

Worship Without Worry: Safety and Security for Places of Worship

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A collection of practical guides for
developing and implementing
a comprehensive program of
whole-church safety and security.

Can be adapted to places of worship of any size or setting.

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You get the idea: I'm happy for all of this to be used freely, but I'd like consideration and professional courtesy about how it is used. Let's keep our eyes on the goal: To help places of worship everywhere be more safe and secure, for low cost and in a reasonable, practical and easily applicable way.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Pastor Don Haymon II, of Calvary Apostolic Church in Denver, Colorado, (www.cacdenv.org) whose proactive approach to safety and security training for some of his key members led to the first document I developed about security for places of worship: *The Greeter and Usher Role In Church Security*.

Through the power of pastor-to-pastor sharing, the Internet and search engines—and the fact that it was free!—that twenty-three page document, along with other material, has been distributed to well over 20,000 churches world-wide.

As always, I gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance of my long-time friend from long-ago high school days in Arkansas City, Kansas, Jeff Adams, Ph.D., pastor of Graceway Church in Raytown, Missouri (Kansas City) (www.visitgraceway.org)

Jeff is a modern day Apostle Paul in his travels, message, mission and humility. (www.drjeffadams.com).

INTRODUCTION

CONTENTS

Chapter One (Page 6): Whole-Church Safety and Security. This provides an overview of what a thorough and comprehensive Church Life program can look like.

Sadly, the only thing many church members, staff and volunteers think about when the concept of church safety and security is mentioned, is responding to a shooter or to an assault on the church on Sunday or Wednesday or whenever your services are held. There is so much more to having a truly safe and secure church than that---as important as that is, of course.

You will be very happy with the results if you expand out from that as much as possible. Keep this in mind: If your church can develop a security response team for emergencies, it can develop an expanded program that includes whole-church needs and can reap the many rewards that come with the effort. It's possible, relatively easy and very, very rewarding!

Chapter Two (Page 11): The Church Safety and Security Committee, Security Response Team and Emergency Medical Response Team. This combination of volunteers and staff is the foundation of the rest of the program. If you're doing most of the work yourself, having a team to help you can make all the difference in your capabilities. Use this tiered approach to allow maximum participation by all age groups and capabilities. It's a wonderful to get and keep many people involved.

Chapter Three (Page 24) How to Assess Church Safety and Security. A safety and security assessment is sometimes called a site survey or risk analysis—and those can be useful as well. However, the method outlined here goes far past the traditional versions of those, to include all of the People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes of a place of worship.

If you are committed to the safety and security of every aspect of your place of worship, this is the material that will help you achieve your goal. It is probably the most comprehensive information you will find on *how* to assess the status of safety and security. Even so, there are issues you and others will think of as you consider your specific situations.

I use a question-and-answer format instead of a checklist, for two reasons: First, you can easily copy, paste and adapt specific questions into a document that perfectly fits your church needs.

Second, the idea of assessment is to compare the current status with the optimal situation. The questions usually provide a clear indication of what is optimal and you can determine the degree to which that is being fulfilled.

Chapter Four (Page 90): Clergy Security and The Role of the Worship Team in Emergencies:

This chapter contains two parts. The first is an overview of thoughts about how to increase security for pastors. The second was written at the request of a conference of pastors who wanted to have plans in the event of an emergency.

I combined the topics, because part of clergy security involves the critical time when the pastor is on the platform and most visible. That is also the time when the pastor can have a leadership role in using the worship team to help others.

Chapter Five (Page 96): Developing a Church Security Manual. A manual is what some churches refer to as their “plan”. It is primarily a way to keep all the policies, procedures and plans in one place—and those must be personalized for the place of worship.

I don’t have templates for plans and procedures, because they vary so much. However, even if you have never written such material before, you and others working with you will be able to produce items that work well for your needs. I mention in the material that there is no Eleventh Commandment for how such material must look. It just needs to be easily understood and effective.

Emphasize both safety and security. If you review the graphic on Page One you will be reminded of the many aspects of your place of worship that will benefit from assessment and preventive actions, as well as from plans for emergencies. The best approach is a balanced approach between *safety* and *security*.

•**Safety** (fires, accidents and injuries, vehicle safety, travel safety and medical, weather and mechanical emergencies.)

•**Security** (crimes against people and property, loss and misuse of property and anything else that could harm the well-being of a place of worship or the people who use it.)

Chapter Six (Page 101): The Greeter and Usher Role in Safety and Security. This is a good overview of whole-church safety and security but particularly applies to staff and volunteers who are in the foyer or assisting visitors in the sanctuary or auditorium before, during and after services. After services is just as important as before, but unfortunately that time-frame is usually not treated as being significant.

Training should be conducted on a regular basis to discuss what is considered the most likely concerns and how to respond to them.

Chapter Seven (Page 125): Planning For A Special Event. This was another short document for a group who asked for the information and found it helpful. Although the ideas may not work for every church, it can be helpful as a thought-starter.

The fundamental steps for safety and security planning for a special event are to consider:

- *What might happen and what effect will it likely have?
- *How could it be prevented?
- *How could it be detected if it happens?
- *What needs to be in place to protect people and property?
- *What responses are likely to be most effective.

Extra Material

Page 131: Sample portion of a Security Team Manual: This was given to me by a church security director and reflects great commitment to be organized about team roles and individual and team responses.

As you can see, he had a good number of volunteers for a team—and his church may not reflect the culture or resources of yours. However, it can be a very good guide and inspire some thinking about your own team and the security planning of your own place of worship.

Page 153: Sample Incident Report Form

Page 154: Sample Suspicious Event Form

Page 155: Sample Bomb Threat Form

Page 156: Final Thoughts

INTRODUCTION

What to call a safety and security program? Although no formal name is necessary, there are a number of names used to describe safety and security programs in places of worship: The Shepherd's-Care Program, Church Guardians, Watchmen, Church Life, Church Care, Church Safety Program, Gatekeepers, and others. Those are less cumbersome than *Church Safety and Security Program*, said or written repeatedly. They also sound a bit more friendly.

I'll be using *Church Life* in this document, to describe a program that is concerned about the well-being of every part of a place of worship. Unfortunately, using the phrase *church*, may seem to leave out those who are looking for information about synagogues, temples, mosques and meeting houses. That is not my intention and I hope the spirit of helpfulness in this material will come through.

Your own program's title may be much more creative or useful—let me know about it. Or, you may decide no formal name is needed and your church will simply implement some procedures and develop some plans. That's fine too!

Other valuable resources: As lengthy as this document is, it is certainly not all-inclusive. However, it does contain enough detail that someone of average knowledge can use it as a foundation for an effective program, perhaps combined with information and ideas from a variety of other sources.

Brotherhood Mutual Insurance has recently completed their material on church safety and security, to which I had the pleasure of contributing. What they have to offer, for a reasonable price, is excellent and very helpful. (www.brotherhoodmutual.com). www.GuideOne.com and www.churchmutual.com, have also been sources of easily applicable material in the last few years, much of it free.

Carl Chinn, at www.carlchinn.com, has an interesting story, offers valuable services and provides up-to-date statistics. Jim McGuffey at www.churchsecurityconsultant.com, is also a source of information you can use.

The fact that I haven't included others here is just to save space and time. Do some research and check out a variety of resources. Avoid extreme approaches, unnecessary expenses and anything that just doesn't seem right. Be open to new ideas—but you know your church culture and situation best.

