

Pastor Finds Church Member Shot to Death in His Own Home

A pastor was following his instincts when he failed to make contact with parishioner Benny Hallmark.

“It wasn’t like Benny not to show up, and then when I called there was no answer,” Woodhaven Baptist Church Pastor Scott Patz says. “It’s very shocking and very difficult to deal with.”

So Patz went to Hallmark’s home, only to discover the unthinkable: Hallmark was found shot to death in his recliner. Police later found another dead body across the street from Hallmark’s home.

Police arrested Jimmy Merritt and charged him with first-degree homicide.

Hallmark’s Orlando-area church, though, feels the loss.

“He was such a sweet, caring, kind, considerate, loving man of God. No one like him. He is in the arms of the Lord. Going to miss his sweet smile & the warm hugs,” one person wrote on the church’s funeral announcement.

“Please keep Benny’s family in your prayers. Benny’s smile and uplifting personality will be sorely missed. We love you, Benny,” according to the church Facebook post.

“So loving and joyous. I’m missing him terribly,” Patz says.