

MCC San Francisco

At 2:46 A.M., July 27th, the alarm was sounded that M.C.C. San Francisco, at 1074 Guerrero Street, was burning. The shingled exterior with the Romanesque-Gothic styling and the hand-carved redwood interior of the east gable of the church were heavily damaged by water and fire. The steeple adjacent to the gable was the focal point of the arsonist's fire and was virtually destroyed. The 75-year old edifice survived the fire and earthquake of 1906, but yielded to the bonfire of prayer books in the sanctuary.

Those members who received the news Friday morning were numbed and visibly shaken that our church would be the target of the same hate that has ignited fires in Los Angeles, Nashville and New Orleans. The fire had now fused us into a common bond with our brothers and sisters who had been subjected to similar acts of violence. We were, however, spared the loss of life and personal property. The pattern of community spirit and cooperation took effect before the embers of the church had cooled. Resolute and determined not to be humbled into fear, not to reflect bitterness and hate toward those who trespassed against us, we prayed in God's spirit and love that Friday evening, especially for those who fired the church. By candlelight, in the ground floor social hall of the burned-out church, the members of M.C.C. and sisters and brothers throughout the community assembled as an expression of faith and solidarity — together united in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

"Upon the Solid Rock I Stand" and "I'm Not Afraid Anymore" reaffirmed that we would go on. The fire destroyed only an edifice and

not the spirit of God's children who are the true embodiment of the temple of the Lord. Christ dwells within each of us and is our source of strength against adversaries who would try to negate the privilege of communion with our Lord.

On Sunday, July 29th, M.C.C. San Francisco was "meeting as usual" at Mission United Presbyterian Church, who is the owner of our gutted church on Guerrero Street. Undeterred by Friday's fire, 556 worshipers assembled for Sunday evening services. Police security was notably present due to threats on Pastor Jim Sandmire's life; the threat had been hastily scrawled on the door of the burned-out church.

Among those present at the evening service, representing the Fellowship of M.C.C. churches, were the Reverend Troy Perry, our founder; Reverend Lee Carleton, Pastor, M.C.C. Los Angeles; and Jerry Small, Director of Metropolitan Community Temple. Further, it was noted that this was the largest turnout of politicians for any gay event. Notably present were Senator Milton Marks, Supervisors John Molinari and Dorothy von Beroldingen and Sheriff Richard Hongisto. Representatives from most of the gay organizations in San Francisco were present and unilaterally expressed their support.

Pastor Sandmire in an interview with CBS noted that one factor for

the joint backing of both the straights and gays was that M.C.C. San Francisco "was an effective voice for gay rights and a bridge for the straight and gay community, where we could meet on a common ground of our belief in God." Reverend Sandmire's sermon Sunday evening emphasized that "we are going to show by our love that we are true Christians, we are going to build, we are going forward."

M.C.C. San Francisco plans to raise \$50,000 for the purchase of or the building of a fire-proof church. Supervisor Diane Feinstein was the first to pledge \$100 toward the building fund. Dowager Empress Jose collected \$100 at a bar opera. Seventeen blind children contributed \$2.07. Telegrams from churches and individuals all over the United States expressed their concern, their support and their prayers.

We will build together; we have the victory. Truly, if they fear us enough to try to burn us out, we have overcome. We no longer know how to go underground. We are here to stay. To quote a poem by M.C.C. member Diane: "They burnt our steeple; they killed some of our people (in New Orleans). But they can not destroy the love in our soul."

PEACE.

Lynn Jordan

CHUCK & DAVE'S (see ad, page 10) is offering 10% of all sales upon mention of M.C.C. at time of purchase, to be set aside for the building fund. The offer is effective until 12/31/73.

Would you like to help M.C.C. toward its \$50,000 building fund goal? Send contributions to:

Metropolitan Community Church
1076 Guerrero Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94110
Attn: Treasurer/Building Fund