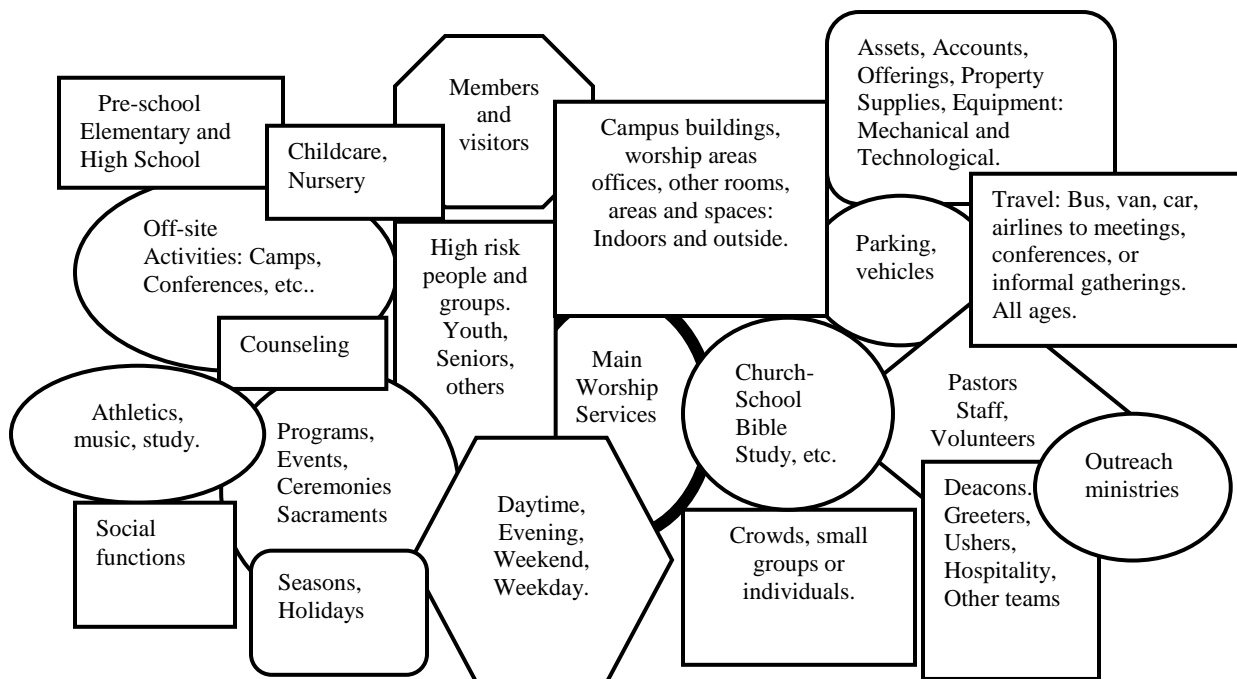
You and others, working together and critiquing each other, can be practical, reasonable and effective about developing a Church Life program. Stay focused on all of the People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes of your place of worship and you will have a program that reflects whole-church stewardship in the most positive ways.

CHAPTER ONE

WHOLE-CHURCH SAFETY AND SECURITY: THE COMPONENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM

This graphic is one I often use to visually show the big picture of concerns for even a small church. It also emphasizes the need to develop procedures and plans for the big picture, rather than only focusing on violence and disruption in the sanctuary.

Certainly, violence cannot be minimized as being only one of many concerns. However, leaders in places of worship cannot afford to overlook all the other things that can cause harm, on the grounds that no one is likely to be hurt physically from them. *Stewardship is a comprehensive issue and requires comprehensive measures.*



The concerns for any of those groups or activities include:

- *Violence and disruption.
- *Accidents, injuries, medical emergencies and illnesses.
- *Mechanical failures and hazards.
- *Weather emergencies.
- *Crimes against people or property.
- *Misuse, loss or damage to property.
- *Wrong-doing by staff, volunteers, members or guests.
- *Anything that harms the well-being of the place of worship as a whole.

The Foundation and Components of the Church Life Program

The Foundation

1. THE CHURCH LIFE PROGRAM IS UNDER THE GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP. Ultimately the program represents the whole-church and its leadership. Church leaders must be kept informed about significant issues and their input should be sought.

•**Regular meetings:** Meetings between everyone directly involved in safety and security activities will ensure coordinated effort. The purpose of the meetings is to share accomplishments, make reports, discuss concerns and receive direction and guidance from the committee and church leadership.

•**Fundamental policies:** Church leadership or committees or teams can establish fundamental policies and related procedures. These will vary according to the size of the place of worship and its programs. Among the most important policies relate to these:

***A non-criminal or non-emergency safety or security concern or incident:** This should be reported to church leadership or a designee, as soon as possible after it occurs. Incidents might include accidents, illnesses, a safety and security concern that was corrected or a non-emergency concern.

***Crimes or alleged crimes against people or property:** These must be reported to the police *immediately*, then to others who need to know. This is especially important regarding sexual crimes and other serious crimes against a person (assault, threats, etc.). No matter who the complaint involves or whatever the circumstances or apparent validity of the report, a policy should require that law enforcement be contacted as soon as possible.

*The policy should state that no one in a position of authority to whom a crime is reported will attempt to persuade the person reporting to stay silent about it or to let it be handled only by church staff.

*Crimes involving finances or church property should also be reported immediately. In some cases there is a desire to avoid embarrassment for a person or their family or for the church. However, for the good of the church and for those involved, a report should be made. Church leadership can let the police and prosecutors know about mitigating circumstances or restitution plans.

*A designated person should keep church leadership informed about the situation until criminal allegations are resolved appropriately.

Carrying of weapons: Church leadership or the Church Life Committee, if there is one, may be designated to develop policies, requirements and restrictions about concealed or open carrying of weapons, in keeping with local laws.

*At a minimum, a policy should state that carrying weapons must be done within the law, that weapons cannot be carried or stored in such a way that they can be accessed by children or youth, and that weapons will not unnecessarily be taken out of holsters in any location in or around the place of worship.

As a reminder of the tragedies that can occur: In Florida, in 2012, a pastor's daughter was accidentally shot and killed by a family friend who was showing the safety features of a weapon to the daughter's fiancé in what was considered a safe and private place--a small closet at church. The weapon discharged and went through the wall, striking the young woman. Heartbreaking! (The pastor and his wife handled that in a very loving way—you can find out about it through some Internet research.)

That situation and others is why church leadership must be prepared to make a criminal report if there is a law violation involving a weapon or to impose internal sanctions if the policy is violated in some other way.

When it is known that there are many weapons being carried in a place of worship: One way to consider the potential impact of weapons in a place of worship is to think of this: If there is a threatening situation in your place of worship and everyone who has a weapon, no matter what their capabilities, simultaneously shoots several times in the direction of the threat, how many shots might be fired? Where might the bullets go if they don't hit the threat target?

If it is common knowledge that several people (or dozens or hundreds) are carrying weapons, the Security Response Team (discussed in the next section) should consider providing quarterly training about legal aspects of weapons use, close-quarters firing and related topics.

Perhaps a handout could be developed or a website notice could be used, to remind people of church policies about weapon safety and reminders of the need to train about weapon safety and close-quarters shooting situations. If there are local resources for training, those could be listed.

Whatever you decide to do in your place of worship, keep in mind the safety and security of everyone, as well as the liability of the church.

2. THE CHURCH LIFE PROGRAM INVOLVES AN EXPANDED VIEW. A whole-church security program is wide-ranging, to include security, safety and the general well-being of every aspect of the place of worship: People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes

3. THE CHURCH LIFE PROGRAM INVOLVES WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND PLANS. There is too much involved, even in a very small church, for staff, volunteers, teachers and others to remember everything that is important for whole-church safety and security in large number of situations. The written material doesn't have to be complex, just complete and easy to understand and follow.

*For example, a procedure for turning off the water in the event of a burst pipe should be detailed and clear enough that most adults could do it. (Perhaps photos could help.)

*Another example: Limits on driving time for a bus or van driver must be so specific that there is no wiggle room for exceptions. That goes for all procedures where it is likely that someone may try to cut corners (which is to say, all of them!).

●One way to decide what to include in Church Life material is to use some of the traditional crime-prevention concepts and apply them to every concern:

Assessment (Inspection), Prevention, Protection, Detection, Response

Note: If you are familiar with crime prevention practices, you'll notice that the concept of *Resistance* is missing in that list. That refers to efforts to make a person, building or situation resistant to failure, attack or harm. It includes such things as fire-resistant fabric, puncture-resistant tires or a tamper-resistant lock, as well as being personally resistant to attack or to resisting verbally, physically or in other ways, during an attack. I include that concept under *Protection*.

