



Johnson County Fire Protection District

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NEWS RELEASE – Friday, July 5, 2024

Renewed Effort to Solve Cold Case Church Arson

JOHNSON COUNTY, MO – The Johnson County Fire Protection District and Missouri State Fire Marshal have partnered in a renewed effort to solve the July 5, 2020 arson of the Harmony Baptist Church in rural Leeton. A video featuring Fire Chief Larry Jennings and Missouri State Fire Marshal Tim Bean, filmed at the former site of the church, has been posted online sharing information and suspect photographs pleading for anyone with information to come forward.

Missouri's statute of limitations for Arson in the Second Degree is five years and today's fourth anniversary of the fire leaves only one year to bring the arsonist to justice.

The Fire District responded to the Harmony Baptist Church late on Sunday, July 5, 2020 after a neighbor observed the over 100-year-old church on fire. Crews arrived to find the church engulfed in flames and spent the next two hours bringing the fire under control.

The Missouri State Fire Marshal and Johnson County Fire Investigation Unit investigated the origin and cause of the fire and determined the fire was intentionally set. Further investigation found security camera video recovered from inside of the church showing a male setting the church ablaze where investigators had determined the fire originated.

"This fire was devastating for members of our community," said Fire Chief Larry Jennings. "Seeing the baron ground today where the church welcomed members for over 100 years is still despairing. Someone out there knows something. Someone can identify the male in the photographs. We need to bring this person to justice. This community needs closure."

Anyone with information about this arson should contact the Missouri Arson Hotline at 1-800-39-ARSON (1-800-392-7766). Award money is available for information leading to an arrest.

The new video may be viewed on the District's Facebook at www.facebook.com/johnsoncountypd or on the District's Vimeo at www.vimeo.com/973711539.

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For more information contact:

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