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Draft 7/1/96 8:00pm

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS ON CHURCH BURNINGS
ROSE GARDEN
THE WHITE HOUSE
July 2, 1996**

Good morning. Over the past month, our nation has come together in outrage, united by our determined *effort* to stop the burning of black churches and other houses of worship across America. These fires are continuing; just this week, a predominantly African-American church in Maysville, South Carolina, and a church in Bonner Springs, Kansas, were burned. These burnings are an affront to our most basic beliefs of religious liberty and racial tolerance. They pose a challenge to our entire nation.

I am gratified that law enforcement, government, business and the private sector are coming together to meet this challenge. I have just finished meeting with the Attorneys General from 12 states that have been afflicted by church burnings. I am pleased to be joined by these law enforcement leaders, along with the President of the National Association of Attorneys General, Scott Harshbarger of Massachusetts.

We will continue to work together to track down anyone who may be responsible. I am pleased that Congress acted with dispatch to pass legislation making it easier to prosecute and punish anyone who burns a house of worship, and I will sign it next week. ~~And~~ I am *also* gratified that there is an outpouring of private support to help those communities that have been torn by these acts of arson to rebuild.

We must do more to prevent these crimes. Last month, I asked Federal Emergency Management Administrator James Lee Witt to take the lead in working with law enforcement to find ways to stop these burnings before they happen. He has asked law enforcement and community leaders what more needs to be done, and today we are taking steps in response to their needs.

So today, I am taking emergency action to prevent church burnings, by transferring \$6 million to communities in 12 targeted states. This emergency transfer will let every county in the South hire a new police officer for the summer -- patrolling the back roads, visiting the dozen African-American churches in a typical county, keeping watch for signs of trouble. These new officers will be a wall of protection to ward off anyone who would strike out in hate at a house of worship. *And other houses*

If they believe it necessary, communities can spend the money for other purposes -- installing floodlights, hiring private security guards -- whatever works to forestall the fires. I am asking the Congress to quickly approve this transfer, through a special procedure that allows action without a time-consuming floor vote. We have no time to waste.

Make no mistake: If this emergency measure is not enough to stop the church

burnings, we will do more. We will do whatever it takes, for however long it takes, until every family can worship in freedom without fear of arson or terror.

Law enforcement alone, no matter how diligent, will never be enough protect America's churches, mosques and synagogues. We must come together, as one America, to reject hatred and reach out across lines that divide us. Earlier today, I signed a proclamation designating this month a National Month of Unity. I call on religious leaders of all faiths to speak from the pulpit and emphasize the need for healing . . . and I call on all citizens to join together during this month, to reach out and strengthen the ideals of democracy and unity that illuminate our nation and keep us strong.

On Thursday, we will celebrate Independence Day. This year, let us take this opportunity to rededicate ourselves once again ~~the proposition that all Americans are created equal~~ →

↑
to our founding principles of
religious freedom and
equality.

1ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1996 Little Rock Newspapers, Inc.
Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

June 11, 1996, Tuesday

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 806 words

HEADLINE: 'PAINFUL MEMORIES' OF TORCHED CHURCHES YIELD DEBATABLE LIST

BYLINE: JULIAN E. BARNES, Democrat-Gazette Staff Writer

BODY:

A day after President Clinton was challenged about his recollections of arsons at black churches in Arkansas in the 1950s and 1960s, the White House released a list of three churches that burned.

Officials of all three churches confirmed Monday that their buildings burned, but none said the fires were arsons.

When Clinton was a 17-year-old high school senior, however, the Roanoke Baptist Church in his hometown of Hot Springs burned -- possibly in a racially motivated arson.

In his weekly radio address Saturday, Clinton condemned recent church arsons in the South and recalled that black churches were burned in the 1950's and 1960's to scare civil rights workers.

"I have vivid and painful memories of black churches being burned in my own state when I was a child," he said.

The 1963 Roanoke Baptist Church fire was not on the White House list. At the time, investigators said there was no evidence of arson, but the church pastor, a civil rights activist, said the fire was set.

Thirty Southern black churches have been victims of arson in the last 18 months. The most recent fire occurred Sunday in Greenville, Texas. No connections have been made among the fires, but Clinton blamed racial hostility.

After the speech Saturday, Arkansas historians and black leaders said they did not remember any churches burning in the state.

On Sunday a Clinton spokesman clarified the presidents' remarks after press secretary Mike McCurry questioned him about the Arkansas fires.

