



NATIONAL CHURCH ARSON TASK FORCE



FEDERAL HATE CRIME CONVICTIONS FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST HOUSES OF WORSHIP REPORTED SINCE JANUARY 1995 (AS OF OCTOBER 5, 1999)

ARSONS AND BOMBINGS

ALABAMA

- Greater Saint Joseph Baptist Church (Baldwin) (Southern District)**
- Tate Chapel AME Church (Baldwin) (Southern District)** - On the night of June 30, 1997, there was an arson at the Greater Saint Joseph Baptist Church and an attempted arson at the nearby Tate Chapel AME Church. Both congregations were African American. The Greater Saint Joseph Baptist Church was totally destroyed by the fire. Regarding the arson at the Greater Saint Joseph Baptist Church, two 18-year-old Caucasian adults, one male and one female, were found guilty by a jury (in November 1997) of violating 18 U.S.C. ' 371 (conspiracy to commit an arson). These two defendants were sentenced to 41 months of imprisonment and ordered to perform 300 hours of community service. Another 18-year-old Caucasian male was found guilty (in November 1997) of violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(h)(i). He was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment. The fourth defendant, an 18-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty (in October 1997) to violations of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and 18 U.S.C. ' 247 (Damage to religious property; obstruction of persons in the free exercise of religious beliefs). He was sentenced to 60 months of imprisonment, three years of supervised release, and 300 hours of community service. He was ordered to pay restitution. Regarding the attempted arson at Tate Chapel, a 19-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty (in October 1997) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). He was sentenced to 46 months of imprisonment, three years of supervised release, and 300 hours of community service. He was ordered to pay \$100 in restitution. One of the 18-year-old Caucasian males found guilty in the arson of the Greater Saint Joseph Baptist Church was also convicted (in November 1997) of violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) in connection with the Tate Chapel AME church. All of the co-defendants were ordered to jointly pay \$96,846 in restitution. Some of the defendants attended a Ku Klux Klan rally two days before the arsons. One yelled a racial epithet at the time of the arson.
- Born Again Church of Christ (Heflin) (Northern District)** - On November 14, 1996, a cross was burned at this African American church. Gasoline was poured onto two wooden beams arranged in the shape of a cross and then ignited at the front doorway of the church. Three Caucasian defendants, ages 26, 22, and 18, pled guilty in federal court (in April and May 1997) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 241 (Conspiracy against rights). They were sentenced to 18 months, 15 months, and 24 months of imprisonment respectively. In addition, all were sentenced to three years supervised release, fined \$500, and ordered to pay restitution of \$2,145.

ARKANSAS

4. **Universal Church of God (Shirley) (Eastern District)** - In May 1995, the Christian Day School operated by the Universal Church of God, which hosts a racially mixed congregation, was burned. One defendant, a 25-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court (in August 1998) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241. A second defendant, a 24-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty (in October 1998) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(h)(1) and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241. A third defendant, a 22-year-old Caucasian female, pled guilty (in October 1998) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241. The three were ordered to terms of incarceration ranging from 30 to 97 months in prison.

LOUISIANA

5. **Cypress Grove Baptist Church (Zachary) (Middle District)**
6. **Saint Paul=s Free Baptist Church (Baker)(Middle District)**
7. **Sweet Home Baptist Church (Baker) (Middle District)**
8. **Saint Thomas Chapel Benevolent Society (Baker) (Middle District)** - On February 1, 1996, these African American churches were burned. The arsonists brought tires and gasoline to the churches. In one church, the fire was started by a molotov cocktail, in another church, by stacking tires and then setting them on fire, and in the last two instances gas was thrown into the churches and ignited. One defendant, a 25-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court (in July 1997) to 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and was sentenced to 48 months of imprisonment.

NEVADA

9. **Church of Christ (Henderson)** - On September 19, 1996, the siding on this African American church was burned. The defendant, a 23-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court (in December 1996) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247(c). He confessed to using a lighter to ignite a fire. Witnesses stated that he attempted to burglarize the church, but failed. After the failed burglary, he stated he should burn the church because its members were African American. He was sentenced to 63 months of imprisonment and three years of supervised probation. He was also ordered to pay \$1,619 in restitution.

NEW MEXICO

10. **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Roswell)** - On June 28, 1998, this Caucasian church was burned, causing 2.5 million dollars in damage. In the two months leading to this fire, a series of vandalisms occurred at three other Latter Day Saints churches in Alamogordo, Artesia and Alto, New Mexico, along with the arson of a truck used in interstate commerce. The vandalism included destruction of musical instruments, pews, doors and walls resulting in damage in excess of \$150,000. A 48-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty in federal court (in March 1999) to violating seven counts of 18 U.S.C. ' 247(a)(1), two counts of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i), and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(h)(1). The defendant was sentenced to 15 years in prison to be followed by three years supervised release.

