

World Changers Church Shooting Suspect in Custody

The suspected gunman in Wednesday's shooting at World Changers Church International was taken into custody at a shopping mall later that afternoon.

Police say Floyd Palmer, 52, walked into a prayer service at the Atlanta-area church just before 10 a.m. and opened fire, with 20-25 people watching. Palmer was a church employee until he resigned in August for personal reasons.

One victim says six shots were fired. The church's founder, Pastor Creflo Dollar, was not there at the time of the shooting. According to police, Greg McDowell, 39, was shot once and died at the church as Palmer calmly walked out.

A massive manhunt concluded around 4 p.m. at a Macy's department store, where Palmer was arrested.

"He was taken into custody without incident," Fulton Co. police Cpl. Kay Lester told News/Talk WSB. "He was not combative. He did not have any weapons on his person."

Investigators said they don't know what prompted the megachurch shooting, and they are working to determine if Palmer and McDowell knew each other.

"We do not know if the victim was targeted," Lester said. "We are looking into that as he was the only person that was shot."

Lester said Fulton County police charged Palmer with murder and possession of a weapon during the commission of a crime. Jail officials say Palmer is expected in court at 11 a.m. Thursday.

This is not Palmer's first arrest. He plead guilty to shooting

a man at a Baltimore mosque in 2001. He was committed to a psychiatric hospital in 2004 after pleading not criminally responsible to assault charges.

McDowell, who police say was a member of the church's production crew and a facilities maintenance manager, is the father of two toddler sons.

"He would be considered a model dad," Ken Terry, a pastor at the church who is acting as a spokesman for the McDowell family, told reporters. "To have this happen is just devastating."

McDowell said the church family was distraught and was trying to comfort McDowell's family. Dollar also offered comforting words to his congregation.

"That's not God's will for a husband to be taken away from his wife and family. That's not God's will," Dollar said, according to Channel 2 Action News.

The news station reported that Dollar told his congregation he wanted to drill home three main points: God is good, heaven is real and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Dollar, a well-known preacher who appears regularly on Trinity Broadcasting Network, founded World Changers Ministries in 1986 with eight members, holding services in an elementary school cafeteria, the church's website says. Its campus now occupies 81 acres, and holds services in the 8,500-seat World Dome.