

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (TRP NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Susan M. Liss (CN=Susan M. Liss/O=OVP [OVP])

CREATION DATE/TIME: 9-JUN-1997 18:00:56.00

SUBJECT: Re: Tuesday's Reconciliation Meeting

TO: June G. Turner (CN=June G. Turner/OU=WHO/O=EOP @ EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

June: Do you mind telling Sylvia that I can't come because I will be with

the VP at that time. He will be addressing the National Council of

Churches at the Dept. of Justice on the anniversary of the National Church

Arson Task Force. The central part of his message is reconciliation.

thanks.

RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (TRP NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Susan M. Liss (CN=Susan M. Liss/O=OVP [OVP])

CREATION DATE/TIME: 9-JUN-1997 18:11:01.00

SUBJECT: churches -- next version

TO: Robert B. Johnson (CN=Robert B. Johnson/OU=WHO/O=EOP @ EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:
will you read and let me know what you think. If you have serious problems

and I'm not at my desk (66608), call Dan Pink directly at 67173. thanks.

----- Forwarded by Susan M. Liss/OVP on 06/09/97 06:01 PM

Dan Pink

06/09/97 05:39 PM

To: Susan M. Liss/OVP

cc:

Subject: churches -- next version

DRAFT: June 8, 1997; 5:28PM

Vice President Al Gore

National Church Arson Task Force

United States Department of Justice

Washington, DC

June 10, 1997

[Acknowledgments from advance]

Good morning. Thank you for being here.

For too many American communities, 1996 was a terrifying year. Across the nation -- and especially in America,s South -- we witnessed a blaze of violence, a wave of church burnings that seared the nation,s conscience.

For me, it was especially troubling to see hate roar with such fury so close to home. But I know something about the soul of the South. I know that the vast, vast majority of people -- white and black, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor -- are good people, honest people . . . people who care for their family and honor their God. And I am here this morning to say that this multicolored majority will prevailing over a cowardly minority that expresses its hate with heat and flame.

That is what Sunday,s report of the National Church Arson Task Force tells us in no uncertain terms. In the past year, law enforcement authorities have arrested 199 suspects in these church burnings. Federal and state prosecutors have convicted 110 people. 35 percent of the cases have been solved -- double the usual rate for arson. 25 houses of worship have been rebuilt, and 65 more are currently being built. America has fought back.

I,m so proud of what the federal government has achieved -- thanks to the leadership of Jim Johnson, Deval Patrick, and now Isabelle Pinzler . . . and thanks to the dedicated public servants at the Departments of

Justice, Treasury, HUD, and FEMA. You have been inspiration. You have taught us powerful lessons about public service. I thank you for all you, ve done to enforce the law, rebuild the structures, and heal our communities.

But together we,ve done more than simply gain the upper hand against these forces of terror. We,ve also grown stronger as a nation.

I recall the words that Joseph uttered in Genesis, when he met up with the brothers who sent him into slavery: &You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.⁸

What good has come of these unspeakable acts?

For starters, they have brought Americans together. Across our nation, individuals and business have answered the call of their community. Over the past year, Habitat for Humanity estimates that more than 15,000 people volunteered for the rebuilding process. Private companies donated funds and building materials. Transportation companies offered volunteers reduced fares to communities in distress. America is coming together. And President Clinton will have more to say on race and national reconciliation this week when he delivers a commencement address in San Diego.

This past August, on the day that is both Tipper,s and the President,s birthday, both of our families traveled to Fruitland, Tennessee to help rebuild Salem Missionary Baptist Church. church. We

carried drywall, hammered nails, wielded power screwdrivers, and painted walls. It was a terrific birthday -- and one of the most memorable times our families, have spent together.

[NOTE: You may want to tell the story about when a white church was destroyed, the first to help was a black church. Later, when the black church was burned to the ground, the very first check was from the white church that had been helped. The black church was Salem Missionary Baptist; the white church New Shiloh United Methodist Church, also near Fruitland.]

These fires aimed to divide us, but they produced an unexpected result: They inspired us to deepen the bonds of our American community -- to build bridges across the divides of race, religion, and region. One young man put it well. He went to Greensboro, Alabama to help rebuild a church, and when he came back home to Chicago, here's what he said: I wonder & whether the guy who lit the first match understood how many people he brought together.⁸

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.

What other good has come of this?

These tragedies have also reminded us that the secular world cannot be completely isolated from the world of faith.

I have learned that, too. As a Christian -- and as someone entrusted with public office -- I have discovered that faith cements what the secular world unglues. Faith reminds us that while we are leaders, we are also led. Faith reminds us that while we are looked to for answers, there is always a larger reality to embrace. Faith reminds us that while we must seek to lead with a cool head, we must also bring forth a warm heart and a compassionate soul.

The connections between religious faith and social progress are especially powerful in America's South. Another church Tipper and I visited last year was New Macedonia Church in Fruitvale, Tennessee. Churches like that wonderful place hold a special place in the history of our nation. Much of the civil rights movement was cradled in such churches. These houses of worship offered sanctuary to those who dared speak truth to power. Churches like these and the thousands like them across the South often sit at the end of country roads. But in a larger sense, they sit at the crossroads of American history, signposts on the long, difficult, and still unrealized, path to freedom.

Faith has always mattered in America. And these terrible fires remind us that faith can outlast and overpower any worldly flame.

The Bible makes this point as well. Indeed, it is filled with examples of fires that burn but do not consume.

For example, in the third chapter of the Book of Exodus the angel

of the Lord appeared to Moses in the form of a flaming bush -- a bush that burned and was not destroyed.

In the Book of Daniel (3:19-27), we read that when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to serve King Nebuchadnezzar's gods or worship a golden image . . . the king became &full of fury.⁸

King Nebuchadnezzar was so angry that:

&He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was to be heated. And he ordered certain mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.⁸

King Nebuchadnezzar couldn't believe what he saw. And he asked:

&Did we not cast three bound men into the fire?⁸

His soldiers answered that they had. So the king continued:

&But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.⁸

The three men came out of the fire. Their heads were not singed. Their mantles were unharmed. No smell of fire came from them.

The king and his fiery furnace of intolerance were powerless.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace . . . just like the passage of Moses and the Burning Bush . . . reminds us that God can be symbolized . . . by a fire that burns, but that does not consume.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, we live in extraordinary times. There is no limit to what we can achieve. No limit to how far we can travel when we work together . . . when we trust each other . . . when we restore our faith in God.

Our work isn't done, of course. We'll keep prosecuting the arsonists, rebuilding houses of worship, and preventing more fires from erupting. But we've made a great start. We've succeeded in turning these acts of hatred into forces for good. That is an accomplishment that should make all of us proud.

And for it, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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RECORD TYPE: PRESIDENTIAL (TRP NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR: Susan M. Liss (CN=Susan M. Liss/O=OVP [OVP])

CREATION DATE/TIME:10-MAR-1998 16:09:05.00

SUBJECT: Re: Church Burning -- A Blast From Your Past

TO: Thurgood Marshall Jr (CN=Thurgood Marshall Jr/OU=WHO/O=EOP @ EOP [WHO])
READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

oh no, not this one! It's bad enough that affirmative action is alive and well. You need WH Leg Affairs (there was a new law passed at the height of the burnings to make prosecutions easier.), your current folks (Jane Maguire worked on this); you could invite Sylvia as a blast from her past; I think Dawn worked on this for WH Counsel; you could try Dick Morris, but he may not get past the WAVES clearance! Seriously, it was mostly Cab. Affairs, Leg. Affairs, and the agencies, including FEMA. Press folks are necessary, but not till you know what you want them to say.