NORTH CAROLINA

11. Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (Maysville) (Eastern District) - On June 30, 1996, this African American church was burned. Seven molotov cocktails were thrown at and into the church and a petroleum product was poured around the church foundation. The damage estimate was \$50,000. Three Caucasian males pled guilty (in May 1997) to various federal charges. One of the defendants said they burned the church after hearing news reports about church burnings. One defendant, a 19-year-old male, pled guilty to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and ' 844(h). He was sentenced to 30 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and ordered to pay restitution. Two of the juveniles pled guilty to 18 U.S.C. ' ' 371, 844(i), 844(h), and 924(c)(1). They each received 18 months of imprisonment. A third juvenile was granted pre-trial diversion.

SOUTH CAROLINA

12. Mount Zion A.M.E. Church (Greeleyville)

13. Macedonia Baptist Church (Manning) - On June 20 and 21, 1995, respectively, these two African American churches were burned. Four Caucasian ex-members of the Ku Klux Klan pled guilty (two defendants in August 1996 and two in December 1996) to federal charges relating to these arsons. Three of the defendants, ages 23, 24, and 52, received 168 months, 144 months, and 258 months of imprisonment, respectively, for violations of 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(h). The fourth defendant, age 51, also pled guilty to violations of 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(h). He received 180 months of imprisonment and five years of supervised release probation for the arson of Macedonia Baptist Church.

TENNESSEE

14. Church of God of Prophecy (Dyersburg) (Western District) - On July 22, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The defendant, a 20-year-old African American male, pled guilty in federal court (in November 1996) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247(c). He said that he wanted to start a race war and that he was acting at the direction of Satan. The defendant was sentenced to 60 months in prison.

15. Church of the Nativity (Bartlett) (Western District) - On June 29, 1996, this Caucasian church was burned. The church suffered \$10,000 in damage to the altar area. The defendant, a 46-year-old Caucasian pastor, admitted setting the fire. He used a match to ignite curtains behind the altar. The defendant pled guilty in federal court (in March 1998) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247. He was admitted into a rehabilitation clinic. He was sentenced to 33 months imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and ordered to pay \$27,952 in restitution.

16. **Canaan A.M.E. Church (Maury County) (Middle District)**

17. **Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (Maury County) (Middle District)** - On January 29, 1995, these African American churches were firebombed. Three Caucasian defendants, 33, 35, and 43, pled guilty in federal court (in October 1995) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 241. One defendant was sentenced to 57 months in prison while the other two defendants were sentenced to 46 months in prison.

TEXAS

18. **Gainesville Church of Christ (Harrison County) (Eastern District)** - On May 8, 1998, this African American church was burned. A 20-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty in federal court (in July 1998) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 247(c) and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). A 29-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty (in August 1998) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 247(c) and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). A 15-year-old juvenile male also pled guilty (in August 1998) to 18 U.S.C. ' 5032 to violate 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) in connection with this matter. The two adult defendants were sentenced to 60 months in prison to be followed by three years supervised release, and were ordered to pay \$54,000 in restitution. The juvenile defendant was sentenced to 24 months probation with a condition that he must complete 14 months detention in a boot camp program.

19. **Freedom Fellowship Church (New Boston) (Northern District)** - On March 28, 1998, this African American church was burned. The defendant, a 31-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court (in September 1998) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). The defendant was sentenced to 60 months in prison to be followed by three years supervised release.

20. **Bethany Lutheran Church (Dallas) (Northern District)** - On March 5, 1998, this Caucasian church burned. Pentagrams, satanic symbols, racist and homophobic epithets were spray painted on the church and around the neighborhood. A 20-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty in federal court (in April 1998) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and 18 U.S.C. ' 247. He was sentenced to 33 months imprisonment and ordered to pay \$337,918 in restitution. A 19-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty (in April 1998) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). He was sentenced to 27 months imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and ordered to pay \$337,918 in restitution. Two juveniles are being prosecuted by the state.

21. Abiding Savior Lutheran Church (Corpus Christi) (Southern District)

22. McArdle Road Baptist Church (Corpus Christi) (Southern District) - On October 31, 1997, these Caucasian churches were burned. Four defendants were involved. A 24-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty in federal court (in April 1998) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 371, two counts of 18 U.S.C. ' 247, and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). He was sentenced to 71 months imprisonment and three years supervised release. A second 23-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty in federal court (in April 1998) to violating one count each of 18 U.S.C. ' 371, 18 U.S.C. ' 247, and 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). He was sentenced to 63 months imprisonment and three years supervised release. A 23-year-old Caucasian female pled guilty in federal court (in April 1998) to violating one count each of 18 U.S.C. ' 371 and 18 U.S.C. ' 247. She was sentenced to 63 months imprisonment and three years supervised release. They were held jointly liable for \$138,628 in restitution. A female juvenile defendant was convicted at trial (in November 1998) for violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 371 and two counts of 18 U.S.C. ' 247. She was sentenced to 51 months probation with the condition that she serve 12 months in a community corrections center. They were alleged to have Satanic motives for the arsons.

