

# Local clergy meet to discuss latest outbreak of violence in Boston

By [Travis Andersen](#) and [Nick Stoico](#) Globe Staff and Globe Correspondent, Updated February 22, 2023, 7:57 p.m.

Seven homicides in Boston so far this year, including the [shooting death of a 13-year-old boy](#) walking to his grandparents' house in Mattapan last month, prompted a meeting of local clergy in a historic Roxbury church Wednesday to discuss strategies to mobilize the faith community against violence.

The meeting was held at Charles Street AME Church and drew about 25 faith leaders from around the city, with more expected to join the effort in the coming weeks, said the Rev. Gregory G. Groover, the church's pastor.

"We are in a crisis now," Groover said in a phone interview Wednesday evening. "I know that elected officials and others would prefer not to use that language, for whatever reasons, but it is a crisis."

The meeting brought faith leaders together a day after a man was fatally shot in Dorchester Tuesday night, which followed a weekend of violence where a woman was gunned down in Dorchester and a man was fatally stabbed in Roxbury within hours of each other on Saturday.

The Rev. Eugene Rivers said it was "a packed house" inside the church, and Groover said he spent Wednesday afternoon taking phone calls from faith leaders of various beliefs in Boston and surrounding towns and cities who want to be part of the effort.

Groover said the meeting was about organizing clergy, setting next steps to engage city officials, and discussing ways to divert young people away from gang life. Rivers said this

will involve partnering with the Boston Police Department's gang unit to reach out directly to young people involved in gangs to encourage them to choose a different path.

"We're going to sit down with the Gang Unit [and] talk about areas that need the attention of clergy doing street work," he said.

When reached for comment on Wednesday, Boston police did not confirm or deny their participation in the plan that Rivers described.

"One homicide is too many. We're dedicated to solving each one as we work with our partners in the City toward strategic prevention and intervention efforts," Mariellen Burns, chief of communications for the Boston Police Department, said in an e-mailed statement. "We welcome the public's help in doing this work and have a long history of partnering with the community in a variety of ways."

Rivers said the city has experienced a recent spate of "dystopian violence," citing the fatal shooting of 13-year-old Tyler J. Lawrence in Mattapan on Jan. 29 and [a January fight at Boston Latin Academy](#) that ended with one student being sent to the hospital.

Groover said Lawrence's death has especially caused deep despair across the community.

"I got a call from one of my parishioners the other day and all I heard was powerlessness over the 13-year-old who was killed," he said. "It's just the extent ... and the types of violence that's taken place that really has gone beyond our normal expectation."

Also in January, two teenagers were arrested in connection with [a daytime triple stabbing](#) at a Dorchester park near a pilot school for grades 6 to 12, authorities have said.

On Feb. 11, 16-year-old Wilmary Mejia Matos allegedly stabbed a 21-year-old woman to death and wounded a 17-year-old girl in an apparent dispute over an explicit photo, authorities have said. Mejia Matos was ordered [held without bail at her arraignment](#) two days later.

On Tuesday, one man was fatally shot and another man was injured in Dorchester near 89 Wilrose St. around 7:30 p.m., police said. The injured man was expected to survive, police said. No arrests were made.

There have been seven homicides in Boston this year, compared to three at this time last year, police said.

A spokesperson for Mayor Michelle Wu's office said ensuring that residents feel safe and welcome in their communities is the highest priority.

“In the moments immediately following a serious act of violence, senior City officials are on scene to connect those impacted with resources such as the City's Neighborhood Trauma Team,” Wu's office said in a statement. “Each and every day the City is working closely alongside our public safety officials and neighborhood partners to intervene before violence occurs.”

---

Travis Andersen can be reached at [travis.andersen@globe.com](mailto:travis.andersen@globe.com). Nick Stoico can be reached at [nick.stoico@globe.com](mailto:nick.stoico@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@NickStoico](https://twitter.com/NickStoico).

[Show 17 comments](#)