

'Attacking the Churches is Just Unforgiveable'

By Askia Muhammad
Special to the NNPA from *The Final Call*

WASHINGTON—Black churches, the symbol of sanctuary for tortured Black souls, especially in the Southern United States; once the headquarters of the Black liberation movement; are once again under attack in the South.

And as in decades past when similar rashes of mysterious fires torched them, white authorities—who are suspected in the minds of many to be in collusion with the race-hating arsonists—are dismissing the likelihood of a racist conspiracy.

Since June 17, the night a white supremacist and Confederate sympathizer calmly murdered nine parishioners in Charleston, South Carolina's Mother Emmanuel AME Church during a Bible study meeting eight Black churches have gone up in flames.

Mount Zion AME Church in Greeleyville, S.C., 60 miles northwest of Charleston was the most recent. Authorities say they don't believe that fire was intentionally set, although the same church was burned to the ground by the Ku Klux Klan 20 years ago.

Glover Grove Baptist Church in Warrenville, S.C. was burned on June 26. The cause of that blaze is still undetermined, as is the cause of the fire at The Greater Miracle Apostolic Holiness Church in Tallahassee, Fla., also on June 26. Ironically, for two months before the blaze in Tallahassee, the marquee in front of the Greater Miracle Church announcing an ongoing revival service inside read: "Call 911. This church is on fire!"

The cause of the fire which destroyed College Heights Baptist Church in Elyria, Ohio on June 25 has not yet been determined.

The Briar Creek Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. was completely destroyed by fire on June 24 in a case authorities believe to be deliberate arson. That same day, Fruitland Presbyterian Church in Gibson County, Tennessee was burned in an incident which is under investigation, but which is believed to have been started by lightning.

God's Power Church of Christ in Macon, Georgia went up in flames on June 23. Authorities believe arson may be the cause of that fire.

College Hill Seventh Day Adventist Church in Knoxville, Tenn. caught on fire June 22. Authorities suspect arson.



Elisha Walker, 9, and his mother Bonita Walker look at the charred remains of the back left wing of Briar Creek Road Baptist Church, June 24 in Charlotte, N.C. They are members of the church and Elisha had been attending summer camp since school ended for the summer. Investigators with the Charlotte Fire Department say a fire at the predominantly Black church is a case of arson.

In all authorities suspect three cases are clear cases of arson, the cause of five other church fires have not been determined.

"These burnings are reminiscent of what I went through as a child, and my grandparents and parents both talked about it at the table, not to me, but I could overhear them," Charles Ogletree, director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute of Race & Policy, and professor of law at Harvard University told *The Final Call*. "And here it is again, the 21st Century.

The Rev. Dr. Major L. Jemison is immediate past president of the Progressive Baptist Convention. He told *The Final Call* he is also shocked at the rash of church burnings. "I am a byproduct of the Civil Rights movement, of course what we're looking at from a racial standpoint is far worse than anything that my parents experienced, and I experienced as a child.

Read the rest online at www.theskanner.com



Blessings



The Grotto will host the annual Blessing of the Animals at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 19 at the Grotto Plaza. Individuals of all faiths are invited to bring their companion animals, properly restrained, to The Grotto for a Blessing. All are welcome at this free event.

N/NE Business Association to Host Clergy Networking Breakfast

The North/Northeast Business Association will host a clergy networking breakfast from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. July 23 at 311 N. Ivy in Portland in advance of the MLK Dream Run in August. The event will include networking and social time, remarks from NNEBA Board Chair Joice Taylor and NNEBA Board VP John Washington. The event will be facilitated by Dr. Cynthia Harris. For more information, contact (503) 841-5032 or visit WWW.NNEBAportland.org or WWW.MLKDreamrun.org.

St. Philip the Deacon Church to Host Summer Party

St. Philip the Deacon Episcopal Church, situated at 120 NE Knott St., will hold its annual summer party and lasagna/spaghetti dinner from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, July 18.

The event will include music from the Carroll Raaum Swing Orchestra as well as dinner.

Tickets for the event are \$15 for adults and \$5 for children.

For more information, contact (503) 281-5802 or visit www.stphilipthedeacon.org.

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