card was used in a scam. See popular contact information below. Then, tell the FTC about it at ftc.gov/complaint.

Amazon
• Call 1 (888) 280-4331

Google Play
• Call 1 (855) 466-4438

iTunes
• Call Apple Support at 1 (800) 275-2273, then say “gift card” to be connected to a live representative.

MoneyPak
• Call 1 (866) 795-7969