

Texas Church Members Vote to Demolish Sanctuary Where 26 Died During Mass Shooting

Nearly four years after 26 people lost their lives during the horrific shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, the building is reportedly slated for demolition.

Shooter Devin Patrick Kelley walked into the church on Nov. 5, 2017, and opened fire on the crowd during a Sunday morning worship service. The victims ranged in age from 5 to 72 years old.

According to News 4 in San Antonio, members of the congregation voted Sunday to raze the sanctuary after it was deemed structurally unsafe.

"Once you're in there, the beautiful white walls, the white ceiling, the white floor, the white chairs, the names on the chairs of everybody that they lost," said Terrie Smith, the president of the Sutherland Springs Community Association. "The single red rose, the beautiful big cross in the center. It gives you an embrace by everybody."

Smith added, "It's just a beautiful, peaceful place. Small, little church, small little community with a lot of humble people, and humbled angels that we lost."

TODAY: I spoke with members of the Sutherland Springs community and could hear the pain in their voices.

Church members voted 69 to 35 to level the structure. You may remember just a week after the shooting, the quaint building was transformed into a memorial for victims.

The church's sanctuary was converted into a memorial and a new

church building was built next to it in 2019.

On opening day, Pastor Frank Pomeroy told the crowd they were celebrating God's glory while remembering "those who have paid a price for this incredible facility."

The church commemorated the victims by reading their names as the church bell rang, and those connected to them stood up in the crowd. Pomeroy's 14-year-old daughter, Annabelle Pomeroy, was among those killed.

The new worship center and memorial room honoring the victims were made possible through millions of dollars in donations from around the world. The facility features enhanced security elements, along with a new church bell tower and an additional prayer space.

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