

Pennsylvania church to bless couples toting AR-15 rifles

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A Pennsylvania-based offshoot of the Unification Church is encouraging couples to bring their AR-15 rifles with them to a commitment ceremony in the Pocono Mountains, a half-mile from an elementary school.

World Peace and Unification Sanctuary in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania, says it planned the Feb. 28 ceremony long before last week's massacre at a Florida high school. Authorities say the alleged shooter used an AR-15.

Tim Elder of the Unification Sanctuary said Tuesday that the church believes the AR-15 symbolizes the 'rod of iron' mentioned in the Bible's apocalyptic book of Revelation.



The Unification Church (led by Hyung-Jin Moon and his wife, above) is holding a blessing that encourages believers in Pennsylvania to bring along rifles - the church claims the guns are referred to in the Bible

'This will be a big thing for us. It's a new stage for us because it incorporates the rod of iron, as it is in Revelations. Revelations talks about the returning Christ ruling with the rod of iron,' Elder said.

'This rod of iron is the AR-15, in today's terms,' he added.

Up to 600 people are expected to attend the ceremony according to [WNEP](#).

Some parents are expressing alarm, but Elder says the weapons will be unloaded and secured.



The controversy arises from the fact that the ceremony will take place near a school, soon after the Parkland Florida shootings, concerning area parents

'It's something I would consider keeping my child home. It's scary,' said Liz Zoccola.

'I wish they wouldn't have it at all. I don't think there's a good time to have it, especially this close,' Kendra Hanor added.

The leader of the church is Hyung-Jin Moon. The church leader's father is the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, which often is described as a cult.

