

Witnesses Give Shocking Accounts of LDS Church Shooting in Michigan

One moment, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc, Michigan, were worshiping in peace and joy, as outside, their small town basked in early autumn sunshine. The next, carnage invaded their Sunday morning service.

At least two people were killed and eight were wounded when Thomas Sanford, 40, drove a pickup truck into the church building then began firing a rifle. Sanford was shot dead in an exchange of fire with law enforcement, but not before the church was set on fire, leading to a blaze that sent smoke high in the sky.

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Before the moments of chaos were over, Kristin Juarez expected to die.

At first, she feared the noise of the truck hitting the church was a calamity such as the steeple falling, according to The New York Times.

Then came panic as a member of the congregation passed out warning that a man with a gun was preying on them.

In the chaos, she and her husband were separated. She fled into a bathroom, where she heard more gunfire.

"I thought, 'If I have to die, it's OK,'" Juarez, 54, said. "I feel good about where I am. And then I heard my husband's voice, and he was calling for me."



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John Juarez, 57, had helped another member of the LDS church carry a wounded member outside. Then he saw another victim.

"I didn't know what I could do for him," he recalled. "I couldn't get him out on my own."

That was when he called for his wife, who emerged. They fled the church to hide in a ditch across the street.

Brian Taylor initially thought the impact of the truck hitting the building was an accident.

"We heard a large, just a large bang," he said, according to WJBK.

As members of the church went outside to help whoever might have been hurt, they realized this was no accident.

Taylor said he and his wife tried to drive away, but their vehicle was shot. Taylor suffered a cut on his hand after the windshield shattered.

"None of us recognized this guy," Taylor said, according to WJBK. "He came [inside] in camo pants and [with] an assault rifle."

Taylor said the incident took place just before communion.

"We started rushing out to go help, and as soon as I saw the American flags on the truck, and somebody yelled it was on purpose, I tried to get people out of the area and disperse away," he said.

A deranged gunman bursts into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc during Sunday services, unleashing bullets on innocent worshippers before setting the building ablaze in a cowardly act of pure evil.

Paul Kirby ran outside to see what had happened, then saw a man with a rifle, according to The New York Times.

The 38-year-old recalled the moment as “extreme fear.” He found himself “just waiting for that hit” from the gunman 10 to 20 yards away.

The gun fired; a glass door next to Kirby shattered. A piece of glass cut his leg. He ran into the church to find his wife and family. They packed as many people in their car as they could, then fled, passing others lying on the ground.

“I was afraid they were going to start shooting cars as we were leaving,” he said, calling the episode “the scariest I’ve ever been.”

After the shooting, church members reflected on the evil that descended upon their church.

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Phillip Cotter of nearby Clio, who belongs to the church that was destroyed by a fire police believe the shooter started, did not attend Sunday, but shared his pain as he responded to the scene

“I know everyone who was there,” he said, according to the Detroit Free Press.

“I don’t know what God has planned for us, but I trust him,” he said. “Evil is alive, it’s active. People are too casual to throw out terms that inflame others, weak minds.”

Church member Stephanie Gidding called other members of the

church her “family.”

“It’s unbelievable with what happened with Charlie Kirk and then this. ... It’s like there’s evil. You’ve just got to stay close to God and have faith and push through.”

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Grand Blanc Township Police Chief William Renye said authorities expect to find more victims once the fire is extinguished, according to the Detroit News.

“We do believe there were people up there that were near that fire, and they were unable to get out of the church,” Renye said.

This article originally appeared on The Western Journal, and is reposted with permission.