



JOINT NEWS RELEASE – Monday, September 9, 2024

Arrest Made in Harmony Baptist Church Arson

JOHNSON COUNTY, MO – Johnson County Prosecuting Attorney Robert W. Russell has filed charges against a male accused of burning rural Leeton’s Harmony Baptist Church to the ground in July 2020. Scott Gregory Taylor, 36, of Raymore was charged Tuesday, September 3, 2024, with Arson in the Second Degree, a Class D Felony. Taylor was arrested today by Kansas City, MO Police and is currently held on a \$25,000 cash bond in Jackson County.

The arrest stems from more than four years of investigating by the Missouri Division of Fire Safety with assistance from the Johnson County Fire Investigation Unit and Johnson County Fire Protection District.

“This case is an exceptional example of tireless investigative work and outstanding interagency collaboration throughout an investigation that spanned more than four years,” Missouri State Fire Marshal Tim Bean said. “We thank our Division of Fire Safety’s Fire Investigation/Explosives Enforcement Unit, Johnson County Fire District, and the Johnson County Fire Investigation Unit for their unrelenting dedication and professionalism.”

The Johnson County Fire Protection 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. The church was not able to be saved and has since been closed and demolished.

The origin and cause investigation of the fire determined the fire was intentionally set. Further investigation found security camera video recovered from the church showing a male setting the church ablaze where investigators had determined the fire originated.

On July 5, 2024, the Fire District and Missouri State Fire Marshal partnered to announce a renewed effort to solve the arson case and pleaded for anyone with information about the fire to come forward. Additional investigative information was obtained as part of this effort.

“A loss of a landmark and place of worship is always difficult for a small community and this fire had a deep impact on the area,” said Fire Chief Larry Jennings. “We are pleased to see an arrest has been made concerning this heartbreaking fire. It has taken years to reach this point and support from the community was vital. We appreciate the assistance received from community members and encourage anyone else who may have additional information to contact the Missouri Arson Hotline at 1-800-39-ARSON (1-800-392-7766).”

The above charges are mere accusation and not evidence of guilt. Evidence in support of the charges must be presented before a court of competent jurisdiction whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

<Photograph Included>

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Scott G. Taylor
Jackson County Detention Center