



LANCASTER CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

NEWS RELEASE

City of Lancaster
Bureau of Police, 39 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, Pa. 17603
www.lancasterpolice.com

Author: Sgt. Todd Umstead

Contact Number: 735-3300

Date: February 9, 2009

Arrest in Church Burglaries

As a result of an ongoing and joint investigation by the Lancaster City Police, Manheim Township Police, Manor Township Police, Millersville Borough Police and West Lampeter Township Police, numerous Burglary charges have been filed against the below individual:

Michael Scott WISSLER w/m/38
54 S. Franklin St.
Lancaster, PA

Since mid-October 2008, the above agencies investigated numerous burglaries of churches and businesses in their jurisdictions. It became apparent, based on methods of entry, the types of items stolen and other indicators, that these burglaries appeared to be related. Investigators and patrol officers from all departments spent countless hours and resources attempting to solve these crimes and identify the person or persons responsible.

On December 30th, 2008 a burglary occurred at St. El Redentor United Methodist Church, 548 S. Ann St., Lancaster City, at approximately 6:40 P.M. At this time, a witness observed a male subject inside the church. This subject was seen leaving the church carrying a green book bag and riding a yellow bicycle.

At approximately 7:30 P.M., December 30th, 2008, a church member at First Church of God, 344 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster City, observed an individual in the Pastor's office attempting to open desk drawers. The church member confronted the individual, who then left the church. This individual was carrying a crowbar and a green book bag. Both of the above witnesses provided physical descriptions of the suspect.

At approximately 10:25 P.M. Lancaster City Police Officers responded to 54 S. Franklin St. for a reported domestic disturbance. While investigating this incident, officers located Michael Scott Wissler in the rear yard of the address. Wissler was found to be in possession of a green book bag, which contained a crowbar and a hammer. Wissler was also found to be in possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia. Officers also located a yellow bicycle in the rear yard of this address. Wissler was arrested and charged with Possession of Marijuana, Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and Harassment.

At the time of his arrest, Wissler also had an outstanding warrant for burglary through the West Lampeter Township Police Department. This warrant stemmed from a burglary at the Chesapeake Crab Connection, 2000 blk. Willow St. Pike, that occurred on December 14th, 2008. During this burglary, an image of the suspect was captured on a video surveillance camera. This image was distributed to area law enforcement agencies. A



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Lancaster County Probation Officer later identified the suspect in the video as Michael Scott Wissler. Officer William Sanger, West Lampeter Township Police, charged Wissler with this Burglary and a warrant was issued.

Wissler was conveyed to the Lancaster City Police Department after his arrest. Detective Kevin Fry, the lead Lancaster City Police detective investigating the series of church and business burglaries, was immediately notified. Detective Fry observed that the boots Wissler was wearing at the time of his arrest matched the general size and tread pattern as boot prints found at several burglary scenes. These boots were seized and are currently at the Pennsylvania State Police Laboratory undergoing further forensic testing. The crowbar possessed by Wissler was also seized and sent to the State Police Lab. Additional physical evidence collected at numerous burglary scenes is currently undergoing extensive forensic analysis.

Detective Fry immediately notified investigators from other agencies of this arrest. Detective Brent Shultz, Manheim Township Police and Officer Craig Parduski of the West Lampeter Township Police responded to the Lancaster City Police Station and worked through the night assisting Det. Fry with this investigation. On December 31st, 2008 Detective Brent Shultz of the Manheim Township Police Department executed a search warrant at 54 S. Franklin St., Lancaster. During this search, items were located that were connected to a burglary that occurred in Manheim Township on 18 – 19 December 2008 at the Neffsville Mennonite Church.

As a result of this collaborative investigation, Michael Scott Wissler has been charged with the following crimes:

LANCASTER CITY, LANCASTER TOWNSHIP CHARGES:

Burglary (18 counts), locations, dates follow:

1. Congregation Degel Israel Church, 1120 Columbia Ave., occurred 23-24 Oct. 08.
2. Faith Calvary Church, 1507 Millersville Pike, 1-2 Nov. 08.
3. Abbeyville Christian Church, 551 Abbeyville Rd., 2-3 Nov. 08.
4. Jethro's Bistro, 659 First St., 6-7 Nov. 08.
5. St. Anne's Church Rectory, 929 N. Duke St. 7-8 Nov. 08.
6. Medical Doctor's Office, 1300 Millersville Pk., 18-19 Nov. 08.
7. Ross St. United Methodist Church, 312 E. Ross St., 24 Nov. 08.



