

# *Church Security and Safety*



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*Note: See Bibliography at end of presentation*

## **Some thoughts on the matter (Church Security and Safety):**

When I was younger (many moons ago), the church was a place where the door was always open and visitors were welcome anytime of the day or night. The pastor, congregants (members and adherents) felt that the church was the safest place in the community. It was a safe refuge for those who just needed some time in prayer, counseling, and personal reflection. Church security was unheard of or, at least, minimal.

Over the course of the last couple of decades that trend has changed and most churches have scheduled times when their doors are open and the building is available for public prayer and other events in the community.

However, most recent acts of violence toward pastors and church members have brought about a new focus on church security.

In 2016, 65 violent deaths—defined as homicides, suicides, and aggressors killed in action—took place at churches or ministries. As well, a disturbing 25 percent—were killed as the result of domestic spillover. There have been several other events in which people were killed and/or wounded since 2016.

The most disturbing thing about these numbers is many of these violent acts were between people who had some relationship with the church and/or its members/employees.

Most of these attacks happened when church was not in service and church employees and volunteers let their guards down.

The statistics are alarming and warrant a closer look at how churches safeguard their members, volunteers and employees.

**With churches now offering their facilities for Daycare, Private Schools, and other Community events, Security concerns and Safety measures are needed more today than ever before.**

**“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”  
Ben Franklin**

**That is the reason for proper Security Measures and Mindsets to be taken in today’s churches.**

**I am thankful for our church’s Eyes and Ears Ministry (Our logo; your church can come up with your own logo to coincide with your particular type of security ministry). It is a great start for our church in dealing with Security concerns. I am thankful for specific individual’s work on this great program to assure the safety of our congregation.**

**The following are some incidents that triggered a tragic event within the churches of the United States.**

- A marital disagreement turns violent prior to a pastoral counseling session.
- A distraught intruder walks into the church office, making demands.
- A man carrying a semi-automatic weapon enters the sanctuary during a Sunday morning service.
- A highly jealous man thought that his wife was having an affair with another church member. The man approached the church member in the parking lot and a tragic altercation occurred in the parking lot.
- A distraught father became violent when picking up his child from a Day Care facility (church). This happened in front of the other children causing great distress within the fellowship.

This happened in other churches. It can happen in large and small congregations and in one-on-one counseling sessions. You should make sure your church is ready for such events even though there is a greater chance of something like this not happening as described.

**The Eyes and Ears Ministry has Created a Safer Church.**

We know that starting a safety and security program at your church doesn’t have to be complicated or costly—but, it’s important to do what you can with

the resources you have. “Many churches don’t know where to start, or think that a huge budget is necessary to develop a team,”

**Here are Ten (10) Suggested Checks and Balances to assure you are doing what you can to be Proactive in your endeavors for Church Security and Safety:**

**1. Identify trained professionals within the membership.**

Look for trained medical professionals, current or former law enforcement officers, and members with military or security backgrounds.

**2. Assign roles.**

In an emergency, determine who will call 911, who will talk to authorities, and who will talk to the media. Assign backups for each role.

**3. Invest in two-way radios.**

Two-way radios eliminate spotty cell service and scrambling to locate a list of internal phone numbers. Ushers, day care workers, and office staff equipped with two-way radios can relay information quickly throughout your building or campus. There are some very reasonably, less expensive 2-way radios available that are applicable for our campus.

**4. Create minimum entrances into the church (preferably one).**

Assign an usher or team member to lock doors once your service starts. Any unlocked doors should be actively monitored. All other entrances should be inaccessible from the outside of your church. Ensure that the exit doors remain unlocked from the inside.

I know that this is an inconvenience for any church and Daycare; however, I think it is a good idea to look at this as to making it easier to manage the security issue.

**5. Monitor doors and lots.**

During services, assign a volunteer to monitor an unlocked door or two volunteers for the parking lot. Equip your volunteers with two-way radios.

