



Mayor Annette M. Blackwell

PRESS RELEASE

Mayor's Response to Shootings in Stafford Park

Maple Heights, OH (September 5, 2023) – As the Mayor of Maple Heights and Safety Director, which is an accountability and advisory role, I am the conservator of peace.

On Labor Day 2023, I was invited to join the All Church Picnic Northeastern Ohio Association of Baptist Ministers at our local park, Stafford. Shortly after my arrival, shots rang out in the distance and several small children ran away from the danger. Quickly along with the Pastors and many members of the congregations, we sheltered the children and attendees in place, pavilions and other distant parts of the park as a male victim ran away from the gunman. The shooter caught up to the victim in one of the park's bathrooms where he shot him dead in the sight and hearing of many. Also in the park's parking lot what we came to know, was that the male victim's pregnant wife had also been shot and another victim was grazed by a bullet during the shooting; the mother and baby did not survive.

The acts by the ministers and men in attendance on this catastrophic day were courageous, heroic, and swift, no one panicked. There is no preparation for this kind of violence, or advance warning, but there was unity, certainty, and immediate action on this difficult day by law enforcement, emergency medical services, our municipal mutual aid partners, and all that were able to help. These shootings were horrific and up close, unforgettable.

As this event came to an abrupt close, the Pastors encircled the people in and close outside of the main pavilion and while holding hands, we began to pray for the souls of the victims and healing and restoration for the witnesses. There was a consensus that the horrific actions that had taken place at the organization's annual event would not remove the love and spirit that they had fellowshiped in prior to the tragedies. The theme for the all-church picnic was *"Let all that you do be done in love."* **Corinthians 16:14**

The City of Maple Heights in this release would like to express its sincerest condolences to all that were affected by these shootings and pray that their faith and resolve bring them peace.

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