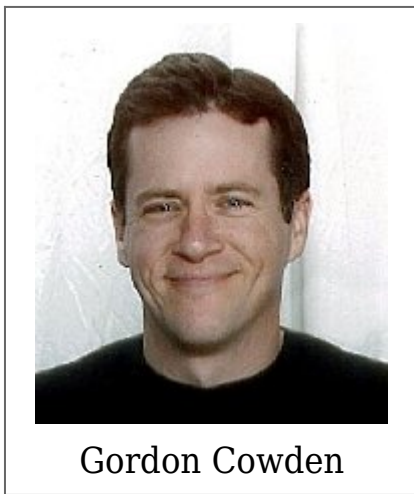


Colorado tragedy affects Texas Baptist family

July 25, 2012

AURORA, Colo. (ABP)—The impact of last week's shooting rampage at a Colorado movie theater was felt as far away as Texas, where a Baptist family mourned the loss of a brother and son.



Gordon Cowden

Texas native Gordon Cowden, 51, the oldest of 12 people killed during a July 20 midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises* in Aurora, Colo., attended Riverbend Church, an Austin megachurch affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, before moving to Colorado 12 years ago. A memorial service for him is scheduled at 11 a.m., Friday, July 27, at the church on North Capital of Texas Highway in west Austin.

Cowden's father, George Cowden, is a well-known Texas lawyer and former state legislator who has served as a trustee at Baylor University and as a director of the Baptist Foundation of Texas. Gordon Cowden's brother, George Cowden III, also an attorney, is member of Woodland Baptist Church in San Antonio and a leader in Baylor's alumni association. His sister, Gaylynn Cowden Kendall, lives in Lakeway, and before moving away from Austin served on staff at Riverbend Church.

In Colorado, Gordon Cowden reportedly attended Aurora's Colorado Community Church with his two teenage daughters. Last Friday night, he took the girls to a midnight showing of *The Dark Knight Rises*, the new Batman movie, at the Century 16 movie complex. A few minutes into the film a suspect now identified as a 24-year-old former doctoral student named James Holmes lit gas canisters and opened fire in the crowded theater, killing Cowden and 11 others and wounding 58. Cowden's daughters were unharmed.

Cowden's family released a statement describing Gordon, a self-employed real-estate appraiser, as "a true Texas gentleman that loved life and his family."

"A quick-witted world traveler with a keen sense of humor, he will be remembered for his devotion to his children and for always trying his best to do the right thing, no matter the obstacle," the family said.

"The family of Gordon Cowden wishes to express appreciation for the concern and prayers offered to us during this very difficult time," the statement said. "Our hearts go out to everyone that has been harmed by this senseless tragedy."

Roger Paynter, pastor of First Baptist Church in Austin, said Cowden spent some of his teenage years in the youth group at First Baptist before the family moved its membership to Riverbend, but he knew him mainly from several summers he spent with him at youth camp during Paynter's years as a youth minister.

Although he hasn't spoken to Cowden in several years, Paynter said he was not surprised that he would be doing something fun like seeing a Batman movie with his teenagers.

"The children of George and Mollie Cowden are all extraordinary adults, each of them a respected person of integrity and leadership and deeply

devoted to family,” Paynter said. “Though I mainly knew Gordon as a teenager, he was the kind of young man whose intelligence, kindness and honesty led you to believe that great things were in store for him. I understand that Gordon grew to be the kind of courageous leader all of us expected him to become. Though only 51, I am confident that Gordon had lived every minute to the fullest. I grieve enormously for his wonderful family.”

A 1984 graduate of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Gordon Cowden is survived by his parents, two brothers, one sister and four children. A memorial service is scheduled for him in Colorado today at Pathways Church in Denver.