

'Intense Grief,' Ministry Linger After Batman Shootings

It's been 19 days since the unthinkable shooting happened at a movie theatre in **Aurora, Colo.**

But in many ways, the brutal killings are still fresh in the hearts and minds of the wounded Aurora community.

This is the Rapid Response Team's specialty. Trained to handle crisis situations like natural disasters and random shootings, 33 chaplains have ministered to those looking for answers. To those still questioning "Why?" And "What now?"

"The grief and the suffering is so intense among the victim's families, those directly affected and the community that we've experienced a tremendous openness for a ministry of presence and prayer," said Jack Munday, director of the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team.

These chaplains trained by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association have had the privilege to **pray** with more than 1,500 hurting people in this community. Through "emotional and spiritual care" dozens searching for hope have made decisions for Christ.

Beginning at 7:45 a.m. on July 20, the **Holy Spirit** has opened the door for a variety of ministry in the wake of the tragedy. After the intense counseling on the day of the shooting, chaplains have also helped comfort people at two memorial sites, hospitals, the shopping mall near the theatre as well as many memorial services.

"We found the entire community extremely grateful and open to talking with the chaplains," Munday said. "It's in times like this when those who are experiencing intense grief need someone to talk to."

The chaplains have also ministered at a firefighter graduation ceremony—invited by the fire chief. They also visited many fire stations, including station No. 2 when the initial responders returned to work for the first time.

They've loved on many law enforcement officers and security guards, prayed with mortuary staff who had cared for the deceased family and friends, and ministered to several of the victim's military co-workers and family members.

Other ministry opportunity developed as residents of the Columbine community came to the memorial services to search again for answers to yet another Colorado tragedy.

Then, there was the random opportunity to pray with the hurting, including one chaplain who was getting ready to cross the street when a car pulled up, rolled down the window and asked if he was a Billy Graham chaplain and "would he pray her along with two kids in the car?"

"It's an example of the need and openness for prayer," Munday said. "And also the appreciation that we were there."

Ministry will continue through this week, tentatively set to wrap up this Saturday.

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