

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Jefferson County Police Department

Offense Arson II		Date of Report 07-03-00	Time of Report 1000 hours	Report Number 0-015794
Date of Offense 06-13-00	Time of Offense 0105 hours	Day of Week Tuesday	Location of Offense 5017 Bardstown Road	
Victim Heart of Fire Church		Race/Sex/Age NA	Address 5017 Bardstown Road	Phone Number NA

Interview

M. Michelle Cook

W/F/4-11-68

Phone [REDACTED]

I interviewed Mrs. Cook on 07-28-00 at approximately 1130 hours. Cook was an employee at the Heart of Fire Church until January 1999. She stated that she started attending the Church in February of 1997 and started working for the Church that summer as the Church Secretary for Pastor Dan Johnson and his wife Pastor Rebecca Johnson. She said her and Rebecca "fought about everything." She said she quit the Church in January 1999 just before the day care was to open because she was promised a specific salary to run the day care and Pastor Dan wanted to renege on the agreed upon salary. She said about fifteen others left the Church at about the same time. She said a man named Al Burk left the Church about a month before the fire. Apparently Burk gave a lot of money to the Church and began to question its uses. Pastor Dan felt that Burk was "defiant" and Burk decided to leave the congregation.

Cook said there was an ongoing misappropriation of funds occurring at the Church. She said one of her duties at work was to deal with the contractors while the new addition was being constructed and that Pastor Dan would not pay the contractors as he was supposed to. He also got Cook to lie to them about payment and would hide from them and collectors. The Pastor also submitted plans for the Church addition that did not include a day care. He had planned all along to build a day care and changed the plans himself at the last minute to avoid all the code enforcement hassles with building a day care. I asked why the Pastor got a firm in Texas to do the contracting for the new addition. She said the Pastor met Doug Smith while on vacation in Mobile, Alabama, and had him come up and submit a bid for the job. During the job Doug Smith Construction would send the bills to Cook at the Heart of Fire Church. The bill would go to the Pastor, who would fax it to Alanar Mortgage Company. Alanar would overnight the check to the Pastor and it would be deposited in their personal bank account. The Pastor would then meet with the company that completed the work and talk them into dropping the price of the bill. The Pastor would then give a check for the lesser amount and make a little money from the transaction.

Cook said there was a school operating on the premises before the new construction began in February 1998. She said the school was made up of the Pastor's children and one other child. Cook said the school was in the old house on the property and it was a sham because they were not teaching the kids anything. Cook said the Pastor decided to burn the house when the new construction was planned because it was cheaper to burn the debris rather than have it hauled away. Pastor Dan told Cook to buy hot dogs and marshmallows before he set the fire so it would look like they were having a bonfire when the fire department showed up. Cook said she witnessed the Pastor pouring kerosene out of metal cans onto the house to spread the fire. She said the Fern Creek Fire Department responded to the scene and monitored the blaze for a while, then put the fire out.

Cook said when she first heard about the fire she suspected that Pastor Johnson had started it. However, Cook said the motive was unclear to her since it appeared that the Church was underinsured. She said there might have been other motives other than financial for Pastor Dan to burn the Church.

Respectfully Submitted



Detective Jeff Richardson
Arson Unit

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Interview

Michelle Cook
W/F/4-11-68



On 09-07-00 I interviewed Michelle Cook and her husband Andy Cook at their home at 306 Chieftain Drive in Fairdale, Kentucky. Michelle stated that she had no knowledge of Joanna Gorman or Lynn Bakhtiari. She also said she was not involved in the bingo operation. Andy Cook said that he was finding out about how to set up the bingo before he and his wife left the Church. This was while the new construction project was taking place. Andy said they did not have enough of a congregation to supply the volunteer workers so they dropped the idea. The Cooks left the Church shortly thereafter.

During our conversation Michelle informed me that Tena Carr, the day care administrator had the credentials for the job but did not really know what she was doing. Michelle said she was actually setting up the day care and was more of an actual administrator than Carr. Michelle said after she left the Church, a black woman named Evelyn took over her job for about three weeks, and then quit. Another black woman named Michelle took Evelyn's place and Cook had no knowledge of what transpired after that.

I also talked to Cook again about how the contractors were paid. She said the individual contractors, for example the painters and electricians would submit their bills to the Church. The Church would then send the bills to Alanar and Alanar would overnight a check to Pastor Johnson's residence. He would deposit the check into his personal account and would then write a check to the contractor. She said she did not know how the payee was listed on the check; whether or not it was made out to Heart of Fire Church and Boland-Maloney for example, or just to the Church.

At the conclusion of the interview Cook gave me two documents she had in her possession. One was a mailing list and the other was a tax exemption letter issued in 1988.

Respectfully Submitted

Detective Jeff Richardson
Arson Unit