



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Church Arsonist Sentenced to 40 Years in Prison

Prosecutor: "His actions won't soon be forgotten by this community"

(Fort Worth, TX) – Thomas Britton has been found guilty of Arson and Criminal Mischief \geq \$300,000 for his destructive January 2017 rampage at the St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Fort Worth.

In the early morning hours of January 8, 2017, Britton broke into the century-old church's education building, where among other resources, the church school is located. Over the next several hours, he destroyed more than \$784,000 worth of property, including breaking decades-old stained glass windows and setting 5 fires.

"This was not just criminal mischief. This was historic criminal mischief," said prosecutor Vincent Giardino. "The police officers on the scene that morning, and even his own defense attorney, said they'd never seen anything like it. His goal was not just to damage this church, but to obliterate it. And he has no remorse for it."

The damage was discovered later that morning when a parishioner arrived to check on the heating unit, which was damaged during Britton's attack. Britton was identified and turned into police after surveillance video from inside the church was released to the public. His DNA was also located in multiple locations around the building.

Britton alternated between claiming not to have been at the church that night, to claiming he had been there on a secret national security mission to meet a potential terrorist. He left graffiti at the scene hoping to convince the police that a group such as ISIS had been involved in the destruction.

The jury of 12 Tarrant County residents sent a very clear message about Britton's actions, returning a guilty verdict in only 5 minutes, and then sentencing the 56-year-old to 40 years in prison.

"This historic church is a living record of the ongoing circle of life in Fort Worth: babies are baptized there, children attend school, weddings are performed, and ancestors are buried on the grounds," said prosecutor Theresa Austin. "Thomas Britton violated this place of sanctuary, and his actions won't soon be forgotten by this community."

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