News

People embrace as worshippers gather at Blackhawk Church in Madison, Wis., Dec. 16, 2024,

People embrace as worshippers gather at Blackhawk Church in Madison, Wis., Dec. 16, 2024, to pray for victims and survivors of a mass shooting that day at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison. At least three people are dead, including the suspect, and others are injured, after the mass shooting, police said. (OSV News photo/Cullen Granzen, Reuters)

Kate Scanlon

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Police in Madison, Wisconsin, said they are investigating a mass shooting at that city's Abundant Life Christian School Dec. 16 that left at least two killed and six injured, authorities said. The gunman is also dead, they said.

Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes said at a press conference there is no ongoing threat to the school or local community.

Police identified the suspected shooter as Natalie Rupnow, a 15-year-old student, who also went by the name Samantha. Rupnow is believed to have died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound after killing a teacher and a fellow student.

Barnes said the Madison Police Department responded to a report of a shooting at Abundant Life Christian School, a community Christian school with students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. The school's website states it was founded in 1978 as "a community Christian school with the vision of providing academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment for families in the greater Dane County area."

"This is something that we all prepare for, but we hope we never have to do," Barnes said of the law enforcement response.

Children prepare to board a bus bound for the reunification center where they'll meet their pa

Children prepare to board a bus bound for the reunification center where they'll meet their parents after a mass shooting at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wis., Dec. 16, 2024. At least two people are dead, in addition to the suspect, and others are injured, after the mass shooting, police said. (OSV News photo/Cullen Granzen, Reuters)

A spokesperson for the White House said President Joe Biden has been briefed on the incident, and that senior White House officials are in touch with local counterparts in Madison "to provide support as needed."

In a statement, Biden called the shooting "shocking and unconscionable."

"We need Congress to act. Now," Biden said. "From Newtown to Uvalde, Parkland to Madison, to so many other shootings that don’t receive attention – it is unacceptable that we are unable to protect our children from this scourge of gun violence. We cannot continue to accept it as normal. Every child deserves to feel safe in their classroom. Students across our country should be learning how to read and write – not having to learn how to duck and cover."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has called in the past for a total ban on assault weapons, a term that refers commonly to semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, and pistols fed by ammunition magazines of various capacities. The bishops support an assault weapons’ ban similar to the one they supported in the 1994 crime bill, which Congress allowed to expire in 2004. They also support limitations on civilian access to high-capacity ammunition magazines. Other gun regulation measures the bishops support include universal background checks for all gun purchases.

Biden said he and first lady Jill Biden "are praying for all the victims today, including the teacher and teenage student who were killed and those who sustained injuries." They expressed their gratitude to "the first responders who quickly arrived on the scene, and the FBI is supporting local law enforcement efforts."

"We can never accept senseless violence that traumatizes children, their families, and tears entire communities apart," he added.

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Gov. Tony Evers said in a statement, "I am closely monitoring the incident at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison."

"We are praying for the kids, educators, and entire Abundant Life school community as we await more information and are grateful for the first responders who are working quickly to respond."

The incident took place near the 12th anniversary of the mass killing at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, on Dec. 14, 2012, where a gunman with a semiautomatic rifle took the lives of 20 children and 6 adults. It is among the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history.

Theologians and church leaders previously told OSV News that preventing gun violence is a social justice issue, and that a public policy response to gun violence representing a Catholic perspective should start by prioritizing the common good.

"We are deeply saddened by the shooting that occurred at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison and mourn for the victims of this horrible act of violence," Bishop Donald J. Hying of the Madison Diocese said in a statement shared with OSV News.

"We stand united with the Abundant Life family and pray for healing for those who are injured and comfort for the families who are facing the heartbreaking loss of a loved one," he said. "In these days leading up to Christmas, may the peace, love, and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be an anchor for all those affected."

A candlelight vigil is planned in Madison for Dec. 17 organized by The Boys and Girls Clubs of Dane County. The mayor and other city and community officials are expected to attend.