

Bethel Baptist Church

Security Training 1/10/2021

Suspect in custody after shooting at Texas church leaves pastor dead

WINONA, Texas — One person is dead and three more, including the suspect, were injured following a shooting at an East Texas church Sunday morning. According to the [Smith County Sheriff's Office](#) (SCSO), the shooting took place at [Starrville Methodist Church](#), located on Farm-to-Market Road 16 in [Winona](#).

BEFORE THE SHOOTING

On Saturday around 7:30 p.m., the [Lindale Police Department](#) (LPD) responded to several calls regarding the driver of a dark-colored passenger car near the intersection of Farm-to-Market Road 849 and Interstate 20. Police were told the driver, identified as Mytrez Deunte Woolen, 21, of Marshall, was pointing a gun out the sunroof of the vehicle. Police never saw the vehicle, but responded to the area when, minutes later, an SCSO deputy saw the suspect vehicle in the parking lot of the Chevron convenience store, located at 303 South Main Street in Lindale.



At this time, the deputy attempted to stop Woolen, but he drove off at a high rate of speed and a chase ensued. Officials say Woolen drove west on South Street and eventually turned east onto Farm-to-Market Road 16. He then traveled south on Farm-to-Market Road 849 before getting on Interstate 20, headed east. The chase continued on I-20 with Texas Department of Public Safety troopers joining in. The SCSO says Woolen exited onto Highway 271 before turning onto Farm-to-Market Road 757. At the intersection of Farm-to-Market Road 757 and Farm-to-Market Road 16, the SCSO

says Woolen's vehicle ran off the road where it came to a stop on the property

of Starrville Methodist Church. Officials say Woolen got out of the vehicle and ran into the woods behind the church.

The SCSO used deputies, K-9 units and a drone as they tried to locate Woolen. After several hours, the search area was expanded as officials felt Woolen had escaped the established perimeter. The SCSO says evidence in the vehicle led officials to the suspect's identity. A shotgun was also found. "Law enforcement personnel remained in the area for several hours in an attempt to locate the suspect," a press release from the SCSO said. "Additionally, the shotgun that had been displayed by the suspect was recovered at the scene of the crash during the pursuit."

Smith County Sheriff Larry Smith believes Woolen hid in the church sometime between 2:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Sunday.

THE SHOOTING

Sunday morning, the church's pastor, Mark McWilliams, 62, of Frankston, opened a stall in the bathroom and found Woolen, the SCSO said. According to Sheriff Smith, McWilliams was armed, pointed a gun at Woolen and asked him to leave. However, Sheriff Smith says Woolen disarmed McWilliams, shot and killed him. CBS19's newspaper partner, the **Tyler Morning Telegraph**, confirmed the pastor's identity with law enforcement after family members had been notified. Officials say Woolen also shot a male victim who underwent surgery for non-life threatening injuries. Sheriff Smith says Woolen shot at the pastor's wife, Rosemary, but missed. However, she did sustain a shoulder injury from a fall while running away.

The SCSO says Woolen then stole the pastor's car. According to officials, the vehicle had OnStar, which was instrumental in later locating Woolen.

The **Harrison County Sheriff's Office** (HCSO) says the SCSO attempted to stop the vehicle in Smith County, but Woolen took off east on Interstate 20. Woolen continued driving, reaching speeds as high as 120 miles per hour on I-20, according to the HCSO.

"As they entered Harrison County, Harrison County DPS units and Harrison County Sheriff's Deputies assisted in the pursuit of the vehicle," the HCSO said in a press release.

Once DPS units got behind the vehicle, OnStar was notified to disable the vehicle. Officials say Woolen was finally stopped at the intersection of Bomar

Street and West Meredith Drive, near Price T. Young Elementary School, in **Marshall**. Woolen was arrested and a weapon was recovered, along with the stolen vehicle.



Woolen had a gunshot wound to the hand and was treated at a Tyler hospital. He has since been booked into the Smith County Jail on two counts of aggravated assault (aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated assault causing serious bodily injury) and one count of capital murder. His

bond has been set at \$3,500,000. McWilliams' body was sent for autopsy.

Gov. Greg Abbott also confirmed the death and injuries in a press release:

"Our hearts are with the victims and the families of those killed or injured in this terrible tragedy," Abbott said. "I am grateful for the law enforcement officers who apprehended the suspect, and I ask Texans to join Cecilia and me in praying for those affected by this horrific shooting. The State of Texas is working closely with first responders and local officials to ensure that justice is served and that the Starrville community has the resources it needs during this time."