Early on, I discovered that *Resistance* was being misunderstood as only referring to a requirement and expectation of physical resistance to a threat, in every situation. Rather than risk the misunderstanding I stopped using the term.

Two other familiar crime prevention terms, *Deterrence and Delay* can also be considered under Prevention and Protection.

4. THE CHURCH LIFE PROGRAM INVOLVES ONGOING TRAINING. Those who are responsible for observing, reporting or responding to problems and helping themselves and others in emergencies will receive training about their roles and how to fulfill them.

This training can be formal or informal and can be made part of ongoing activities, as mentioned in other material. When training is done with the spirit of working more effectively together to care for the whole-church, people usually enjoy it and want to be active participants.

5. THE CHURCH LIFE PROGRAM ENCOURAGES EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE IN WAYS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THEM. One of the most exciting things about a Church Life program is that it can be energizing, unifying and a way to build leaders and participants of all ages. People who may not become involved in any other special program of the church may be interested in helping with this one.

FIVE COMPONENTS

These five components will give your place of worship a strong foundation of safety and security, in a reasonable, well-balanced and effective way.

1. A CHURCH LIFE (SAFETY AND SECURITY) COMMITTEE.

***Security Response Team.** (Unarmed or armed, according to circumstances and the ability to train and retrain, as well as the desires of church leadership.)

***Emergency Medical Response Team.** (Medical professionals or non-medical volunteers who have an expanded role in the overall program.)

2. ASSESSMENTS OF THE STATUS OF EVERY ASPECT OF THE PLACE OF WORSHIP: (Ongoing, throughout the year, for every type of event and around the clock.)

3. PROCEDURES AND PLANS (AND TRAINING ABOUT THEM.) These answer the questions: What should be done and when, who should do it, how should it be done?

4. SAFETY AND SECURITY MATERIAL, COLLECTED IN A FILE, MANUAL AND DOCUMENTS. (Usually called the *safety and security plan*. This is all the material related to the program, as well as specific material for various roles and tasks.)

5. EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND INVOLVEMENT. This is what makes the program part of *church life*. It involves everyone and is done *for* them and *with* them, not *to* them.

The remaining chapters in this document will help you to more easily develop all of those components for your place of worship.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SAFETY AND SECURITY (CHURCH LIFE) COMMITTEE AND SAFETY AND SECURITY TEAMS

Having a Church Life or appropriately-named committee or team ensures a whole-church approach. It leads the way for the congregation by providing oversight of activities, developing procedures and plans and making recommendations to church leadership. Under the Church Life Team may be:

- 1A. Security Response Team (or a similar title).
- 1B. Emergency Medical Response Team (or a similar title).
- 1C. Safety Liaisons (or a similar designation).

Role and activities vary: How the committee functions will depend upon the size of the place of worship, its needs and preferences by church leadership. Among the most common functions:

- Ongoing status assessments and surveys:** Reviews reports, makes recommendations and follows-up.
- Develop activities and encourage participation.** The more the program is seen as an integral part of church life, the more effective it will be. A goal should be to involve as many people as possible in activities that interest them. (See material about the Emergency Medical team, for example.)
- Produce materials and coordinate security-related tasks and purchases.**
- Continuity planning.** This kind of planning allows the place of worship to keep functioning during interruptions of any kind. This is a complex process that will require a great deal of input. Ongoing assessments of the People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes of the place of worship can assist tremendously with this planning.
(As a reminder about continuity planning: In Boise, Idaho, a pastor reminded me that Noah was the first emergency planner—and it wasn't raining when he built the Ark.)
- Ensure acceptance, participation and the success of the overall program.** The role of the committee is to keep a well-balanced, appropriate, reasonable and practical approach to safety and security activities. This will require the committee to be active and informed and willing to intervene if needed to keep the balance that is needed.

Members of the Church Life Committee: A wide range of church members can participate. (Ages, experiences, capabilities, expertise, etc.)

- Look for members who are interested, will advance the program and improve it over time and are positive communicators about the concepts.
- Committee members will be most helpful if they are all concerned about the *big picture* rather than only their specific interest.

•Consider having advisory positions that rotate every six months, eight months or a year, to allow more people to be involved. Among the people who could be effective in an advisory role are:

*Younger adults and older adolescents, as a leadership and experience opportunity.

*Older members who may not have the physical ability to participate in other ways.

*Those who have mechanical, plumbing, HVAC, hardware or technical expertise. (However, don't assume they will want to donate time and labor.)

Practical aspects: This is a very important committee which requires maturity, excellent judgment and the ability to work and communicate well with church leadership and others. Not all people who want to participate will be as effective as needed and not all would be a positive factor—that happens in many settings, not just in churches.

•It is usually best to not establish a set number of members on the committee. In that way there is no requirement to fill a vacancy. It is also usually best to *request* specific members rather than asking for volunteers. This can help to avoid an awkward situation if a volunteer would not be appropriate for some reason.

1A. SAFETY AND SECURITY (CHURCH LIFE) COMMITTEE-- SECURITY RESPONSE TEAM

This group is sometimes called the Emergency Response Team, Safety Response Team or some other term to clarify its role. I think it works best as a sub-group of the Church Life Committee, because this team is usually focused on emergency responses rather than the whole-church program.

In addition, the Committee can ensure coordination of attire, the overall approach of the team, and pastoral preferences about Security Response Team activities.

Off-Duty Law Enforcement Officers: Many places of worship hire off-duty law enforcement officers to provide patrol during large main services or events and to ensure an immediate protective or tactical response while waiting for 911 responders.

This material will not address issues related to hiring officers since the process varies so much. It works well to have a member of the Church Life Committee or Security Response Team serve as a liaison between the church and the hired officer or group of officers.

Membership on the Security Response Team: Often this team is comprised of church members in law enforcement, fire department, paramedics, former military, etc. That affiliation will have a great deal to do with when and how they respond to emergencies of all kinds, including violence or disruption.

However, many churches do not have people from these professions and some officers are not able to attend main services or other events. Fortunately, this team does not have to be a tactical-response team. The primary activities of the team in most situations other than a violent incident, are to observe, evaluate what is happening, call for assistance and help others as needed, so any capable adults can have a role.

Other issues: There are wide variations in attire, identifying pins, equipment, weapons, etc. Check websites that give detailed information about security teams or contact other places of worship that may have experiences to share.

Liability concerns about emergency responses: Anyone may choose to respond in any emergency or a suspicious situation, whether they are authorized to do so or not. However, if a person or group is designated by church leadership as a security responder (or if it is known a person or group *intends* to be responsible for that role) the church may be liable ethically, morally and legally, for the actions taken. In addition, the reputation of the church can be harmed by over-zealous responses or ill-judged or untrained actions.

Seek input from insurances providers to know your coverage as it relates to such issues. Ensure compliance with all related laws. Consider consulting with an attorney who understands or can research the issues involved. Talk to security leaders or directors in churches who have already done research about the matter. Make regular training on many related topics a requirement of participation.

Common Functions of a Security Response Team:

- Usually given specific assignments: Provide protection for the pastor or others during and after services, patrol parking lots, check halls, maintain a post in the sanctuary, etc.
- Respond to various emergencies (safety, security, weather, mechanical and medical) and call for 911 assistance when needed.
- Assist during and after building evacuations.
- Work with greeters, ushers and others to observe at entrances, in the sanctuary, throughout the building, parking lots, etc.
- Evaluate situations to determine the level of threat and response needs.
- Handle non-violent disruptions through intervention, communication, containment or diversion and get 911 assistance if appropriate for the situation.
- Respond to violent incidents in the way that is appropriate for training levels and capabilities of the team. For example, police and military members or an armed person or team, may intervene directly while calling for assistance. Those without those capabilities may call for assistance, then assist as many people as possible.
- Use safety equipment, flashlights, AED devices, first aid kits, etc.

Expanding the work of the Security Response Team: Encourage the team to expand their efforts and their roles with individuals and groups:

- Train or provide material about travel safety (commercial travel or vehicles) event safety and security, liability concerns and issues related to high-risk or high-threat programs (counseling, child-care, special needs, money handling, food banks, shelters, etc.)
- Research and train about recent events, nationwide and locally. Provide information on how to prevent similar situations and how to respond if they occur. (Violent incidents,

criminal actions, accidents, problems related to staff and volunteer issues, serious emergencies, etc.)

