

Heater to blame in Minneapolis Seventh-day Adventist Church fire

By **TIM HARLOW**, Star Tribune

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Cleanup is underway at a south Minneapolis church where a heater used to warm pipes apparently caused a fire Tuesday night that destroyed new equipment for the youth drum corps and other programs.

The fire destroyed drums, flags, uniforms and camping equipment bought in August for the drum corps and drill team of the Minneapolis First Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The church also lost supplies for the Pathfinders ministry used by children ages 4 through the teens, said the Rev. Maurice Battle, pastor of the 300-member congregation.

The fire was primarily contained to the equipment room, but caused an estimated \$50,000 in damage, said Sean McKenna, a spokesman for the Minneapolis police and arson squad.

Battle learned about the fire about 10:45 p.m. when a church leader called him at home to tell him the building at 2315 Nicollet Avenue S. was burning.

"He jokes around a lot and at first I didn't believe him," Battle said. "I drove to the church. I was shocked, stunned. This is not a fun thing."

Several members of the congregation stopped by the building the church has used for the past 2 1/2 years to see what they could do to help. Representatives from the church's insurance company were on site today cleaning up the mess so services can be held Saturday.

Sabbath School classes won't be held Saturday. The church also is temporarily suspending its ministry in which it supplies clothing to needy people, but other programs will continue, Battle said.

A preliminary investigation shows that a heater mounted to the ceiling caused a fire in nearby insulation and window trim. The church had recently installed the unit because pipes in the basement had been freezing. The heater had run continuously for the past three days, McKenna said.