"The president's recollection is that there were burnings of some black community buildings in the '50s when he was a child," White House spokesman Mary Ellen Glynn said.

But Monday evening the White House released the names of three black churches that burned. A spokesman said Bethel AME Church in North Little Rock burned in the mid-1960s, Mount Nebo AME Church in College Station burned the 1950s, and the Collins Temple Baptist Church, now Canaan Baptist, in Little Rock burned in the 1960s.

The Rev. Clarence Boyd of Bethel AME said his church burned Feb 3, 1970. Larry White, a trustee of Mount Nebo AME, said the church burned in the 1960s. Neither fire was arson.

The Collins Temple Baptist Church was destroyed by fire Dec. 16, 1965, two months after being completely renovated. The cause of the blaze was not determined.

The Rev. Leon Massey, the current pastor of Roanoke Baptist Church, remembers standing over the embers of his church after it burned Sunday, Dec. 22, 1963.

"I remember going down the next day. It was just smoldering," said Massey, who was 23 at the time. "Everything had collapsed into the basement. There was just a wall or two standing."

All that was left was the church bell in the charred bell tower. The bell, rung at funerals and to call church together each Sunday, was too hot to touch that day, Massey remembers.

Local authorities said the day after the fire that there was no evidence of arson, according to news clippings.

But then-Roanoke Baptist Pastor James Donald Rice, the president of the local NAACP, demanded an FBI investigation.

Clinton has pledged to have FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents visit churches around the South to help protect against arson.

But in 1963 no such help was coming. John Pope, then the special agent in charge of the Little Rock FBI office, said an federal investigation was not warranted, according to the news accounts of the day.

"The origin of the fire was never determined, and the persons responsible were never apprehended," Massey said.

Residents of Hot Springs said Monday that the black community believed that the fire was set in retaliation for Rice's efforts to organize the NAACP.

"He wasn't doing drastic things. He was just doing things like a lot of people were doing around the country," said Alma Wesson, a Hot Springs resident. "Things were real segregated here."

Massey said Rice's activism led several Hot Springs businesses, including Walgreen's and Newberry's, to begin hiring blacks and to integrate their establishments just before Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

"From that standpoint it was a resounding success," Massey said.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 11, 1996

But the congregation had a tougher time recovering.

The church bell was stolen. An insurance problem led to the church being paid \$ 3,200 for a structure valued in news reports at \$ 500,000. Congregants had to move to a Seventh-Day Adventist church while they tried to raise money for a new church.

The new church, built on the ruins, was completed in 1968. The church bell was recovered and mounted in the wall of the new church.

Today there are 200 church members, Massey said.

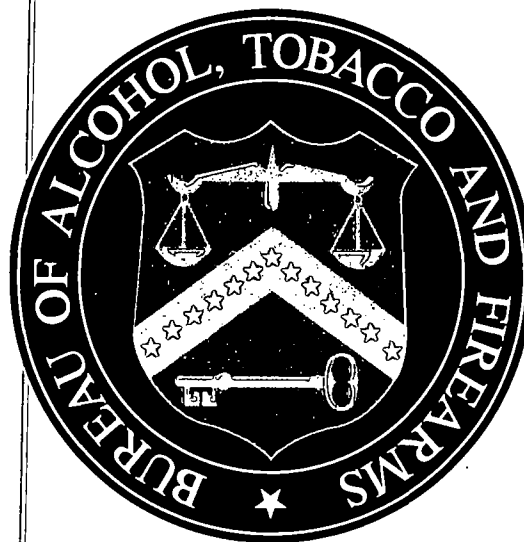
"It took a long time for the church to rebuild," Massey said.

LOAD-DATE: June 11, 1996

**DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS**

Arson and Explosives Division

***Church Threat
Assessment Guide***



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LEVEL 1 - 23 OF 538 STORIES

Copyright 1996 The San Diego Union-Tribune
The San Diego Union-Tribune

June 23, 1996, Sunday

SECTION: NEWS; Ed. 1,2; Pg. A-3

LENGTH: 122 words

HEADLINE: Church-burning vigil set

SERIES: REGION UPDATE
From Union-Tribune news services

BODY:

Religious and civic leaders are planning a community vigil Saturday to fight racism following two church fires in the Northwest that mirrored the burning of more than 40 black churches in the South.

"We will protect each other," said Bill Wassmuth, executive director of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment. "We will stand by each other."

