News



This photo provided by Gwendolyn Bisek in August 2025 shows her daughter, Genevieve Bisek, 11, who was shot and wounded in the Church of Annunciation shooting in Minneapolis, on Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2025. (Gwendolyn Bisek via AP)

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Lying in an intensive care unit hospital bed, 11-year-old Genevieve Bisek is comforted by the many handmade cards she has received from fellow classmates after Wednesday's shooting at a Minneapolis church.

Some are decorated with beads, some with sparkling stars. All of them are taped to the walls of her room at the Hennepin County Medical Center, where she has been recovering. Her condition has been upgraded from critical to satisfactory.

"All of these handmade cards are just absolutely adorable and heartfelt," Genevieve's aunt, Wanda Stipek, told The Associated Press in a phone interview Saturday. "This is coming from other kids who also have their own trauma and yet are still reaching out and showing their love for her. She has these cards taped up on the walls in her room so that she can see this and be surrounded by that love."

Genevieve was one of the 20 people who were shot during the attack at the Church of Annunciation, as hundreds of students from the nearby Annunciation Catholic School and others gathered for a Mass. The shooter fired 116 rifle rounds through the church's stained-glass windows, leaving two students dead and 18 people wounded, nearly all of them children. The shooter, 23-year-old Robin Westman, died by suicide.

At least seven people were still in the hospital on Saturday. A spokesperson for Hennepin County Medical Center said five children were being treated there, including four in satisfactory condition and one in critical condition, as well as one adult who was in serious condition. A spokesperson for Children's Minnesota – Minneapolis Hospital said doctors there were treating one patient.

Genevieve, a sixth grader at the Catholic school who loves animals and playing outside, was conscious after the shooting, Stipek said. After authorities cleared the church from danger, she was gathered with other children to assess their injuries and was brought to the hospital in an ambulance with another wounded student, she said.

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Medical staff sedated Genevieve until Thursday.

"Genevieve is a very sensitive and compassionate little girl," Stipek said. "When she did wake up from her sedation after the event, the first thing that she wanted to talk about, she asked about the other children."

Stipek said Genevieve told her mother, "I can't say that I wish this wouldn't have happened to me because I don't want it to have happened to anyone else either."

Stipek said Genevieve has not been told yet who died. She said one of the students killed, Fletcher Merkel, 8, was a neighbor and friend of the family.

The handmade cards and other outpourings of support from the community, including ribbons tied around trees in the neighborhood and donations made online, have helped the family cope with their trauma, Stipek said.

"I think sometimes that when something terrible like this happens, you think of the world as a scary and dangerous place full of bad people. But we are very moved by the goodness," she said. "All of those things show the love and support, and all of it helps us know that there's goodness out there. I think that's part of the healing process. It's important for us to remember that the world is still full of good people."

Priest speaks of light coming through the darkness

At a Mass held Saturday night in the Annunciation school's auditorium, Fr. Dennis Zehren spoke of hope for better days.

"We welcome the light of a new day here at Annunciation," he said. "And it reminds us when death and darkness has done its worst, that's when God says 'Now see what I will do.' And that's kind of a strange mystery that in the most intense darkness the light somehow seems to shine even more brightly."

This story appears in the **Minneapolis church shooting** feature series. View the full series.