- Provide training to interested people about community crime concerns, personal safety, home safety and security, computer safety, and related topics, based on the expertise and interest of team members.

Training for a Security Response Team: Training may be provided by law enforcement or fire service personnel or by credible volunteer individuals or groups or businesses who specialize in such training.

It is also effective for team members to research topics and present the training, as long as their resource material is balanced and appropriate. Church insurance companies and related publications are good resources for many safety and security topics.

Among the training that would most likely be beneficial:

- Requirements, policies, liability concerns, scheduling, attire, conduct.
- Situational roles, hand signals, observation and reporting techniques and methods, etc.
- Evacuation procedures for each area.
- Quick lock-down or lock-out procedures.
- Identification of barricades, barriers, shields and concealment, throughout the facility. Identification of shelter-in-place locations and how those might be used.
- Develop plans for a variety of situations. (Have team members research events in other churches to develop realistic scenarios: Minor and major disruptions, fires, violent situations, explosives, threats, illnesses and injuries, etc.)

Special training for handling disruptions:

Purposeful disruptions: Individuals and groups may disrupt services or events in a variety of ways, some more disturbing and frightening than others: loudly chanting, standing silently, holding signs, filling the worship area with supporters, doing a “flash mob” down the aisles, shouting, trying to get the microphone and through other methods.

A disruption may also be caused by someone who wants to speak to the congregation or engage the pastor during services. These can be dangerous situations, because the person may not be mentally stable and may react violently to attempts to stop him or her from speaking.

In most cases that have been handled effectively, some deacons, ushers, security team members and others have kept the congregation calm while others have positioned themselves between the disrupting people and the congregation and pastor.

Unintentional disruptions: A disruption may also be caused by an emotional or excited member or guest who sings, cries, shouts, dances, talks or does other disruptive things without a violent intent.

- Make sure that the pastor and the team agree about at what point the team should take action about a non-violent and apparently non-threatening situation, even though it may be somewhat disruptive. This will vary by place of worship and the situations there. For

example, in one church the pastor has instructed security team members to not stop a young man who for years has habitually shouted scriptures or prayers during services.

In some cases the team can help educate the pastor about concerns, but in others the pastor may have a better understanding about the congregation and what is and is not a problem. This especially applies if non-members are used as security staff.

- Another kind of disruption is when the person involved is not doing anything overtly frightening but congregation members are unnerved or made uncomfortable. For example, in one urban church, street people come into the church, especially during cold weather. If the odor is unpleasant, members move to another pew. Sometimes the street people will move as well, apparently just to make a point of some kind.

If there was an easy solution to that kind of challenge I'd provide it, but there isn't. There are options, according to the location of the church, if the street people are known, if they stay at shelters that could be consulted, and if they seem to be able to be reasoned with or not. This is a prime example of a situation that should be discussed well before the event happens.

Potential methods for dealing with disruptions:

- Calming and controlling techniques.** These can be very useful for dealing with non-violent individuals who may be well-meaning but disruptive. Research these concepts online and/or by contacting behavioral experts or counselors—particularly if you have a specific person or a specific concern in mind.

- Shield and Guard.** This involves having security members surrounding a potential target or, as mentioned above, standing solidly between the disruptive person or group and the target of their actions. Training can consist of scenarios at different locations in the church.

- Divert and Direct.** This is a method for moving a disruptive person out of an area and into a more safe or controlled area until police arrive. Sometimes simply having several people walking with the person, with one security member leading the way, hustles the person out of the area safely.

Special training for handling violent incidents: This is the kind of event that is most dreaded and usually the most talked about when discussing church safety and security. It may involve any kind of weapon and may be directed at everyone in the room or only at one or a few people.

While it is true that plans don't usually work exactly the way they are written, they are very helpful for getting staff, the pastoral team, other church leaders and those directly involved with safety and security, thinking about scenarios involving violence, with a focus on Prevention, Protection, Detection and Response.

- If you will be training armed, non-law enforcement security team members, use knowledgeable instructors (law enforcement or through commercial resources) or do careful research about the best practices for situations.

- Save a record of training by date, training received and those present. Save all printed material. Practice on-site.

- Restrict training to team members and those involved in the security program. Especially do not have casual observers or children present.
- Develop plans and contingency plans for the team, based on several potential outcomes or responses by an assailant.
- Keep in mind that many individuals in the congregation may have their own plans of response and/or may be armed, and the security team will not know about it.
- Focus training first on *slow, walk-through scenarios* to gain increased awareness of potentials and to discuss responses and potential results. Real-time practice will be useful, with a well-trained team and careful attention to safety.
- Include distant and close-quarters encounters with an armed assailant who seems intent upon harm. (Slow motion or real time.) This will be effective for both armed and unarmed security teams. *What will you and the team do in a crowded sanctuary or meeting room, if armed violence occurs? Up close? With a firearm? With a knife? With an explosive?*
- Using dummy weapons or no weapons is one way to ensure that no one has a loaded weapon.
- Include training for how the team may split-up, with some team members helping the congregation find shelter or assisting in an evacuation, while others may be attempting to stop or block an assailant.
- Inform key people (platform team, ushers, deacons) of response plans. Discuss their roles in the event of a violent situation.
- The size and culture of the church will determine the degree of training or communication with the congregation or long-term members about their potential responses. The best way to do so is to incorporate some of that information into a quarterly announcement about responses to fires and other emergencies.

Contents of a Security Response Team Manual

Security Team members should have written information and documented training. This is best contained in a manual that can be used as a reference. The following topics will likely be in manual, but your team may need many other items of information as well.

1. Overall role of the security team.

Among the topics that might be discussed in this section are:

- Who does the team report to and what is the reporting chain within the team. (No matter what the expertise of those involved in security work in the church, church leadership should have some oversight role in the structure and procedures of the group.)
- The mission of the team within the church function.
- Liability concerns. Research these or get information from an attorney or your insurance company.

2. Membership on the team

- Application and approval process.
- Requirements and limitations of participating in the security team
- Armed status (or information about carrying non-lethal weapons, if that is an issue)
- Expectations regarding being present at most services when possible (or as scheduled).
- Procedures for notifying about absences.

Note: Security Team leaders or church leaders need to be willing to remove someone from a security position if it appears guidelines are not being followed or that there is a concern about the manner in which the role is being fulfilled. This isn't easy to do, especially with sincere volunteers, but it is sometimes necessary.

3. Schedules and activities

- Schedules and how they are assigned (if there are enough people for that.)
- Services and activities at which there will always be a security presence.
- Security at services and activities other than the primary ones.
- Make sure that potential members know they will be doing more than standing by in case there is violence or an emergency. List other activities: Preventive patrol, open and close the building, observe for safety concerns, provide training, etc.

4. Attire, Communications and Equipment

- Attire: Uniform and non-uniform issues (for law enforcement) Anything that is issued or that is required to be carried.

- Communications: Phone trees for notification when away from the church.

Walkie-talkies or phones. Code words and phrases to get assistance.

- Equipment issued: (If any)

For example: Flashlights, portable, hand-held radios, chemical non-lethal weapons.

- Weapons, if applicable.

*Who will be armed and who will not be. Will they wear indicators? Training?

*Protocol for notifying lead team member, if a person who is usually armed is not carrying a weapon.

*Requirements and restrictions for being armed as part of the security team.

*Requirements and restrictions for using the weapon as part of the security team. This will be very generic, but it is useful to at least have some kind of a written statement.

5. Activities during services

- Pre-service briefing (Location, purpose) This is a valuable time and needs to be part of every service, as a way to focus the efforts of the team.

- Service activities and posts (with descriptions of duties.)

The people involved should help develop some of the ideas about their security activities.

•Possible posts:

Clergy (pastoral) security during services and afterwards. (This probably should not be like a Secret Service role, but there should be focused attention on the pastor and other visible church leaders.)

Left side, right side, front and rear of the worship area.

