

News Release



Joel D. Scharf
Chief of Police

121 Lake Street North, Big Lake MN, 55309

Incident Number: 12-003873

Date/Time: 08/24/2012 3:00 p.m.

Charges Filed in Saron Church Vandalism

On 08/01/2012 Big Lake Police Officers responded to a reported burglary at the Saron Lutheran Church located at 311 Lake Street South. On their arrival it was discovered that unknown person(s) had entered the church causing an extensive amount of damage, in addition to removing several items. Present within the church at the time this occurred were items donated for a community sale, from which proceeds are used to benefit church youth. This sale has historically generated about \$18,000.

Juvenile Petitions were signed today for three juveniles for the burglary and damage to property at the Saron Church, they include: two 15 year old juvenile males from the City of Big Lake, and a 16 year old juvenile male from the City of Monticello. Due to Minnesota Data Practices Restrictions, their identities are not public information. Charges in the Petitions include: Burglary in the Second Degree (felony) and Criminal Damage to Property in the First Degree (felony).

An Investigator from the Big Lake Police Department determined through interviews that the suspects entered the church through a door they found unsecured. The suspects removed 3 bicycles, and several other items from the church. The suspects then utilized three fire extinguishers on site to spray their contents throughout the church building. The entire church sanctuary and adjacent building were covered with the fire suppressant powder, which is a hazardous substance. Suspects also sprayed contents directly into an organ, piano, and several electronic components.

The items donated for the sale had to be disposed of, the estimated clean up cost for this incident is approximately \$129,000.



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