

Suspected Texas Bomber Was 'Serious' About His Faith

Suspected Texas bomber Mark Conditt, who blew himself up after allegedly mailing out multiple incendiary devices, reportedly had a strong faith.

Police have accused Conditt, who died Wednesday, of manufacturing and mailing out bombs in the Austin area that killed and injured several.

Conditt's family says they had no knowledge of his alleged attacks.

"We are devastated and broken at the news that our family could be involved in such an awful way," the family said in a statement. "We had no idea of the darkness that Mark must have been in. Our family is a normal family in every way. We love, we pray, and we try to inspire and serve others. Right now our prayers are for those families that have lost loved ones, for those impacted in any way, and for the soul of our Mark. We are grieving and we are in shock. Please respect our privacy as we deal with this terrible, terrible knowledge and try to support each other through this time."

Conditt was homeschooled and considered going on a mission trip before he died Wednesday, his mom said.

"When I met Mark, he was really rough around the edges," his friend Jeremiah Jensen says. Jensen says they attended Austin Stone Community Church together.

"He was a very assertive person and would ... end up being kind of dominant and intimidating in conversation. A lot of people didn't understand him and where he was coming from. He really just wanted to tell the truth. What I remember about him he would push back on you if you said something without thinking

about it. He loved to think and argue and turn things over and figure out what was really going on,” Jensen says. “I know faith was a serious thing for him. I don’t know if he held onto his faith or not. ... The kind of anger that he expressed and the kind of hate that he succumbed to—that’s not what he believed in in high school. I don’t know what happened along the way. This wasn’t him.”

Conditt’s faith may have faded in recent years. Initial reports claimed Conditt attended church regularly, but Austin Stone Community Church’s records indicate otherwise.

“After learning of Mark Conditt’s past attendance at our church, we searched our records and spoke with our staff. We found no records of active engagement or past involvement, and we are not aware of any relationships he has with our staff,” Austin Stone Community Church Communications Church Director John Yeng says in a statement to Charisma News. “We love and grieve with our city and we continue to pray for the victims and their families who were affected by these recent tragedies. We are cooperating with law enforcement with any pertinent information we can find that may be of help as they continue their investigation. That is all we have to say about this at this time.”

On Facebook, the church said: “We are thankful for the hard work of the Austin Police Department and the FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation as they have labored to protect our city. Let’s continue to pray for law enforcement officials, those affected by the recent bombings, and for comfort, safety and restoration in our city.”

In 2012, Conditt maintained a blog where he expressed his very conservative opinions on hot topics including abortion and gay marriage.

In one post, he defended the death penalty, writing:

On March 1st, 2012, Mr. Tod Robberson, a editorial writer for

the Dallas Morning News, wrote a editorial about how George Rivas makes the best case not to have the death penalty.

I don't agree with Mr. Robberson. He bases his claim on the fact that Rivas welcomed execution and calling it "freedom". Robberson makes the argument that giving Rivas the life-sentence would be worse than killing him had been. Once again, I disagree.

First, the whole premise that Rivas welcomed death is outright wrong. If he had wanted or wished for death, he would have just shot himself, like his fellow Texas 7 escapee, Larry Harper, who committed suicide, rather than be captured and re-incarcerated. Instead, for 11 years he chose life by surrendering, instead. He fought against death during his trial. He fought against death with his appeals and asked to have his sentence commuted from death to life. None of these are the actions of a person willing to chose death/freedom over life.

Second, Living criminals harm and murder, again – executed ones do not. Rivas was a known murderer, and had escaped prison once. If he had gotten life without parole, he could have escaped again.

Thirdly, Mr. Robberson credentials don't support the fact that he is an expert on this topic. He's a former foreign correspondent with 25 years' experience covering Latin America, the Middle East and Europe—not a death penalty expert.

And lastly, Robberson's audience is used to him writing about drug trafficking, border issues, immigration and international affairs; not about a domestic issue like the death penalty.

Tod Robberson does a good job at making a argument against the death penalty without arguing that it's inhumane. But he

needed to do some homework.

Austin Stone Community Church previously made headlines this year in a high-profile sexual assault case.

Larry Cotton, who has since resigned, was the director of ASCC's internship program. Cotton previously pastored at Parkway Baptist Church in The Woodlands and has been accused of covering up an incident in which then-youth pastor Andy Savage allegedly assaulted a girl in his youth group, Jules Woodson.