In Seattle, federal and local investigators are looking into a blaze that caused \$20,000 damage to the Eritrean Community Center last week. Arson is suspected. In Portland, Ore., an investigation is under way in the arson case of Immanuel Christian Fellowship, a predominantly black church that was burned early Thursday. There have been no arrests.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 23, 1996

Another Look at Church Burnings

A question has been gnawing at the edge of my mind. Suppose the arsonous campaign against black churches turns out to be no such thing. Will I be profoundly relieved? Or will I be just a little disappointed?

I'm not proud of it, but the answer, I fear, is: Both.

The relief needs no explaining. The discovery that America, for all its unresolved racial animus, still hasn't returned to the time of the night-riders and hooded terrorists would have to be a relief. Who could fail to be relieved to learn that the country has not become so polarized that attacks on houses of worship threaten to become routine?

I'm not saying the wave of church-burnings has been proven a Tawana Brawley-type hoax, only that the scope of the problem may be considerably less than we had thought. Several investigators—notably Michael Fumento writing in Monday's Wall Street Journal—have looked both at the numbers and the evidence and

concluded that the arson epidemic may be less than meets the eye. For instance, the number of church burnings (in states that compile such data) has remained fairly constant over the past several years—until *after* the Center for Democratic Renewal

*I hope I have the
grace not to be
disappointed by
good news.*

(CDR) called a late-March press conference to talk about the increase in anti-black arson. Since then, the numbers are up significantly—though how many are race-based arsons is hard to know.

Suppose Fumento (and columnist James K. Glassman before him [op-ed, June 18] is right—that there really is

no epidemic of black church burnings. Why couldn't I simply be relieved?

The answer is that the reports of the burnings, as fearsome as they were, served several purposes. To begin with, they riveted the nation's attention on a certain mean-spiritedness (no doubt induced by economic unease) in America's politics. President Clinton's trip to South Carolina to pray at a new church built to replace one that had been destroyed seemed to me just the right gesture. So did Ralph Reed's denunciation of the arsons, and his promise to help raise money to rebuild the burned churches. If Clinton and Reed believed (as most of us did) that there was an "epidemic" of burnings, they were right to call America to rise above such hatred.

Hundreds of men, women and youths packed off to the affected communities in a church-raising frenzy that I thought was good for America's soul. If the arsonists' message was one of hate and division, these volunteers wanted America to hear the

message of love and unity. I found it moving, and healing.

And of course there were the speeches, the newspaper columns, the editorials—all built on the assumption that the epidemic was real. Some commentators made the link between the epidemic of burnings and the spirit of anti-black permissiveness engendered by the resurgence of ultraconservatism and the religious right.

If there was no epidemic, the rhetoric falls of its own weight—even if racial hostility actually has increased. The fear is that the failure of the rhetorical link will make the message itself seem counterfeit.

Two things about the "epidemic." First, I never thought it was a conspiracy in the sense of an orchestrated campaign. What seemed more likely was that a series of local idiots—not even necessarily racist idiots—decided to join what looked to be a trend. Indeed, it was hard to know whether a conspiracy might not have been preferable. At least then the authorities could

go after the organizers and end the thing. Individual acts of arson are a hundred times harder to solve.

Second, it is not necessary to believe that the people at the CDR (originally the Anti-Klan Network) made up the stories of the church burnings in order to mislead. What seems far more likely is that they "discovered" a new trend—probably without knowing that it was new—and then became a clearinghouse for reports of burnings that otherwise might never have been compiled.

I'm not ready to say that the whole epidemic never happened or that, to the extent that there was an epidemic, it may have been triggered by the CDR and the news media. But I am at least ready to consider the possibility that I've been duped—even if inadvertently.

What I hope for, if that should be the case, is the grace not to be disappointed by the good news. Isn't it enough to be relieved—and grateful—to learn that there's less evil in the land than we feared?

101ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1995 Star Tribune
Star Tribune

December 25, 1995, Metro Edition

SECTION: News; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 1012 words

HEADLINE: Lutherans find strength, solace in rebuilding after devastating fire

BYLINE: Martha Sawyer Allen; Staff Writer

BODY:

Replacing the costumes for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church's Christmas pageant was fairly easy.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville lent theirs to the south Minneapolis congregation whose church was destroyed by fire Dec. 15.

Then, the problems became a little more difficult. A 4-year-old asked her father, "Daddy, did God burn up in the fire, too?"

