

The Sanctuary Church in Newfoundland, PA is not Blessing Guns - Open Letter from Pastor Hyung Jin Moon

February 26, 2018



Contrary to what you have probably read, the Sanctuary Church in Newfoundland is not "blessing guns." On February 28, several hundred couples will gather to (re)dedicate their marriages to each other and most importantly to God.

We do not worship the "rod of iron." We worship God who created us in His image and desires to have a personal relationship with each one of us. We seek His blessing on our marriages because we believe that He dwells most deeply in the love between husband and wife and between parents and children. Such blessed marriages are the building blocks of strong communities and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The Bible speaks repeatedly of Christ's followers as co-heirs of His Kingdom, as Kings and Queens, who must not lose their crowns (Rev. 3:11). God gave us the gift of freedom, responsibility and a sound mind. We are not slaves.

Only God gets to define what His kingdom is and how it will be ruled. It will not be a "welfare state." Each of us will be asked to exercise the same freedom and responsibility that God gave to the first human ancestors.

In the Book of Revelation, Christ speaks repeatedly of "ruling with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27), but the true meaning of the Greek word, "poimano" means to "shepherd" or "protect." The scripture tells us that God will shepherd His children with the rod of iron, guarding the flock not as a dictator, but as a loving father.

In the same way, each of us is called to use the power of the "rod of iron" not to harm or oppress as has been done in the satanic kingdoms of this world, but to protect God's children.

We saw in the horrific shooting that took place in Parkland, Florida, the repeated failure of government institutions to protect the lives of 17 students, teachers and staff members. The local authorities were contacted 39 times about the out-of-control and violent behavior of the shooter, but did nothing. Two citizens contacted the FBI with specific information about his threats to do a "school shooting," but the FBI also did nothing.

98% of mass shootings in the last 60 years have taken place in "Gun Free Zones." The idea that passing such laws will protect our sons and daughters is a dangerous and delusional fantasy.

You and I are responsible to protect our families, communities and, ultimately, our nation. The "rod of iron" allows not only strong men, but also women and the elderly to have the ability to protect themselves and others from such predators. If the football coach who rushed into the building to defend students from the shooter with his own body had been allowed to carry a firearm, many lives, including his own, could have been saved.

True faith in God is not a fairy tale world of delusion. It involves men and women, you and I taking responsibility to love our families by protecting them at the risk of our own lives. That is what my father, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, taught me before he passed on, and what I teach and practice with my own children and Sanctuary church community.

Christians and people of other faiths are being persecuted and even killed because of their beliefs in many countries around the world. God does not want us to be helpless victims. The right to self-defense with a firearm is not only an American right; it is a human right.

'Cult' Heir Hosts 'Blessing' Ceremony Featuring AR-15s, Causes Nearby School to Relocate Students for Safety

Ryan Sit
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Newsweek

Update/ A previous version of this article incorrectly stated that the Southern Poverty Law Center identifies the Sanctuary Church as an anti-LGBT hate group. The Center considers the church to be solely an anti-LGBT organization.

A Pennsylvania elementary school has informed parents it will temporarily relocate students to another school due to safety concerns on Wednesday. The move is a response to a "blessing" ceremony involving AR-15 rifles—similar to the weapon used to kill 17 people in a Florida high school on Valentine's Day.

Wallenpaupack South Elementary School, located in the Poconos, will move its students to the school's north campus when the controversial "Moonies" church, sometimes called a "cult," hosts an event commonly referred to as a "mass wedding" that is expected to involve semiautomatic rifles, WFMZ-TV news reported.



The heir to the "Moonies" cult has invited the church's followers to bring an AR-15 or similar rifle to a "blessing" ceremony on Wednesday, exactly two weeks after the rifle was used to kill 17 people in at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

The World Peace and Unification Sanctuary, also known as the Sanctuary Church, requested that its followers bring an "AR15 semiautomatic rifle or equivalents such as an AK semiautomatic rifle" to the 10 a.m. ceremony on February 28. The event—which was arranged months earlier, Sanctuary Church Administrator Gregg Noll told the news station—comes exactly two weeks after a similar military-style rifle was used in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting in Parkland, Florida.

The church is led by Hyung Jin Moon, son of the late Reverend Sun Myung Moon, a Korean religious leader and self-proclaimed messiah whose followers in the 1970s were known as "Moonies." In a press release issued the day before the school shooting, the church—identified as an anti-LGBTQ group by the Southern Poverty Law Center—invited "all heterosexual couples" who believe "Sun Myung Moon is the Messiah and that Hyung Jin Moon is his representative and heir" to participate in the wedding-like service either in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania or "at other locations via the Internet."

The event is called the "Cosmic True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humanity Cheon Il Guk Book of Life Registration Blessing," but is often described as a mass wedding where couples are blessed. "True Parents" is the term the church's followers use for Sun Myung Moon and his wife Hak Ja Han, who is also deceased. According to the church's website, Cheon Il Guk is defined as the sovereign "Kingdom of God (and/or Heaven)."

The church has dubbed the AR-15 the "rod of iron," "representing both the intent and the ability to defend one's family, community and 'nation of Cheon Il Guk.'" Promotion of weapons of war is written into the religion's constitution, sections of which read nearly identical to the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights. Under "Principle II" the "The Constitution of the United States of Cheon Il Guk" states, "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people (individuals) to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Couples who are unable to bring a rifle to the service "because of laws barring the purchase of such weapons, or other reasons" were asked to buy a \$700 gift certificate from a gun store to show their dedication to "purchase a 'rod of iron' in the future."

"These actions to participate with crowns and a rod of iron/gift certificate are signs of attendance, sovereignty and vigilance to protect God's coming nation of Cheon Il Guk," the church's website said.

Noll told WFMZ-TV that the event does not pose a threat to public safety. "Everything's going to be safe and secure," he told the station. Noll promised all the guns present on Wednesday will be unloaded.

All Wallenpaupack South Elementary School students who are absent on Wednesday will be marked excused and security will be ramped up on the campus all week, district officials told the news station.