

God's Protection

Beatrice, Nebraska. March 1, 1950

Everyone had a good excuse that Wednesday evening for being late to 7:30 choir practice at the Baptist Church. Ladona Vandegrift, a high school sophomore, always came early. But on this night a thorny geometry problem detained her. Torena Estes and her sister Sadie were ready to leave home on time. But their car wouldn't start.

Mrs. Schuster could be counted on to arrive ten minutes early for practice. But she was held up at her mother's house preparing for a later missionary meeting. Pastor Klempel and his wife, always punctual, didn't make it at 7:30 either. His wristwatch, usually very accurate, was five minutes slow this evening.

Joyce Black felt it was so cold that she waited till the last possible minute to leave—a few minutes too long. Harvey Ahl had been invited over to a friend's home for dinner and in the pleasant conversation lost track of time.

Even Mrs. Paul, the choir director, failed to arrive on time. She'd always come fifteen minutes early. But on this night her daughter, who played piano for the group, fell asleep. Mrs. Paul hurriedly awakened Marilyn and they rushed to finish getting ready—but drove up to the church a few minutes late. This was the first time either had ever been tardy for choir practice.

Eighteen people made up the West Side Baptist Church choir. Tonight every one of them arrived late, something that had never happened before.

No one was there at 7:30 when the basement furnace, situated directly below the choir loft, ignited a gas leak. The loft blew up; the church was demolished. Then the choir members arrived on the scene—too late.¹

¹Steven R. Mosley, *God a Biography*, (Phoenix: Questar Publishers, Inc., 1988), p. 211-2.