

‘The Basement’ Youth Pastor Jumps Off 45-Foot Cliff Fleeing Police

A youth pastor jumped off a 45-foot cliff while running from police during an arrest in Birmingham, Ala. Matt Pitt, the 30-year-old founder of The Basement, remains in jail with a bond set at \$15,000, according to authorities.

Pitt was arrested Tuesday night after completing an interview with a local TV station, according to , and was wanted on felony charges of impersonating a peace officer. When Birmingham police arrived on the scene, he fled on foot and ran up Red Mountain.

Pitt alleges he was falsely accused. He claims Chief Deputy Randy Christian was not honest when he claimed the police department did not issue Pitt an ID or badge and that even though he pleaded guilty he was innocent.

“I did not pretend to be anything. They made me an officer. I have a badge,” Pitt said in a WVTM-TV interview.

He claims the false accusation stems from politics.

“Mr. Pitt continued to run to the edge of a cliff southeast of Vulcan and jumped to the ground below (approximately 45 feet) onto 20th Street,” Birmingham police spokesman Sgt. Johnny Williams Jr. told . “BPD officers and JCSO deputies were at the base of the cliff and observed him climb from a ditch after his jump.”

Pitt is in jail without bond. This isn’t the first time he’s been in trouble. The youth pastor pleaded guilty to attempting to impersonate a police officer in 2012, and a judge gave him a 12-month suspended sentence. Pitt was charged with obeying

all laws while serving out two years of unsupervised probation. But he violated probation by once again allegedly impersonating an officer in June.

“He is lucky that cliff didn’t take his life,” Christian told . “For his family’s sake and for his I am truly glad he is OK. As I said before, going to jail may very well have saved his life.”

The Basement is a fast-growing youth movement, and Pitt is noted as one of the country’s hottest youth ministers. After starting the ministry in his basement in 2004, Pitt eventually busted into a 700-seat sanctuary at Cathedral of the Cross in 2007. He outgrew that venue and moved to Church of the Highlands in 2009, which seats 4,000. He also moved on from there.

After hopping around from place to place, some have characterized Pitt as a “Lone Ranger.” Nevertheless, The Basement’s free monthly events attract as many as 7,000 in larger venues.

Pitt was obviously not available for comment. His last Facebook post on Aug. 20, the day he got arrested, read, “Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7.”