

Violence Strikes Private California Christian School

On Wednesday, two children were in “extremely critical condition” after being shot at a tiny religious K-8 school in Northern California, and the gunman died at the scene, apparently from a self-inflicted gunshot, police said.

The gunman may have targeted the Feather River School of Seventh-Day Adventists in Palermo because of its religious affiliation but isn’t believed to have had a prior connection to the victims or the school, Butte County Sheriff Kory L. Honea said. He didn’t explain further.

“Whether or not this is a hate crime or whether or not it’s part of some sort of larger scheme, at this point I don’t have enough information to provide an answer to that,” he said.

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– NewsChannel 9 (@NewsChannel9) December 5, 2024

The wounded children, boys ages five and six, are kindergartners at the school and were being treated at a trauma center in the Sacramento area, officials said.

“I am thankful that they’re still alive, but they’ve got a long road ahead of them,” Honea said.

The shooting occurred shortly after 1 p.m. at the private Christian school with fewer than three dozen students in

Palermo, which has about 5,500 people and is about 65 miles north of Sacramento.

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Honea said the gunman was dropped off by an Uber driver, who is being interviewed by detectives.

He said the shooter was in a meeting with an administrator about enrolling a child at the school, which was described as “cordial.” But it seems that was his first visit to the school, and he had no prior connection to the victims. Shortly after the meeting, shots rang out, Honea said.

The gunman’s body was found near the slide and other playground equipment on the grounds of the school. A handgun was found nearby, Honea said.

Honea said they were trying to contact the shooter’s family before releasing his name.

It was the latest of school shootings across the U.S. in recent years, including especially deadly ones in Newtown, Connecticut; Parkland, Florida; Uvalde, Texas; and Nashville, Tennessee.

Laurie Trujillo, a representative for the Northern California Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, said in a statement that they were “deeply saddened by the events that occurred today at our Feather River school.” She added that they are grateful to the sheriff’s office for acting quickly to protect the students.

The Feather River School has been open since 1965, according to its website.

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After the shooting, authorities rushed students initially to a gymnasium where they stayed until a bus arrived to take them off the grounds and to the Oroville Church of the Nazarene to be reunited with their families, Honea said.

Travis Marshall, the senior pastor for the Oroville Church of the Nazarene, called the reunification between parents and their children "very moving."

"Some of the children were incredibly emotional," he said. "One woman was raising her hands up, praising the Lord" when she found her child.

Sixth grader Jocelyn Orlando described what happened to CBS News Sacramento.

"We were going in for lunch recess, and basically everybody in my classroom heard shooting, and most people were screaming," she said. "We all went into the office. We closed the curtains, locked the doors, basically did what we would do in a school shooting, and then one of the teachers came, and we all ran into the gym."

Assemblyman James Gallagher, whose area includes Palermo, said his "heart is breaking for everyone impacted by this tragedy."

"As a community, we'll all be hugging our loved ones closer today as we pray for the victims and try to make sense of something so senseless," he said in a statement.

The Western Journal has reviewed this Associated Press story and may have altered it prior to publication to ensure that it meets our editorial standards.

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