

On Tuesday evening, March 16, 2021, we heard the tragic news of the brutal murders of 8 individuals, six of whom were of Asian descent, and of the aggravated assault of one victim who survived. We were absolutely devastated at this senseless loss of life and callous disregard for human beings created in the image of God. We grieve for the victims and their families, and we continue to pray for all of those affected by this heinous crime as they deal with unimaginable pain and sorrow.

Furthermore, we were absolutely distraught when we found out that the shooter was a member of our congregation. The Long family have been members of our church for many years. We watched Aaron grow up and accepted him into church membership when he made his own profession of faith in Jesus Christ. These unthinkable and egregious murders directly contradict his own confession of faith in Jesus and the gospel.

We want to be clear that this extreme and wicked act is nothing less than rebellion against our Holy God and His Word. Aaron's actions are antithetical to everything that we believe and teach as a church. In the strongest possible terms, we condemn the actions of Aaron Long as well as his stated reasons for carrying out this wicked plan. The shootings were a total repudiation of our faith and practice, and such actions are completely unacceptable and contrary to the gospel.

No blame can be placed upon the victims. He alone is responsible for his evil actions and desires. The women that he solicited for sexual acts are not responsible for his perverse sexual desires nor do they bear any blame in these murders. These actions are the result of a sinful heart and depraved mind for which Aaron is completely responsible.

We have been in complete cooperation with law enforcement, and we pray for justice to be done. We pray for both earthly justice and divine justice.

We ask that all Christians would join us in praying for the families of the victims, the communities affected, the Long family, and the Crabapple Church family. We believe in a Holy and Righteous God who abhors evil and will judge all sin in perfect justice. We also believe that this Holy God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

We are thankful for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that offers forgiveness and new life to all who truly repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ alone for salvation. We are thankful for the grace and mercy of the Lord that gives us strength to endure in times of extreme suffering. We are also thankful for faithful friends, pastors, and partners in ministry who have covered us in prayer and have reached out with support and encouragement.

Our hearts are broken at this devastating loss of life. We will continue to grieve, mourn, and pray for the families and loved ones of the victims. Finally, we deeply regret the fear and pain Asian-Americans are experiencing as a result of Aaron's inexcusable actions.

We also wanted to provide answers to many of the questions that we have received since this tragedy occurred:

Q. Was Robert Aaron Long a member at Crabapple First Baptist Church?

A. Yes. These actions do not in any way reflect the biblical character of a true follower of Jesus Christ and member of His Church. In accordance with the biblical pattern and our church bylaws, Crabapple First Baptist Church has completed the process of church discipline to remove Robert Aaron Long from membership since we can no longer affirm that he is truly a regenerate believer in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5).

Q. Did Robert Aaron Long's father work for the church?

A. Robert Aaron Long's father has never been employed by Crabapple First Baptist Church.

Q. Do you teach that acts of violence are acceptable against certain ethnicities or against women?

A. Absolutely not. Scripture teaches and we believe that all human beings are created in the image of God. Every person is worthy of respect. All people are equal in dignity, value, and worth. We repudiate any and all forms of misogyny and racism. We categorically reject the idea that violence is appropriate, regardless of one's issues or motivations. Murder, especially, is a heinous evil and grievous sin. We also explicitly denounce any and all forms of hatred or violence against Asians or Asian-Americans.

Q. Do you teach that women are responsible for men's sexual sin against them?

A. We categorically reject this idea. Each person is responsible for his or her own sin. In this case, the shooter is solely responsible for his heinous actions, not the victims who were targeted.

Q. Why did you shut down your website and social media?

A. We took down our website and social media out of an abundance of caution. We feared for the safety of members of our church community.

Q. Have you cooperated with law enforcement?

A. We have fully cooperated with law enforcement and will continue to do so. We want to aid law enforcement in any way possible so that justice is done.

We request that all press inquiries be directed to info@crabapplefbc.org.