

Hills church victimized by vandalism

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

Vandals caused about \$25,000 in damage to a Farmington Hills church Monday.

Police plan to file Oakland County Probate Court petitions charging two juveniles, ages 10 and 11, with breaking and entering, said Sgt. Charles Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

The vandalism occurred between 4-8 p.m. Monday at Hope Lutheran Church, 39200 12 Mile. It was the worst act of vandalism at the church, which celebrated its ninth anniversary in Farmington Hills Jan. 19.

"Initial cleanup should be done to-

day," the Rev. Victor Mesenbring said Tuesday afternoon. "There was glass all over the place. But we'll be able to worship Sunday. We'll put the church back together."

Nebus credited Patrolman William Maffeioli with apprehending the suspects. "He saw a suspicious person walking down 12 Mile with other officers were at the church," Nebus said. "When the person ran, he and detective David Lee followed footprints in the snow to a house about a quarter of a mile away."

THERE, POLICE recovered a tape recorder, speakers, a stereo receiver and a VCR belonging to the church, Nebus said.

The toll from the church vandalism was heavy.

In the sanctuary, several windows were smashed, including a leaded glass window made by a church-goer. At least one fire extinguisher was emptied. "We'll have to wash everything in the sanctuary. It was pretty messy," Mesenbring said.

Windows on three outside doors and two sets of double doors going into the sanctuary were smashed. Hammer marks were on the doors and hammer punctures were in nearby walls. Books

and chairs were strewn throughout the sanctuary.

Also in the sanctuary, a piano was badly damaged. In the office, the glass top on an electronic stencil scanner was smashed and hammer marks were on the control panels. In the foyer, a hanging cross was broken.

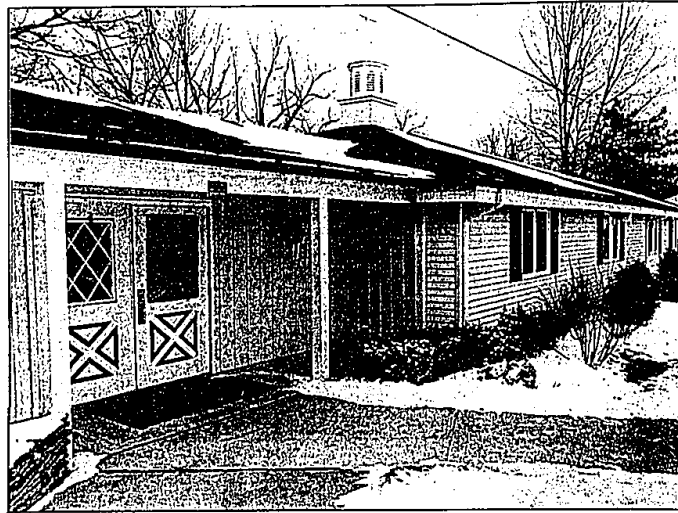
RADIOS AND appliances also were damaged. "Some were salvageable, others weren't," Mesenbring said.

Mesenbring discovered the break-in when he stopped at the church Monday evening to use the telephone.

"It was a blessing I was going by and saw the lights on, which isn't that unusual, and decided to make some telephone calls," Mesenbring said. "But when I came up to the door, I saw what had happened and called the police, who came quickly."

"Fortunately, there wasn't a lot of damage in the office," he added. "We may not be able to put out a bulletin for Sunday services. But we'll do verbal announcements."

Mesenbring said he found a candle burning in a foyer closet, where paper was strewn. Speculating that a fire could have broken out, Mesenbring said the vandalism "could have been much more disastrous."



RANDY BOBST/staff photographer

Monday's vandalism was the worst ever at Hope Lutheran Church, which marked its ninth anniversary in Farmington Hills Jan. 19.

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correction

A photo caption that appeared on Page 2 of the Observer Jan. 27 incorrectly identified the managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission.

The director's correct name is John Grubba.

The same mis-identification appeared in a quote block on Page 1.

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