

Church arsonists get maximum penalty

by [Bob Allen](#)

January 12, 2011

TYLER, Texas (ABP) -- The mother of one of two men sentenced Jan. 10 to life in prison for burning down a string of East Texas churches said she believes the punishment does not fit the crime.

"No one was hurt," Kimberly Bourque, mother of 22-year-old Jason Robert Bourque, [told](#) the *Tyler Telegraph*

in the hallway outside the Smith County 114th District courtroom where Judge Christi Kennedy sentenced her son to five life sentences for first-degree arson and three 20-year sentences for attempted arson.

"Murderers don't get these harsh sentences."

She told the newspaper that she did not condone actions of her son or Daniel George McAllister, 20, who are suspected of torching 10 churches in three counties over a five week period beginning New Year's Day in 2010. She added that she had hoped for mercy, however, and was heartbroken by the sentences.

Both men received maximum sentences after pleading guilty Dec. 15 to charges stemming from five fires in Smith County. Smith County District Attorney Matt Bingham told local media the duo did not receive a reduced sentence for confessing and could not have received more time if they had gone to trial.

Bourque's sentences for the five counts of arson and two of the attempted-arson counts will run concurrently, making him eligible for parole in 15 to 20 years. If he is paroled, he will then serve the third 20-year attempted-arson sentence and would be eligible for parole on that sentence after five years.

McAllister will be eligible for parole after he serves 15 years on two counts of first-degree arson and two counts of second-degree arson. Both men waived their rights to appeal the sentences.

Officials said McAllister spoke with police and cooperated with them but Bourque did not. They are not saying what he told them, however, because the two still face charges in Van Zandt and Henderson counties.

The Jan. 10 sentencing was for crimes related to fires that destroyed Dover Baptist Church, Tyland Baptist Church, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Prairie Creek Fellowship Church and Clear Spring Missionary Baptist Church, all in Smith County.

All of the fires occurred between Jan. 1 and Feb. 8. Bourque and McAllister were arrested Feb. 21 after more than a week of surveillance following calls to a tip line. The investigation included state, local and federal law enforcement.

A Smith County grand jury indicted both men for the crimes in May. Since their arrest they have been held in the Smith County jail on bonds of \$10 million apiece.

As teenagers Bourque and McAllister [attended](#) youth group together at First Baptist Church in Ben Wheeler, Texas. McAllister, according to family members, dropped out of church and started hanging out with the wrong crowd after his mother died from a heart attack and a stroke in October 2007. Bourque's attendance dropped off after his family moved to another town about 20 miles away.

Bingham declined to give a motive for the crimes, telling media it would be "pure speculation" for him to do so.