23. Harvest Baptist Church (Keller) (Northern District) - On August 27, 1997, the chapel of this Caucasian church was totally destroyed by fire. The damage estimate was \$150,000. The defendant, a 26-year-old Caucasian male, confessed to breaking a window, pouring diesel fuel, and striking a match. He said he decided to burn the church because he felt that the members of the congregation who attended services there were bothering his dog and creating parking and traffic problems along his street. He pled guilty in federal court (in November 1997) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247(a)(2). He was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release. He was also issued a \$100 special assessment and ordered to pay \$150,000 in restitution.

24. Macedonia Baptist Church (Ferris) (Northern District) - On March 22, 1997, this African American church was burned. Two Caucasian male defendants confessed to setting the fire using gasoline and a cigarette lighter. One defendant, 25, pled guilty in federal court (in May 1997) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and 18 U.S.C. ' 247(c). The other defendant, age 22, pled guilty (in May 1997) to violating 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i) and 18 U.S.C. ' 241. The 25-year-old defendant received 60 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$64,785 in restitution. The 22-year-old defendant received 70 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and was ordered to pay \$64,785 in restitution.

OTHER ACTS OF VIOLENCE

GEORGIA

25. **New Jerusalem African Methodist Episcopal Church (Ellenwood) (Northern District)** - On November 6, 1998, a Caucasian male made a threatening telephone call to this African American church. During the call he stated his intention to blow up the church. The defendant pled guilty in federal court (in April 1999) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(e). The defendant was sentenced to one year imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and was fined \$2,000.

IOWA

26. **Second Baptist Church (Fort Dodge) (Northern District)** - On August 15, 1993, a vandalism occurred and a cross was burned at this African American church. Two Caucasian male defendants in their 20s pled guilty in federal court (in November 1998) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 844(i). One defendant was sentenced to 102 months in prison while the other was sentenced to 41 months in prison.

KANSAS

27. **Beth-El B=Y=Shue Messianic Synagogue (Wichita)** - On June 6, 1998, threatening graffiti was spray painted on all sides of this synagogue. The four defendants who were involved were members of a self-described skinhead group. Two Caucasian males, ages 21 and 23, pled guilty in federal court (in March 1999) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247. A 22-year-old Caucasian male pled guilty (in March 1999) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241. The fourth defendant, a 19-year-old Caucasian male, was convicted in federal court (in March 1999) of violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241 and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247. The three defendants who pled guilty were sentenced to terms of house arrest, while the fourth defendant who was convicted was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

NORTH CAROLINA

28. **China Grove A.M.E. Zion Church (Charlotte) (Western District)**

29. **Flora Williams Ministries (Charlotte) (Western District)** - On April 3, 1996 and May 19, 1996, these African American churches received racially threatening messages on their telephone answering machines. Two Caucasian defendants, ages 22 and 21, pled guilty in federal court (in January 1997) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 241. The 22-year-old defendant was sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and was ordered to perform 100 hours of community service. The 21-year-old defendant was sentenced to 12 months of imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release, and was ordered to perform 100 hours of community service.

TEXAS

30. **Baruch Ha Shem (Dallas) (Northern District)** - On April 26, 1997, this Messianic Congregation building was damaged by gunfire and members were threatened with gunfire. The defendant, a 48-year-old Caucasian male, was yelling anti-semitic epithets as he fired the automatic weapon. He pled guilty (in January 1998) to violating one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 247(a)(2) and one count of violating 18 U.S.C. ' 924(c). He was sentenced to 147 months imprisonment and three years supervised release.

TENNESSEE

31. **Parkers Chapel (Memphis) (Western District)** - On August 5, 1996, this African American church was damaged by two gun shots. Three defendants, including two juveniles, were involved. One defendant, a 19-year-old Caucasian male, pled guilty in federal court (in October 1996) to one count of a federal firearms violation, 18 U.S.C. ' 922(j) (Unlawful acts), and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 922(x)(1). He was sentenced to six months in prison to be followed by six months home detention and two years supervised release. He was ordered to pay \$866 in restitution. A juvenile Caucasian male pled guilty (in October 1996) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 922(x)(2). He was sentenced to serve the remainder of his state sentence in addition to one year federal probation. The other juvenile Caucasian male pled guilty (in October 1996) to one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 922(j) and one count of 18 U.S.C. ' 922(x)(2). He has been sentenced to six months home detention and two years probation. He was ordered to pay \$866 in restitution.