

The Guardian Call

by Stephen Paulson

How is it that catastrophic mass murder has suddenly become a regular part of American life? I had just returned home from an early church service on December 9 to find the breaking news headline about a shooting at Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Arvada, CO. Two killed and two wounded in another senseless attack by another disturbed young man, and the all too familiar sense of goodness defiled came rushing back. As I considered my church family's prior work with this vibrant organization my heart sank—it almost felt like we ourselves had just been hit. Then only a few hours later another headline—shots fired at New Life Church in Colorado Springs. At that point if I had known the modern day equivalent of tearing one's robes, I would have done it. You probably know that indescribable mix of emotions that leaves you somewhere between despair and fury. What was happening? Who is doing this? *Lord, why don't You deliver Your people?*

As the media continued to report on details surrounding what had happened something unexpected became the focal point of the news coverage, and one woman was suddenly thrust into the national spotlight. Jeanne Assam, a member of the New Life Church volunteer security team, had heard about the earlier attack at YWAM and as a precaution she had recommended that the security team be expanded for that morning at New Life. She attended an early service to worship and then stayed to stand guard for the later service so that others could be fed in safety. She was physically weakened, being on the final day of a three-day fast during which time she had been seeking the Lord's clear call and direction for her life. The late service had been dismissed and hundreds of people were still milling about the foyer when a gunman armed with a rifle, two pistols and a thousand rounds of ammunition opened fire in the parking lot, fatally wounding two teenage girls. As he entered the building Jeanne prayed, "Holy Spirit, be with me," and moved to confront him with her gun drawn. Answered only with bullets flying her way she made the only choice she could—she fired round after round until at last his rampage was brought to an end.

To many people, the shock of the attack is eclipsed only by the shock of how it ended. Most Christians bring their Bibles to church, and the thought that a fellow believer would bring a gun to church would never even cross their minds. But for people like Jeanne, the thought of leaving that gun at home on Sunday morning is equally foreign. Their call is unusual, and perhaps controversial for many. Because of this they're often lonely on Sunday mornings. Many are afraid of being misunderstood or even feared by those they are so passionate about protecting. They shun the Hollywood-tough guy Rambo image and mindset. They invest their own time and money into equipment and proper training. They conceal their weapons from sight and knowledge, having resolved to use them only as the last resort. Indeed, sometimes that holstered gun feels like the cross they've been given to bear and it weighs on them physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Yet despite all this they long for the honor of being deemed worthy by their King to fulfill their call in defense of His children. Some belong to official church security

teams, and others wish their churches had such teams. They aren't many, but blessed is your church if you have one or two. Theirs is The Guardian Call.

For some this may be difficult to accept, so let's unpack it a little. As a church body we believe in the wide and varied calls of God to all kinds of vocations and to all kinds of ministries. We believe that the Holy Spirit calls and arranges the different parts of the body as He wills to accomplish His purpose in and through the Church. We also believe that we have an enemy that opposes the gospel and the Church that is sent into the world to proclaim it. That enemy wars against the Church in the spiritual and physical realms, and we feel the effects of it daily. All believers are called to pray, but God has clearly raised up some to be prayer warriors who specialize in fighting battles in the spiritual realms through hours of daily prayer. Is it a stretch then to think that the Holy Spirit has also called certain men and women to stand against evil in God's created world? It's quite easy to accept this in the case of police officers and military personnel. We frequently thank God for them and honor their courage and the risks they take as they perform their duties. When we pray for God's protection we see our prayer readily answered in the faces of those brave people that wear the uniforms. But when the children of God at New Life Church cried out for His protection and deliverance that day as shots rang out inside their building, did not His answer come to them in the form of a woman whose own long fasting & prayer was being answered at the same time?

I'm privileged to know a number of people like Jeanne—quiet warriors in various vocations who are passionate about God's call on them to be ready to defend, and who yearn for an acceptance and understanding of their call within the body of Christ. So I wonder...what kinds of letters have filled Jeanne's mailbox in the weeks following the shooting? Has she received the care and concern of the other parts of the body? Or has she faced the scorn that so many like her fear? The media would have us call her a hero, and indeed she is. But my guess is that she'd say otherwise. My guess is that she'd only want to be known as a part of the body of Christ.

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