Foyer or lobby

Roaming patrol inside and outside.

Other assignments throughout the facility or in the service.

•After-service assignments: This may include pastoral security, security in parking lots, checking the facility thoroughly before closing and other assignments.

6. Preventive assignments:

•Patrolling (areas of high priority, method, public relations, contacting suspicious persons, etc.)

•Conducting a safety and security assessment of a portion of the facility, the parking lot or other outside or inside area.

7. Guidelines for responses in incidents involving a violent person.

This section of the manual will involve procedures for two primary goals: Getting people to safety and stopping or diverting the attacker. Information and plans will be based on the skill and knowledge of the team members, as well as on their status as active law enforcement or not.

8. Guidelines for responses in incidents involving a disruptive person.

This should be developed with input from the pastoral team. (See the material on page

9. Response in a fire or similar emergency.

This section might include evacuation routes, gathering places and team and individual responses to various areas of the building, according to the location of the event.

10. Other issues identified by the team or the Church Life Committee. Every place of worship has a different situation involving security teams or hired security staff, so the team manual will be different for each one. The important issue is that when someone is part of a security team, they have written material to help them understand their roles and responsibilities as well as requirements and restrictions.

Note: Any of these Security Team Manual sections could be combined or separated even further. Generally, it is wise to have very specific assignments for responses to most emergencies. Otherwise, everyone thinks someone else will do an emergency response task.

Other thoughts:

•The topics listed above are merely suggestions for how to provide training and guidance for those on a security team. If the team is being newly organized, one part of training might be to have the group work together to develop guidelines.

- Even if team members are emergency response professionals (police, deputy sheriffs, state or federal law enforcement or firefighters) they will benefit from receiving training for their role as a church security team members—and perhaps for providing it as well.

1B. SAFETY AND SECURITY (CHURCH LIFE) COMMITTEE -- EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE TEAM

This team may be called the EMRT or something that reflects its role better, such as the *Helping Hands Team*, *Emergency Aid Team*, *Emergency Assistance Team*, *Willing Workers*, *Ambassadors* or similar titles. It has the potential to be a tremendously effective part of the Church Life Committee and can serve a wide range of functions, according to the needs of the place of worship.

Safety Team: Some churches do not have members who can or will serve on an EMRT team. They may find it helpful to have a designated *Safety Team* that can provide basic assistance until emergency help arrives. This group is not an Emergency Medical Response team, but at least can be prepared to provide help or serve as a resource in other ways--assisting someone who is feeling unwell in the restroom, helping on the playground, etc.

Among the functions of an EMRT:

- Provide stand-by assistance prior to the arrival of emergency responders.
- Provide first aid and assistance in the event of minor accidents or illnesses.
- Evaluate potential activities or situations that might present medical or safety concerns for participants and make recommendations about them.
- Work in coordination with security team members and others at special events, providing oversight of conditions. Ensure the presence of adequate first aid supplies and equipment.
- Provide training and information to staff members and teachers about a variety of illness and accident related topics.
- Ensure proper safety measures are taken about body fluids or other bio-hazards.
- Add to the overall church outreach and safety and security program.
- Provide an increased level of comfort and assurance to the church family and to guests, if they are present during special events.

Expand the role past the obvious: If the only function of the EMRT is to be on stand-by in case of a medical emergency, members may lose interest over time and the group may no longer attract volunteers. It also prevents the team from being as useful as they potentially can be. A walk-through of the church building and grounds can help disclose many opportunities for using an EMRT as a resource or in a stand-by mode.

- Playgrounds, nursery, child care and classrooms: Could staff members and teachers use information about how to respond to emergencies while waiting for assistance?
- Kitchen, restrooms and utility areas: Are there conditions that could be harmful or unsanitary?

- Child care and nursery: What training should helpers receive? Are diapers or other sources of bacteria being handled and disposed of safely?
- Baptismal area: Should an EMRT person stand-by during baptisms to assist if someone has an emergency or if there is an accident?
- Are there special medical needs within the congregation? If it is known that someone has a medical condition that might require emergency response, are EMRT people aware of it and aware of symptoms of an emergency and the best response while waiting for help to arrive?
- How can the EMRT assist after a disruptive or violent situation or other emergency?
- What kind of written material could EMRT members have available for distribution to individuals?

If the EMRT contains medical professionals there will be different options than if it does not—but there are many areas of health, safety and emergency response in which both professionals and volunteers can be helpful.

Establishing and Maintaining an EMR Team

1. Identify a lead team member who will work with church leadership to develop the team and their activities. If your church has one or more medical professionals as members those will probably be the appropriate people to form the team and develop procedures and policies related to team activities.

Many churches find that non-professional volunteers are available more often to provide coverage at all services. If trained appropriately and retrained regularly, they can perform effectively and often are even more committed to expanding the program appropriately than are medical professionals who have limited time.

2. Establish the role of the team and team members. This often evolves over time as the team changes or grows, but it is a necessary starting point.

- What is the team expected to do?
- What is the team restricted from doing, except in extreme emergencies?
- How much time commitment will be involved?
- What knowledge and training level are necessary to fulfill the basic functions of the role?
- Is there a membership application and acceptance process? If so, what criteria are applied?

3. Establish training and retraining for general and church-specific needs. Training needs can be determined by consulting with the insurance carrier, talking to leaders in churches of similar size that have EMRTs, through the Internet or other resources, and by considering the programs of the specific church and what medical responses are likely to be needed over time.

Medical professionals: If your team contains only of medical professionals most training and certification will be taken care of through their own requirements.

Non-medical volunteers: If you have volunteers, it is reasonable to require that every person on the EMRT should be certified in CPR and other basic lifesaving responses, and should be recertified as needed. Without such basic training and refresher training, team members may not be as helpful as needed. That may not be possible in some churches, but is a worthy goal.

- Other training can be provided in the format that works best for the time available, but should include time to consider specific EMRT operational issues: Where should members sit during services? How can the EMRT be notified if there is an emergency outside the sanctuary? How will communication between EMRT members be accomplished? (Portable radio, cell phone, voice only?)

4. Determine what equipment and supplies will be necessary or useful. Costs and reasonableness will have an effect on this issue. Among the items found useful in some places of worship (but not necessarily appropriate for all situations):

- One or more AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators)
- A wheel chair to assist someone who is unable to walk easily but not injured or ill to the point of needing an ambulance. Wheel chairs are especially useful in churches or meetings with many senior participants.
- Home-quality blood pressure and pulse devices for use by volunteers, or stethoscopes and other professional quality items if there are professionals on the team.
- One or more blankets and a small pillow. (These must be washed or clean or the covering washed or cleaned after each use.)
- Bottles of water.
- Other supplies based on specific needs, perhaps changing according to events or seasons or for specific potential problems. For example, there would be different supply needs at a youth retreat than for a women's conference.
- Most EMRT members find it useful to have a flashlight, in the event of power outages, smoke or the requirement to assist in areas with poor lighting.
- Latex or similar gloves and anti-bacterial wipes should be carried by all EMRT members and extras should be in the supply container.

Most churches at least have several First Aid kits with the usual supplies for use by teachers and staff as well as EMRT members. (A useful addition to those kits is a magnifying glass and a small flashlight to see splinters, torn nails, scrapes and small cuts.)

- A semi-private space may be useful for assistance in some cases. (There should always be two same-gender helpers in a setting that is even partially private.) The space could be an unused office or classroom area, a corner of a larger room or even a restroom that is closed to the public when being used by the EMRT members and someone needing assistance.

5. Establish procedures for the actions of EMRT members when assistance is needed. This will best be done by listing the types of emergencies and what response is required and what is not appropriate. T

Note: In all major medical emergencies or when there is a question about the status of a situation, 911 should be called *first*. This is true even if there are medical professionals on the team. An ambulance should be on the way if it is needed or if there is a doubt.

6. Establish a procedure for keeping a record of EMRT actions. This documentation is crucial. At a minimum the records should contain the person for whom assistance is provided, the EMRT member, the time, date, location and a description of the situation and what action was taken and advice was given. If possible and reasonable the person being provided assistance should be asked to sign the response log to indicate the accuracy of the information.