**6. Have Security volunteers with some experience to position themselves in strategic places in the church where they can observe comings and goings during the service.**

**7. Draw attention to the exits.**

This may seem obvious, but in an emergency, it's easy to forget about side or back exits. Have a consistent message to your congregation as to where the exits are located for quickly moving out of the sanctuary.

**8. Ask, "what if it happened here?"**

Schedule a leadership or staff meeting to spur discussion. Preferably, have a meeting with the congregants as to what security measures to be taken if there is a potential incident within the church.

Take advantage of the eyes and ears of all church members to report suspect or unusual behavior and help them understand their role in church safety.

Train employees and volunteers about the church security plan.

Employees and volunteers should understand this plan so they will know what to do in any number of situations that may threaten the church or its members.

Part of this training should include spending time explaining why a plan has been created and how members can partner with church leaders to help ensure church safety.

**9. Obtain a list of area crimes.**

Your local police department can provide a list of crimes that have happened near your address. It is not enough to think, "What we don't know will not hurt us."

**10. Knowing is half the battle.**

Invite local law enforcement, a fire marshal, ambulance service, or a professional Security Representative to your campus to identify trouble spots. They'll help you better understand potential risks and offer solutions to help you create a safer church environment.

**We have come this far...are we willing to do more?**

## **A Christian Security Service to Churches stated:**

### **Capitalize on your momentum.**

**By working these additional five steps (beyond the 10 stated above), your church can be ready to respond to just about any emergency:**

- Overcome objections and fear. Engage leadership in deeper discussions.
- Take a closer look at the unique aspects of your ministry and buildings.
- Ask, “What does success look like?” Map a strategy to bring your vision to life.
- Recruit, screen, and train a safety and security team that’s ministry-minded and calm; formalize the role of each team member.
- Create a plan that addresses all relevant emergencies.

***Your staff and church members can develop a safety and security mindset. The first steps are always the hardest. By overcoming objections and making small changes, you can help your congregation rise above their denial and fear, and create a safer place to worship for them and others.***

## **This Christian Security Service group suggested some:**

### ***Tips to Tighten Church Security (to coincide with the 10 tips mentioned above):***

#### **✓ Have Controlled Hours of Operation**

Make sure your church buildings have designated public hours of operation times and that someone is in the building anytime the doors are unlocked.

Try to avoid putting employees or volunteers in situations of being alone in an empty building – there is safety in numbers.

#### **✓ Have Keyed Entrances**

Church campus buildings are used by so many different people that it is sometimes difficult to control who is entering a building and who has keys to the building.

Volunteers sometimes end up with building keys and may leave and forget to lock the door behind them.

Make sure all doors have a keyed or swipe card entrance that locks automatically when closing. Change the locks on doors that unlock automatically with a key.

✓ **Have Lock-down Procedures**

Develop lock-down procedures, especially in children's areas. Determine the best approach to protecting church members in the event of a threatening or unsafe situation.

✓ **Communicate with Members**

Have a church communication plan in place to make church members aware of new security measures.

Make these communications public so that if there is anyone sitting among the flock, who intends to do harm, they are made aware that lots of eyes are watching them.

✓ **Last, but not least...Prayer is a Must**

**There is a lot of power in prayer so be diligent with praying for church safety. Use your prayer teams to cover church safety.**

**The world has changed in the past few decades making it important to think strategically about church safety. The bible says we should not have a spirit of fear, but we should use common sense and wisdom in our approach and planning for the unexpected.**

**If your church cannot provide all of the above suggested security measures due to lack of funds or lack of volunteers, please do what you can to get the ball rolling as to securing the place of worship for your congregation. There are some suggestions available above as to curtailing or minimizing the chance for a security incident at your church.**

**The main thing is: "Don't feel that God will protect you when there are things that you can do and you need to do to minimize security problems."**



**Some of the Tips for Church Security came from:**

- **Church Safety and Security - Brotherhood Mutual**

**<https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/church-security/>**

- **Smart Church Management**

**<https://smartchurchmanagement.com/church-security-are-your-members-safe/>**