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8. St. Peter's Church, 816 Buchanan Ave., 25-26 Nov. 08.
9. Thanh Vu Dentistry, 806 Marietta Ave., 30 Nov. – 1 Dec. 08.
10. Seventh Day Adventist Church, 346 E. Clay St., 6-7 Dec. 08.
11. Lancaster Internal Medicine Group, 817 N. Cherry St., 18-19 Dec. 08.
12. Red Rose Family Physician, 955 E. King St., 19-22 Dec. 08.
13. Salon 444, 444 N. Lime St., 23-24 Dec. 08.
14. Tri-Angle Motorcar, 1001 E. King St., 24-26 Dec. 08.
15. Ed's Place Garage, 727 E. Mifflin St., 25 Dec. 08.
16. In the Light Ministries, 415 S. Shippen St., 27 Dec. 08.
17. Myers Advanced Diagnostic, 515 New Holland Ave., 28-29 Dec. 08.
18. St. El Redentor United Methodist Church, 548 S. Ann St., 30 Dec. 08.

Criminal Attempt Burglary (14 counts), locations, dates follow:

1. Trinity E.C. Church, 322 Hershey Ave., 17-24 Oct. 08.
2. Wheatland Presbyterian Church, 1125 Wheatland Ave., 22-24 Oct. 08.
3. 1st Assembly of God, 1025 Columbia Ave., 2-3 Nov. 08.
4. Art and Craft Cabinets, 720 Lafayette St., 6-7 Nov. 08.
5. Otterbein United Methodist Church, 20 E. Clay St., 24-25 Nov. 08.
6. E. Chestnut St. Mennonite Church, 434 E. Chestnut St., 29-30 Nov. 08.
7. Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1200 E. King St., 14-16 Dec. 08.
8. Lancaster Freedom Center, 436 N. Lime St., 23 Dec. 08.
9. NTI Group, 1236 E. King St., 24-26 Dec. 08.
10. Ramirez Auto Repair, 1120 E. King St., 24-26 Dec. 08.
11. Lord's House of Prayer, 133 E. Vine St., 25-26 Dec. 08.
12. St. Anthony's Church, 501 E. Orange St., 26 Dec. 08.
13. Accurate Automotive, 415 Harrisburg Pk., 26-29 Dec. 08.
14. First Church of God, 344 E. Chestnut St., 30 Dec. 08.

Possession of Instruments of Crime (29 counts) – these charges stem from the possession and use of a crowbar to



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commit many of the above crimes.

MANHEIM TOWNSHIP CHARGES

Burglary (5 counts):

1. Chiropractic Associates, Anthony's Hair Salon, 1361 Fruitville Pike, 15-16 Dec. 2008.
2. Neffsville Mennonite Church, 2371 Lititz Pk., 18-19 Dec. 08.
3. Lancaster Church of Brethren, 1601 Sunset Ave., 18-19 Dec. 08.
4. Lancaster Brethren in Christ Church, 1865 Fruitville Pk., 18-19 Dec. 08.
5. Guarino Family Chiropractic, 150 Farmington Lane., 18-19 Dec. 08.

MANOR TOWNSHIP CHARGES

Burglary (2 counts):

1. Witbeck DDS Dental Office, 1604 Columbia Ave., 13 Nov. 08.
2. Manor Animal Hospital, 2100 Stonemill Rd., 27 Nov. 08.

WEST LAMPETER TOWNSHIP CHARGES

Burglary (1 count):

- Chesapeake Crab Connection, 2166 Willow St. Pike, 14 Dec. 08.

MILLERSVILLE BOROUGH CHARGES



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Burglary (4 counts):

1. St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 222 N. George St., 13-14 Dec. 08.
2. Grace Evangelical C.C., 18 Kready Ave., 13-14 Dec. 08.
3. Grace United Methodist Church, 163 W. Frederick St., 14-15 Dec. 08.
4. Dr. Botto Dentist Office, 323 . George St., 14 Dec. 08.

In most of the above burglaries, the primary items stolen were small amounts of cash. Also reported stolen at some locations were checks, stamps, a camera, dental equipment, snacks and in one case, a can of coffee. Due to the collaborative nature of this investigation, all charges will be filed before Magisterial District Judge Cheryl Hartman.

All persons charged with a criminal offense are considered innocent until convicted in a court of law.

****THE BUREAU OF POLICE IS RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT THE MEDIA LIMIT WHAT IS PUBLISHED TO THAT WHICH IS ON THIS NEWS RELEASE AND SHOULD THE MEDIA BECOME AWARE OF ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PARTICULARLY THE NAMES OF ANY WITNESSES OR LANCASTER RESIDENTS IN THIS CASE, IT IS REQUESTED THAT THEY REFRAIN FORM PUBLISHING THAT INFORMATION SO AS NOT TO JEOPARDIZE THE SAFETY OF ANYONE NOR THIS ON-GOING INVESTIGATION****

(end of release)