- If the emergency involves an accident in or on church property or involving church equipment an immediate and complete record must be made either by EMRT members or others. The area should not be changed until photos of the location and conditions are taken. Any statements made to EMRT responders or others should be noted.

7. Set up a schedule to ensure that EMRT members are present at major services. This may only require one person or several, according to the size and setting of the place of worship.

- The schedule should show the location of the team members so pastors and other church leaders can be notified ahead of time about the location of EMRT members, if that is desired.

8. Develop the EMRT as an effective group under the guidance of church leaders. Team effectiveness requires a level of cohesiveness as well as understanding the value of their commitment. The EMRT leader can work with church leadership to help establish and maintain this sense of camaraderie and purpose within the group.

It is especially important that EMRT members feel they are representing church leaders and are under their authority, not functioning autonomously. This is usually not a problem, but even small problems may be prevented this way.

9. Keep the team and the program fresh. Some churches will have needs for EMRT responses at every service or event or every few services while others may rarely have a response need. Whatever the situation, it is important that EMRT members stay active and enthused about their roles.

Outreach programs. EMRT members can:

- Sponsor a wellness seminar or fitness clinic
- Host a blood donation drive,
- Set up a health service vaccination day
- Arrange training for new parents
- Develop nutritional information in conjunction with seniors programs

- Become resources for other issues related to the physical needs of members and visitors.
- Provide playground safety tips for children.
- Sponsor safety poster contests in children's classes, Vacation Bible School or other programs, related to parking lot safety, safety in the church, etc.

Training and skills development: Another way to ensure that EMRT members stay committed is to provide training—often it can be found within the congregation or the community, for free or minimal charge.

- Meet with paramedics to discuss best practices prior to the arrival of assistance.
- Get information from a physician, nurse, rehab counselor or other specialist about symptoms of drug overdoses, diabetic reactions or other medical conditions.
- Get training about how to deal with the aftermath of a medical emergency when they and the families of those being treated might be vulnerable to stressful or emotional reactions.
- Meet with EMRT members from other congregations in the community.
- Communicate regularly with EMRT members in congregations outside the area, then share the information or questions that might be asked.

1C. SAFETY AND SECURITY (CHURCH LIFE) COMMITTEE-- SAFETY LIAISON

One of the best ways to ensure that the safety and security program becomes an integral part of church activities is to assign a Church Life Safety Liaison for every event, other than main services in which the Security Response Team will probably be present.

The person in charge of the event can select the liaison, notify the Church Life Committee by phone or email and provide the liaison with instructions.

Instructions for the Safety Liaison: A one or two sheet set of instructions can provide information needed by the Safety Liaison in the case of a wide range of emergencies. Event-specific information may be necessary and can be developed by those who usually are involved in the activity or by the Church Life Committee, Security Response Team or Emergency Medical Response Team.

- Contact phone numbers for maintenance or mechanical, electrical or plumbing emergencies.
- Information about unlocking and locking-up the building or rooms, setting alarms, etc. Reminders to make sure outside doors are kept locked if there is no one present to observe them.
- Safety requirements for starting electrical equipment, using the kitchen facilities, playground, social hall, etc.

- Instructions to contact the police if a crime or potential crime is reported, rather than waiting to notify a staff member or others.
- Evacuation instructions and the safest direction in which to leave and gather.
- Other information needed to be prepared in the case of an emergency.

Off-Site events: A Safety Liaison is particularly helpful for events away from the church facility, to ensure that everyone is alert and careful and that someone is ready to get assistance if needed. In some cases it may be desirable for the Safety Liaison to go to the location ahead of time to see if there are specific needs or concerns.

For events involving youth and children: There must be constant supervision and oversight. No unsafe or inappropriate activities should be allowed. Any that are observed will be stopped immediately. If the situation is severe it should be reported to church leadership or the Church Life Committee, for follow-up.

Large events: More than one Safety Liaison may be needed at some events. The Security Response Team may need to be involved—but scheduling is not always possible on weekdays or in the evening. The Emergency Medical Response Team may also be able to help.

SUMMARY

It is possible for a place of worship to prevent many safety and security concerns and protect people, places, property, programs and processes from harm. A safety and security committee can have a strong leadership role.

By using a Security Response Team, Emergency Medical Response Team and Safety Liaisons, safety and security can become an integral part of the stewardship of the place of worship.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW TO ASSESS THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

This chapter has its own Table of Contents, to make it easier to find the material you are seeking.

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INTRODUCTION

This material was developed to:

- 1.) Give you the information, ideas and guidelines you need to conduct an effective assessment of your place of worship, as it relates to people, places, property, processes and programs, as well as emergency planning and continuity planning.
- 2.) Encourage a focused and balanced approach to safety and security planning.

- There are so many variables in places of worship that no resource is applicable in every way. However, this information can be adapted to almost any place of worship. Create a customized assessment document using the material in *Focus Points For Assessing* (p. 49) as your guide—eliminating or adding a few or many elements.

- You will find ideas here that you may not find elsewhere, because I wanted to share some tips and techniques that fit my approach and style—and might fit yours as well.

- Even if your place of worship has a formal security team, they may be more involved with threat analysis and response than with assessing and evaluating the facility, programs and processes. You can use this to supplement their work. Or, if you are part of a security team, this can add to your material and your efforts.

- Do not let the scope or details of this material discourage you. When you put it into practice you will find it to be a very logical and easily handled series of tasks, especially when working with others on your team.

- I often say (with a smile) that security assessing is not a sacrament and there are no commandments about how it must be done. There *are* requirements for the final product if you want it to be optimally effective. But, how you get to that point is up to you, your team and your church leadership. This material can help you develop something that works perfectly for your situation.

To make the material easier to use: If you receive this in an electronic file format, consider printing it out and placing it in a binder. The binder can become an excellent resource document for many other copied or scanned items.

Keep current: It's inevitable that this document will change over time as people ask for specific information (or as I recall something I meant to mention!) I will put the month and year of the current document on the front cover, and will put a note on my website when revisions have been significant enough to require an update.

Secure your material. Keep completed assessment materials in a secure location or in a computer file. A logical place to keep it is near the folders for insurance papers and similar information.

HOW TO CONDUCT A SECURITY ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

A security assessment is an inspection of a:

person, place, property, program or process

to evaluate the *current condition* of safety, security, overall well-being, and preparedness for an emergency.

- It considers risks, sources and nature of threats and criticality of harm.
- It considers the factors that would enable: prevention, protection, detection and response.
- It includes a report (from a memo to a larger document) containing findings, opinions and recommendations.

A thorough security assessment will include reviewing and inspecting:

- Safety** (accidents, illness, injuries, potential harm to people or the organization.)
- Security** (crimes, violence, loss or damage or related harm, from any cause)
- Emergency preparedness** (response and recovery related to any harmful event or situation of any kind. This may also include plans to be a resource for assistance if an emergency occurs in the community.)
- Continuity planning** (preparedness to continue services and programs of the place of worship, without significant interruption.)
- The overall status of each component of a safe and secure place of worship.** (anything related to the place of worship or its assets and activities that can be inspected, reviewed, inventoried or evaluated.)

In this material, the term *security assessment* incorporates all of the terms sometimes used to describe the concepts of site surveys, audits, safety inspections, and emergency preparedness assessments.

FOCUS AND BALANCE ABOUT RISKS AND THREATS

A thorough assessment can't be done in a day, a week or a month—it must be part of a continuous series of activities.

The Macro/Median/Micro Focus

There are reasons to be concerned about many potential problems. However, it isn't necessary to be in a lock-down mode to be reasonably secure and prepared. This material can help you stay balanced in your efforts.

Your security assessments and the entire Church Life program will benefit from keeping a three-way view all the time:

1. **Macro:** The big picture, the overall situation.
2. **Median:** A segment of that big picture, a manageable portion for inspection.
3. **Micro:** Close up inspection of the details that keep the big picture safe and secure.

It is also helpful to keep a sense of balance about threats and risks. When tragic or frightening events occur there is a justifiable sense of urgency to prevent *that* thing from happening. However, there are often more immediate threats to safety and security that also need attention.