Now, the problems are much more complex. How can the 126-year-old congregation keep its worshiping core alive and continue to provide the essential services to the down and out, the homeless and those who need a helping hand? How can it also be a worshiping witness to the city?

"In a way, it's been like a refiner's fire," said the Rev. Donald Rudrud, who had just left the congregation as senior pastor to join the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) synodical offices to work on inner-city church issues.

"Our Saviour's is alive and well and might even emerge stronger. Now maybe because we won't be sustaining such a large building we'll put more energy into helping the community," he said.

Two bunches of flowers, daisies mostly, lie amid the soot, ice and broken stones on the steps of the burned-out church, testimony to the congregation's grief. The fire took a massive Norwegian Lutheran history with its stained-glass windows, 83-year-old stone walls and altar art.

In Biblical terms a "refiner's fire" is an ancient process of separating pure metal from its alloy. It came to mean a cleansing of a person through fire.

That's the best spin people seem to be able to put on the fire. The 300 members are using the fire to "cleanse" their congregation. "The odds are we'll stay. The community wants us to," said congregational president Gail Lamb.

The Rev. Janet Tidemann said that many of the congregation's social-service programs were earning enough money to sustain the physical building.

Star Tribune, December 25, 1995

Everyone has stories of the offers of help that have poured in. Prince of Peace gave Tidemann a pager, "but I was having to stop all the time and ask someone to use the phone because the beeper was going off," she said. "So my husband got AT&T to give me a cellular phone. I hadn't even gotten it out of the sack and it rang. I was answering a sack!"

Help came rolling in

Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, at 31st St. and Chicago Av., is going to house the English Language program that was helping 160 students.

The homeless shelter will be able to stay in the neighborhood, in a community services building at 19th St. and 11th Av., which pleased church leaders. They have a transitional housing program that helps people get up and out of homelessness, and if the shelter were far from the housing, it wouldn't have been nearly as effective, they said.

Lutheran Social Services provided chapel and office space at 2414 Park Av. Christmas Eve services were to be held there and regular Sunday services are set for 10:45 a.m. "In some ways our office space is better than before," Rudrud said.

Money has come in from all over. St. Stephens Catholic Church, itself a struggling inner-city congregation, gave a generous donation last Sunday, Rudrud said. "That really pleased me."

The Jesus Video Project, an evangelical program that distributes a movie about Jesus, sent a donation, but also called and offered help. "And I also said we'd pray for them," said Director Chuck Fenrick.

Schmitt Music Centers loaned an organ. That pleased organist Rick Stanton, who also lost a lot of his own sheet music. Lamb said Stanton was "so passionate about that old organ. It took a lot to keep it up and he had done a concert in the fall to raise money for repairs."

The congregation is trying to concentrate on what has been saved. The office copier still works, and they saved some historic photos. Much of the educational building is full of smoke damage but still standing.

Much is still needed

When a church burns, part of the community's soul goes with it. Tidemann said that one elderly parishioner, who is terminally ill, worried about where his funeral would be held. "We told him the [nearby] Messiah Lutheran Church sanctuary is lovely and will be large enough for all the loved ones and friends who'll want to come," she said.

She also has lost valuable time at Christmas. Usually she matches families who can help with those who need help during the holidays. "Honestly, what we need now is discretionary money. We need to be able to still help folks through the holidays," she said. "Just today I gave some money to a homeless woman who needed something to make her Christmas. We're not spending as much time with that right now."

Star Tribune, December 25, 1995

"We also need hymnals," she said.

Lamb said the church was a safe place for people in the community. "We had many children from the neighborhood who would come just by themselves. We paired them with adults in the congregation to help them understand the service, to do the things that parents do."

Future is in doubt

The ELCA assured the congregation that the synodical archives program had saved all the church records, which are stored at Luther Seminary, and some artwork. So they didn't lose their past.

What they're in danger of losing now is their future. Rudrud and Tidemann passionately believe that Our Saviour's will come back stronger. Lamb is a little more worried that now that so many of its services have temporarily moved from the corner of 24th and Chicago, something may never fully come back when they rebuild.

But, as Rudrud said, "They will be a vital group that carries on. The city needs the church, any church, to be a center of people giving hope to each other."

Our Saviour's

Lutheran Church

What: Sunday worship services.

When: 10:45 a.m.

Where: The Centrum, Lutheran Social Services, 2414 Park Av.

Information: To hear a message about services and how you can help, call the church office at 871-2967.

GRAPHIC: Photograph

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 27, 1995