

Pastor believes Tahoe church vandalism based on Satanism



Washoe County inmates clean the graffiti off the church.
Photo/Provided

By Scott Sonner, AP

The minister of one of several churches hit by a string of vandalism on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe says they appear to be satanic attacks by an individual who is “very angry with Jesus.”

“I’ve seen nothing that would give a hint it was socially or politically motivated,” said the Rev. Jeffrey Ogden, Presbyterian pastor at Village Church in Incline Village.

“Everything that has been posted, the satanic symbols on the front doors of all the churches – it was satanic,” he told the Associated Press on Friday. “It was anti-Christian, anti-Jesus – more theologically motivated. This is a Satanist who is opposed to Jesus.”

The FBI is offering a reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of anyone responsible for the incidents, which began with graffiti at five Tahoe-area churches in April on Easter Sunday and continued in August.

The FBI has declined formal comment on the investigation, but Ogden said agents have told him they are “looking at this as a potential hate crime.”

Last weekend, someone tried to saw down a wooden cross in front of Ogden’s church. They returned Tuesday night or early Wednesday and tried unsuccessfully again to bring the cross down at the Village Church, he said.

“This person seems to be very angry with Jesus, and the church,” Ogden said.

Some of the graffiti included, “Jesus has already lost,” and “Jesus won’t save your souls,” he said.

“So far from everything I’ve heard, it appears to be an individual,” Ogden said. “It does not appear to be rationale to me. Obviously the person seems to have a lot of anger inside them.”

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church also was hit a second time late last Saturday night. The considerable damage there included broken windows and equipment, Washoe County sheriff’s Lt. Jeff Clark said.

St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church also was vandalized again on Aug. 7, when someone painted graffiti on the building and a car parked on church property.

Ogden said it’s clear the vandal is not targeting a specific denomination.

“One church that was hit was one of the more liberal in the community. The Catholic church and ours – we are more conservative in our theology. They are not making distinctions based on our social or political views,” he said.

Several members of the churches attended a prayer gathering Monday night at Cornerstone Community Church to show support for each other.

“It has been a blessing to be able to gather together as people, not focused on traditions or theologies, but coming together to say we support one another as community members,” Ogden said.

“It doesn’t mean that as Christians we don’t have some differences – some pretty profound differences on some things. But when something like this happens, those are not as important. Love is more important, truth is more important, standing together is more important.”