

Church burnings on the rise internationally and here, too

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By [Randy W. Bright](#)

Last week the topic of my article regarded the church burnings that were taking place at the hands of Muslims in Africa and the Middle East, and ironically a few days later, I noticed an article entitled First Baptist Church of Temple Rises from Ashes on the www.worshipfacilities.com website.

The Temple, Texas church's sanctuary, offices, classrooms and music rooms had been destroyed by an arsonist, and damages had been estimated at \$15 million. It was one of at least 11 churches that had been destroyed by what authorities suspected to be a serial arsonist between January 1, 2010, and February 8 of the same year – all of which were in the general vicinity of an area 50 miles southeast of Dallas.

Little Hope Baptist in Canton was burned on January 1, as well as Faith Church in Athens on the same day. On January 12, Grace Community Church in Athens and the Lake Athens Baptist church were burned.

Tyland Baptist Church in Tyler was burned on January 16, and the following day the First Church of Christ Scientist was burned.

On January 20, the Prairie Creek Fellowship Church in Lindale was burned, then two weeks later the Russell Memorial United Methodist Church in Wills Point was burned.

Finally, the Dover Baptist Church in Carroll and the Clear Springs Missionary Baptist Church in Lindale were burned.

Fortunately, there were no deaths or injuries reported from any of the fires. Soon after the fires, two young men were arrested, charged and held on a \$10 million bond. Jason Robert Bourque, 19, who resided in Lindale, and Daniel George McAllister, 21, from Ben Wheeler, were charged with a first-degree felony. McAllister received 5 life sentences, and must serve a minimum of 15 years. Bourque received 10 life sentences and must serve a minimum of 20 years.

Both of the young men had been raised in Christian homes, but at some point became disillusioned with their faith and became involved in Satanism. At the church burnings, they had placed upside down crosses.

According to the National Coalition of Burned Churches, 1,507 churches in America were burned between 1990 and 2000. An additional 600 were burned between 2000 and 2006. The highest percentage of the burnings occurred in Florida, Alabama, and South Carolina.

The burnings in Texas became one of the largest criminal investigations in Texas, including 75 federal agents, 30 Texas Rangers and 50 Department of Public Safety investigators. Over a

hundred state troopers, in addition to many volunteers, set up patrols and watches to protect area churches.

DNA, forensic evidence and tips led to their arrests and convictions.

The good news that came out of the Temple, Texas fire is that the church, which had been in decline prior to the fire, was revived. The fire actually pulled the people of the church together, and the church experienced growth. Instead of rebuilding at the site of the fire, they chose to build new facilities on land that they had purchased prior to the fire with the intention of planting a satellite church.

According to Doug Young, the church's Minister of Education and Administration, "(Moving to the new property) would be our best chance to reach families, unchurched folks, people that needed to know the Lord. We felt like we had a better opportunity to reach them there than in the downtown area."

In the Middle East and Africa, recent church burnings and murders of Christians were done by Muslims venting their hatred toward Christians and the West over satirical writings about Muhammad. To my knowledge, there have been no church burnings in the United States by Muslims.

However, burning a church is an act of hatred, even if, as in the Alabama case, it was "done as a joke." It is an expression of evil in the ultimate act of rejection of not only God, but of the people who love him. So far society still views it as a heinous hate crime, but when it becomes a non-event or even acceptable (as in the Middle East) then a society has crossed the line of no return.



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