People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes That May Be Harmed Purposely or Inadvertently

Considering the potentials, historical data and the current situation in your community and elsewhere can help you establish priorities and have an effect on your responses and plans.

Threats and Risks

- Crimes against people and property
- Crimes against children.
- Violent actions (Shootings, bombs, assaults, etc.)
- Attacks by terrorists, gangs or groups.
- Attacks by individuals.
- Vandalism.
- Natural disasters and weather.
- Mechanical and utility failures and emergencies.
- Accidents, injuries and illnesses.
- Fires (And water and smoke damage).
- Loss due to robbery, theft or fraud.
- Threats (Phone, mail or in person)
- Disruptions: Intentional/unintentional.
- Vehicle damage or theft.
- Stalking of pastors, staff or members.
- Attacking pastors, staff or members.
- Domestic quarrels or other conflict, erupting at church.
- Staff issues.
- Anything else that affects the operation of the church or the safety and security of staff, members and visitors

People who purposely or accidentally cause harm may be strangers, guests, members of the congregation, former members, families of members, regular visitors, staff, volunteers or employees. The causes and motives are many:

- Criminals
- Vandals
- Pranksters
- Terrorists
- Protesters
- Mentally unstable
- Angry
- Grieving
- Sexual predators
- Resentful
- Suicidal or homicidal
- Vengeful
- Attention seekers
- Litigious people
- Domestic violence
- Addicted
- Custody disputes
- Gangs
- Hate
- Frauds
- Embezzlers
- Inattentiveness
- Miscommunications and lack of training.
- Lack of information, knowledge or ability to perform a task correctly or safely.
- Negligence
- Carelessness.

That long list of potential human sources of harm reminds us to not make assumptions about people or situations when we consider safety and security.

Concern is helpful, obsessive fear and worry is not. An effective assessment team or security team will look for risks and hazards everywhere, while creating a more confident environment for the church family and visitors. One way to do that is to consider risk and threats while also considering prevention, protection, detection and response. Keeping the overall picture in mind will help keep a realistic approach and reduce unnecessary fear.

Safety and Security in Places of Worship

A balanced macro, median and micro focus on people, places, property, programs and processes, results in:

Safety, Security and Stewardship

THE SECURITY ASSESSMENT TEAM

Assessment teams are usually all-volunteers, under the leadership of the Church Life Committee or similar group. Or, they may be coordinated by a church leader or a full or part-time security director. Security assessment teams work most effectively when each member is:

- 1. Knowledgeable about the place of worship.** If you are using non-church volunteers to help you (police officers, firefighters or others) brief them through written material or an interview about anything that is unique to your form of worship, the nature of services, and what might increase risks and threats.
- 2. Knowledgeable and generally familiar with what is desired for safety, security and preparedness.** Strong expertise in security matters is not as important as focus, balance and a commitment to the process. Most people with reasonable thought processes can assess and make recommendations effectively if they have some general guidelines to consider.
- 3. An effective and open communicator.** Discussion about concerns is a major part of the process. Even those with expertise in some aspect of security should be willing consider the concerns and ideas of others and avoid taking over the process.
- 4. Balanced in approach and not excessive about any one aspect of the process.** Each team member is likely to have a special area of interest or concern. This can be valuable as long as they can work with others and keep a reality-based approach.
- 5. Able to do the tasks required and to schedule the time needed.** Security assessing takes several hours in several sessions, at a minimum, and requires walking, careful observation, effective communication and a positive attitude. Those who cannot assist directly may be able to help in other ways: Word processing, phone surveys of members, reviewing reports, Internet research, etc.

In fact, one of the beauties of the program is that many people can be involved, from middle teens (maybe even younger) to elders.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- 1. Share tasks to avoid over-loading a few people.** Volunteer assessors have limited time and can't do it all. Tasks need to be shared and support teams may be needed. It can also be helpful to do some parts of the assessing with a series of questionnaires and checklists for people responsible for the areas or activities being assessed.
- 2. Schedule several assessing sessions.** Schedule the areas to be assessed into workable portions or sections, based on priorities, locations and time available. Sessions can be as short as an hour up to a full day or multiple days. Two to four hours seems to be the time span that is most effective for volunteer teams.

3. Have a plan. There are many approaches to the process, based on your unique situation and your assessment team. It will help to have a schedule, a plan of action, the supplies you need, and a process to follow that ensures you assess everything effectively.

4. Designate a leader or co-leaders. The team works better when everyone has equal status. However, someone needs to coordinate, schedule, lead the way during the assessment and make sure the paperwork is done.

5. Keep each team small. Whatever the total number of people involved with safety and security, the actual assessing process works best with only three or four people.

If you have many people interested in assessing, create multiple small teams and assign projects for each of them. Or, break up a larger team into smaller ones and start at opposite ends of an area.

6. Be thorough. The way to prevent harm to people and property in the future is to consider potential problems as well as immediate concerns. That kind of thinking takes focused observation, purposeful inspection and enough time to be thorough.

7. Take useful notes. Take the time to write full sentences in a clear, orderly manner for ease of reporting and typing. Develop forms or adapt those you find in this material or other resources, to make the task easier.

8. Guard against team conflicts. The most common problems seem to be:

- Excessive hurrying by some and excessive time by others.
- Being excessive or unreasonable either about concerns or solutions.
- Losing interest and not participating.
- Focusing on being the first to find problems, rather than on helping the team assess both weaknesses and strengths.
- Considering assessment findings as criticisms of self or others.

9. Take action about what is observed. If something is a serious problem, fix it right then if possible or call someone to do it. If it requires other action, designate someone to get started on it and ensure it is done. If it requires approval or further research, designate someone to follow-up over time.

Don't just make notes about something that should be corrected immediately!

10. Do the paperwork after the assessment. Take thorough notes and type a brief report for church leaders, with a copy for security files. It should contain:

- Risks and problems observed.
- Positive observations if something specific was noted.
- Overall observations, opinions and comments.
- Recommendations and timelines if any.

IDENTIFYING AND USING OTHER RESOURCES

There are many *friends of the church* who may not attend your services but who want to keep places of worship safe and secure. You probably would not ask these people to help with an assessment, but they are good resources within their areas of expertise.

1. Law enforcement, the military and similar resources: You may have police officers in your congregation who would like to assist with security efforts. Your police or sheriff's department may have a Community Resource Officer or Crime Prevention Officer who provides information. Or, the chief or sheriff in your jurisdiction may wish to assign officers to provide assistance. Ask about what resources are available.

Even though most officers are not trained in security assessments, they can apply their experiences and insights to the process. They also may be able to provide information about crime patterns in your area or about incidents involving places of worship locally or in other communities.

Remember that they are probably going to be focused on issues about violence, disruption and crimes, rather than the myriad of other issues about which *you* must be concerned.

Another good approach is to call the area police or sheriff's department and talk to a commander or supervisor. Ask to meet some of the officers who patrol your area. Get to know them and work with them about parking issues and traffic after services as well as about crime and safety problems.

2. Fire department: Your community fire codes may require regular inspections by the fire department. If not, contact them (or a member who is a firefighter) and ask them to visit your place of worship and provide insights about fire safety and suppression and the best responses for small fires after calling 911.

At the same time, they may be able to check fire extinguishers and exits and provide other information. Fire safety is vital in churches, so their expertise and experience is crucial.

3. Emergency medical assistance: The provider of emergency medical care or the fire department's Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program is also a source of information and assistance, as well as providing training about CPR and first aid.

If you have a large number of members with specific medical conditions (on oxygen, with heart conditions, having diabetes, in wheel chairs, etc.) ask emergency medical technicians if there are special precautions or responses about which volunteers need to be trained. (Members with those conditions should also be encouraged to keep the security team informed about special needs and responses.)

4. Red Cross, Salvation Army and other emergency providers: If your place of worship is in an area that is hit by storms, floods, fires or other natural hazards, get to know the Red Cross officials and Salvation Army teams with whom you might be working if an event happens. You may be able to prepare to assist, as well as having information about who to contact if assistance is needed.

