

Christ for the Nations denounces alum's 'hateful actions'

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(RNS)—In the Buick sedan Vance Boelter left on a rural road outside Minneapolis, law enforcement found a letter addressed to the FBI identifying himself as “the shooter at large in Minnesota.”

Police also found a Ford SUV belonging to Boelter, filled with weapons, notebooks full of website names and other resources suggesting he stalked his victims, and a list of some 70 politicians that authorities say he also targeted.

But nowhere have they found an explanation for why Boelter allegedly killed state lawmaker Melissa Hortman and her husband and wounded two others, according to federal charges brought by the Department of Justice June 16.

Some, including Utah Sen. Mike Lee, have tried to tie the killings to radical left elements.

“This is what happens when Marxists don’t get their way,” Lee posted on social media.

Others have portrayed Boelter as a Christian nationalist.

There are hints in the 57-year-old Boelter’s resume to suggest he might have been motivated by radical opposition to abortion and a distorted belief in violence as an extension of spiritual warfare.

Influenced by New Apostolic Reformation



This booking photo provided by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office shows Vance Boelter in Green Isle, Minn., on June 16, 2025. (Hennepin County Sheriff's Office via AP)

An ordained minister who has preached at an evangelical Christian church in Congo, Boelter inveighed against abortion and claimed that “the enemy” caused people to switch genders.

Matthew Taylor, author of *The Violent Take It by Force: The Christian Movement That Is Threatening Our Democracy*, said he had listened to some of Boelter’s sermons from overseas.

Taylor said he did not hear any calls for violence but did hear influences of the New Apostolic Reformation, a movement of independent charismatic

apostles and prophets that seeks to have Christians dominate all elements of society, including the government.

Taylor said opposition to abortion—common in NAR and other charismatic Christian circles—has spiritual overtones, with abortion often depicted as a kind of child sacrifice.

“I think it is significant that he has apparently spent most of his life in and around communities and channels through which pretty radical ideas are flowing,” he said.

Attended Christ for the Nations in Dallas

The search for a motive has put a spotlight on Christ for the Nations Institute, an influential Dallas-based Bible college for nondenominational charismatic Christians, where Boelter graduated in 1990.

But school officials, who have confirmed Boelter attended the school, said they have had no contact with him since he left three decades ago.

“We are completely unaware of what led to this kind of mental, emotional, social, and spiritual bankruptcy since he left CFNI,” the school said in a statement posted to its website.

In addition, the statement denounced the “hateful actions” of the Minnesota shooter.

“CFNI unequivocally rejects, denounces, and condemns any and all forms of violence and extremism, be it politically, racially, religiously or otherwise motivated. Our organization’s mission is to educate and equip students to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through compassion, love, prayer, service, worship, and value for human life,” the Bible college said in a

statement.

"These core Christian values and principles, which we highly esteem and embrace, are in stark contrast to the hateful beliefs, behavior and actions now being attributed to Mr. Boelter."

Emphasis on spiritual warfare

Christ for the Nations, founded in 1970 by charismatic preacher and missionary Gordon Lindsay and his wife, Freda, claims 40,000 alums from 170 nations, according to its annual report.

Gordon Lindsay grew up in Zion, Ill., a failed Christian utopia founded by John Alexander Dowie, and then became a follower of faith healer and preacher William Branham before launching out on his own, according to a short film on his life produced by the ministry.

Lindsay eventually started his own printing company and a magazine called The Voice of Healing.

He was known for telling his students, "Everyone ought to pray at least one violent prayer each day," an idea still promoted by the school in promoting the power of prayer.

That quote has gained attention since last weekend's attacks, with some seeing it as a sign of hostile intent. But Taylor said that quote from Lindsay is a reference to the belief in spiritual warfare.

"They aren't saying a prayer to do violence against people, but it's spiritual violence," said Taylor.

In its statement, the school essentially agreed, saying that Lindsay's quote encourages students to "incorporate passion in their prayers as they contend for what God has for them and push back against evil spiritual

forces in our world."

"Christ For The Nations does not believe in, defend or support violence against human beings in any form," the statement read.

Alumni linked to New Apostolic Reformation

The school does have ties to leaders of the New Apostolic Reformation, including several evangelical supporters of President Donald Trump: Dutch Sheets, the school's former executive director; speaker and prophet Cindy Jacobs; and Lance Wallnau, a preacher who prophesied that Trump would become president.

A 2013 edition of *Voice*, the school's magazine, features an interview with Wallnau, where he discusses the 7 Mountain Mandate—a belief evangelical Christians should dominate all aspects of culture, including the government, media and education.

Jenna Ryan, who was convicted in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and later pardoned by Trump, is also a former student at Christ for the Nations, attending the school in 2003 and 2004, according to *The Washington Post*.

However, Ryan also told the *Post* she had dropped out of organized religion and had become a spiritual healer.

But Christ for the Nations is equally known for its influence on missions and Christian worship music.

Its alums include hymn writer Marty Nystrom, whose 1984 song "As the Deer" is popular in a wide range of churches; megachurch worship leader Kari Jobe; and Christian music artists Nicole C. Mullen, Russ Taff and

Tommy Walker, according to a 2023 issue of *Voice*, which highlighted the school's music programs. Since the 1970s, the school has released its own annual recording of live worship music.

School leaders said the school will be praying for the victims of the attacks.

"We extend our condolences and deepest sympathies to the immediate families, friends, coworkers and acquaintances who have been affected by this tragedy. We continue to lift up Democratic State Senator John Hoffman, and his wife Yvette who were both wounded, and are undergoing medical care. This should have never happened!"