

Ohio Investigators Rule 4 Church Fires Arson as US Violence Against Churches on the Rise

A string of rural Ohio church fires has left both parishioners and investigators with many questions and few answers.

“We haven’t had...a graffiti situation, we haven’t had anything left at the scene that would say that there’s hatred toward the Church, or hatred towards God. We don’t have any of those factors,” said Josh Hobbs, Chief of the Ohio Fire Marshal’s Fire and Explosion Investigation Bureau.

Hobbs tells CBN News they are now confident these are all acts of arson and were likely committed by the same person or group of people.

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“So a couple of these churches, perhaps, were unoccupied at the time of the fire and had no electric service...so we knew there was a human act involved. And then when you have other fires in that area, you know, you start putting two and two together...you have a pattern,” Hobbs explained.

The first fire happened at Kokeen Enterprise Baptist in April of 2022. Then nothing for two years, until May, July, and August of this year, when three more churches were set on fire, all in close proximity to the first.

“The timing and geography of these fires, the type of churches, all those things, they’re all very similar in appearance, very similar in nature, where they’re at, the

desolate nature of the churches. You know, when you look at the map, although it's kind of in the middle of nowhere, they almost make a little triangle," said Chief Hobbs.

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Churches in America are experiencing record levels of violence and hostility. A Family Research Council Report shows incidents have more than doubled since 2022, with a majority reported as vandalism or arson.

Hobbs says, that with such a high threat level, awareness of what's happening around your building is key.

"Now, in 2024, the ability to have some surveillance, some sort of surveillance equipment is...whether it's just a Ring type camera...if you have something on the front, the back, you know, you'd be amazed what they catch," Hobbs said.

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