

NEWS RELEASE
STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MISSISSIPPI CHURCH BURNINGS CONTINUE

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI - Another church burning in Mississippi on July 23 brings to 12 the total known burned or bombed, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) announced this week.

The most recent attack on a church came July 23 in Amite County, where two other churches burned to the ground last week. The Rose Hill Baptist Church burned July 23, and the Mount Vernon Baptist Church, five miles away, burned to the ground July 21. The Zion Hill Baptist Church, four miles from the July 21 fire, was destroyed by fire July 17. Neither church had been used for civil rights activity.

The Christian Union Baptist Church in Madison County burned on July 19.

Two other burnings occurred in Kingston, near Natchez, on July 13, completely destroying the Jerusalem Baptist Church and the Bethel Methodist Church. Adams County Sheriff O'Dell Sanders said the midnight blazes were definitely arson.

Only two days before the Natchez fires, the Pleasant Plain Missionary Baptist Church in Browning near Greenwood was burned. SNCC workers said local policemen and firemen watched while the concrete building burned to the ground. They said local whites had tried to buy the Browning church, but had been told it was not for sale.

The other attacks were:

June 15, the recreation hall of the Rosary Catholic Mission in Hattiesburg was burned. SNCC has been conducting a voter registration drive in Hattiesburg for more than a year.

June 16, in Philadelphia, the Mount Zion Methodist Church was burned to the ground. A week before the burning, whites had attacked Negroes leaving evening services at the church. Three rights workers, missing since June 21, had come to inspect the ruins of this building the day they were last seen alive.

June 21, the Sweet Rest Church of Christ (Holiness) in Brandon was damaged by a fire bomb. Williams Chapel Church in Ruleville, used as a meeting place for voter registration, was damaged by a bomb that same day.

June 26, a church in Clinton, near Jackson, was set on fire. SNCC workers said the arsonist probably believed the church's white minister had been involved in civil rights activity.

The Knights of Pythias Hall in Moss Point was firebombed on June 23. The building had been used for civil rights activity.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has been conducting voter registration drives in Mississippi since 1961. The anti-segregation group has established its national headquarters here in Greenwood for the summer months.