

Marine Veteran Identified as Gunman in Michigan Church Massacre

The tragedy that unfolded inside a Michigan church Sunday morning has left a community grieving and searching for answers.

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Authorities identified the suspect as Thomas Jacob Sanford, a 40-year-old Marine veteran from Burton, Michigan. Police say Sanford drove a Chevy Silverado into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc Township during services before opening fire on the hundreds of worshipers gathered there.



Grand Blanc Township Police Chief William Renye described the horrifying scene. "He drove his vehicle through the front doors of the church," Renye said. "He then exited his vehicle, firing several rounds at individuals within the church. Ten gunshot victims have been transported to local hospitals at this time, including one who has died."



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Officials later confirmed the death toll had risen. Two more victims were found inside the burned church hours after the attack bringing the total to at least four. Authorities believe Sanford set the building ablaze with gasoline or another accelerant before being killed in a shootout with police.

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Sanford's Military Service

Sanford's background adds another layer of complexity to the grief. He served in the Marines from 2004 to 2008 and deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. According to the Marine Corps, his service included:

- Worked as an organizational automotive mechanic
- Served as a vehicle recovery operator
- Deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Achieved the rank of sergeant
- Final duty station: 2d Maintenance Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 2d Marine Logistics Group at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

This tragedy has left many in the Michigan community mourning, stunned that violence would erupt in a place of worship.

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As families grieve and a shaken congregation begins the painful process of healing we must remember them in prayer. Let us pray for the victims, for the families left behind and for all who were scarred by this devastating act of violence. May God bring comfort, peace and strength to those who need it most.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a background in journalism from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor

to Charisma *magazine*.