

Healing in Wake of Shootings at Colorado Church

After losing two daughters in a church shooting in December, the Works family met with the parents of the killer. Photo: Rachel Works far left; Stephanie Works far right.



[] On an unusually mild day for January at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., Ron and Loretta Murray walked the church grounds where their 24-year-old son had shot and killed two of a total of four young people in the Denver area before taking his own life.

The couple was scheduled to meet surviving family members of Stephanie and Rachel Works—two teenage sisters that their son, Matthew, slew in the back parking lot just a few weeks earlier on Dec. 9, 2007 (Matthew also killed 24-year-old Philip Crouse and 26-year-old Tiffany Johnson at a Youth With a Mission (YWAM) training center in Arvada, Colo., where he was once a student).

Before New Life Pastor Brady Boyd escorted them to meet the Works family in his office, he took them on a private tour, retracing the fatal last steps of their son. “I know as a pastor that many times, when a family has a tragic loss of a loved one, part of the healing process, and one of the steps that a family needs to take sometimes, is to go to the place where the death happened,” Boyd told *Charisma*.

They were shown where a darkly clad Matthew Murray, armed with an AR-15 assault rifle, two pistols and tons of ammunition, parked his car, jumped out, and blasted out the windows of a late-model Toyota minivan, killing 16-year-old Rachel and 18-year-old Stephanie Works, and also wounding their father, David.

Ron and Loretta Murray were told how in a scene of panic and horror, worshipers frantically scrambled in all directions

while their son, who packed hundreds of rounds of ammunition, opened fire repeatedly and randomly, spraying parked and moving cars, and putting many rounds through the back of the church building before going inside.

The couple—heads bowed, hesitant and ashamed—then walked into the office where the Works family was waiting to see them. David Works, father of the two slain girls, shot twice himself by Matthew, was waiting for them with his wife, Marie, and their two surviving daughters—Laurie and Gracie.

David Works told *Charisma* the Murrys extended their hands to him, but that he ignored their gesture, and instead opened his arms. They embraced. The Murrys pleaded for forgiveness. Pastor Boyd said the two families wept in a pile together for close to 20 minutes. “Weeping, sobbing, crying,” said Boyd. “The Works embraced them and told them: ‘We’re so sorry you lost your son.’”

Said David Works: “There was an explosion of the presence of God. We just found ourselves comforting them, ministering to them, trying to help them through.”

In a setting that could've been filled with bitterness and animosity, Boyd said he witnessed a miracle. “There was immediate redemption and forgiveness,” he said. “They embraced each other's sorrows. What I saw was Jesus Christ on display that day.” **—PAUL STEVEN GHIRINGHELLI**