5. Trades and craft professionals: Your location and situation may make it possible to have professionals give you an assessment related to their trades: Locksmiths, doors, plumbers, electricians, burglar and fire alarm companies, HVAC technicians, safes, etc. If you have a security alarm the company may provide security material.

Be prepared to pay for these services, since they are running a business. Even church members with that expertise should be expected to provide hours of time for free—although they may do so, willingly.

6. Utility providers: Often electricity and gas providers offer energy assessments as well as other assessments. It may be beneficial to have them look at your place of worship to see if repair or replacements will likely be necessary in the future or to advise on how to reduce costs.

7. Your insurance provider: Every place of worship should be insured to the extent that is reasonable. Insurance companies nearly always provide information about safety and security measures. Your representative may be willing to come to the site to talk to you about recent issues and how you can prevent loss or damage.

8. Other places of worship within your faith or denomination. Use your network of friends in other congregations to find out what they have done about safety and security issues. If they conducted an assessment ask them about specific problems they discovered and how they fixed them, or ask to see a sample page or two, to help you decide about an effective format.

9. Other places of worship within your community. Perhaps you can develop a network within other places of worship in your community or state. Church facilities have very similar concerns, no matter what the faith or group within that faith. Ministerial Alliance groups are effective and so are small groups focused solely on safety and security, facilities management or IT issues. Perhaps you can help form such a group!

If someone in your church or on your church staff is a member of such a group, ask for regular reports after meetings, as a way to share the information.

10. Commercial and online resources: There are many websites and books that offer information. Private consultants and companies specializing in church security can also be useful resources.

11. Your church members: Identify those who have knowledge and skills in areas that could be helpful. They may not want to donate large amounts of time and labor, but

might be available to give opinions or information. For example, teaching professionals may have training about liability related to youth programs, people in trades may have information about their areas of expertise.

This is another way to use everyone and get them involved in an interesting project.

12. Expand your own ability to be a resource. When you have developed a good process for assessing, consider contacting someone in your network and asking if you can provide assistance or share materials. Become a resource for whole-church safety and security, keeping in mind your time limitations. I can certainly attest to the fact that once your name is out and about, you'll hear from plenty of people who are seeking assistance!

Vary Your Assessing for Thoroughness

1. VARY ASSESSING TIMES

Most security consultants and most volunteers in a place of worship, assess the facility one time--often on a weekday--and call it done. A thorough assessment requires assessing during varied times and circumstances. This is another advantage of having several teams involved and breaking the process into manageable portions.

Plan on assessing at least part of the facility and some of the programs on weekends, at night, during the week, during services and during selected special events. Also plan on assessing in varied seasons and during holiday times. Each of those present different hazards and concerns.

2. WEEKDAY ASSESSMENTS

(1.) Interview staff and employees. Often the employees who are there every day have noticed security and safety issues but not shared them. You can also use the time to ask them about their emergency response plans.

(2.) Assess areas that are open to the public but have limited people present most times.

(3.) Observe the impact of weekday traffic, foot traffic around or through property, bus and school bus stops, staff parking situations, door security, pre-school, school or day care.

(4.) Meet with other resources who work during the day—fire, police, maintenance resources, etc.

(5.) Thoroughly examine most of the facility and perimeter in full light.

3. WEEKEND AND MAIN SERVICE ASSESSMENT

(1.) The most common weekend assessing time seems to be Saturday morning. If services or activities are not in progress, this time can allow more access to every area.

(2.) Occasionally conduct a security assessment before, during and after a main service on Saturday or Sunday. This provides opportunities to see the security of equipment, people and activities that you could not observe otherwise. The movement of people throughout the place of worship is much different around service times than any other time and it is helpful to observe related problems. More about this on page 62.

(3.) Assessing around service times also provides the opportunity to talk with those who participate in various functions involving visitors and members—greeters, ushers and hospitality workers—while they are actually involved in the work.

(4.) Assessing during services allows a focus on potential risks and hazards involving the clergy, music teams, special activities, and problems, hazards and risks for the congregation as they arrive, participate and leave, etc.

4. NIGHT TIME ASSESSMENTS

This is a great experience! You can see the outside of your place of worship as it will be seen by vandals, criminals or those who are looking at access or exits. You can also check the interior of the building in different ways than in the day time.

Consider notifying law enforcement patrols that you are doing maintenance work in the building and that lights may be off and on at intervals. Or, consider putting a note on the main doors: "Maintenance testing in progress. Call (cell phone number) if needed."

- Start during a service or activity. This allows you to see the parking situation, where lights might be needed, places of concealment and even how the services affect the neighborhood at night. If you have lights outside, consider turning them off to simulate conditions if lights were purposely broken or simply burned out.
- If your place of worship has a full or part-time custodian, that person is a good resource about almost every aspect of the building and the systems in it, so ask them to participate if possible.

5. ASSESS IN THE DARK

Switching off lights lets you see what it would be like if there was a fire with heavy smoke or if power went off or was turned off intentionally for any reason. The experience can help you consider ways to respond more safely in those situations.

Be cautious, to avoid accidents and injuries to assessment team members. (This is not the time to be joking or purposely frightening someone!) Everyone should have a flashlight and should stay together. This team should be comprised of the most mature and responsible of your volunteers.

- Think like a visitor to your place of worship, someone with limited mobility or children separated from parents. Consider the choir or orchestra area, child care and nursery or other areas in which pastors, staff, volunteers or members and visitors might be if the lights went out or visibility was limited.
- Go to classrooms and see how adults, children and youth would be able to get out of the building or get to a safer location. See how easy it would be to find a fire extinguisher if that was needed, or to find flashlights or other emergency equipment.
- Check for blocked exit doors, chairs and tables that people might stumble over or anything else that would reduce safety.
- Check emergency lighting and battery operated back-up, if any. This may require turning off power at the fuse box. Have maintenance staff assist with this and use every

safety precaution about shutting off the power and turning it back on. If you have a large building this should be done in zones and your utility company should be notified, to avoid a power surge. Talk to an expert resource if you have a very large facility.

- If your eyes adjust to the darkness, turn on then off again. Turn on the lights if it seems to not be safe to continue in a low-light or no-light setting. There are no rules about these things—make them work for you.

6. ASSESS WITH AND WITHOUT NOTIFICATION.

Usually people who are responsible for classroom and other spaces should be notified of assessment plans. This often results in correcting a few problems before the assessing team reviews the area, and that's a good thing. (Open windows, safety hazards, etc.)

However, there are times when assessments can correctly be viewed as inspections and should be unannounced and conducted during routine activities or after hours. There is nothing wrong with that approach and can be done in a caring way, with the whole-church approach in mind.

Audits and other inspections are nearly always done outside the presence of the person responsible for their record-keeping, for obvious reasons. This isn't an insult, just a way to keep things objective.

7. ASSESS WITH APPRECIATION

The safety and security program of any organization requires cooperation and positive relationships. Keep a positive approach and say thank you for everyone's efforts to be balanced, focused and effective about safety and security.

SPECIAL EVENT AND ROLE AND FUNCTION ASSESSMENTS

Assess special events with a focus on risk and threats for people and assets, liability concerns or problems of any kind. There is more about this kind of assessment starting on page 56. Events and activities might involve:

Holiday celebrations	Weddings, showers, funerals
Camps	Vacation Bible School
Cook-out or picnics	Open House
Athletic events or field days	Fund Raisers
Special ceremonies and services	
Conferences or Seminars	

Any use of the building or any off-site activity sponsored by the place of worship is part of the responsibility of church leaders. An assessment of special events and activities should be part of a whole-church security assessment and program.

SPECIAL FOCUS ASSESSMENTS

In these assessments the team focuses on a specific kind of threat or concern and how people in each part of the place of worship might respond if it were to happen. (Or, more effectively, *when* it happens.) Or, it might involve focusing on a specific asset, person or group and how they could be vulnerable as well as better protected.

These focused assessments may involve considering:

:

A fire	The condition of hardware and windows
A shooting situation	A list of high value assets to assess
A dangerous weather emergency	Specific concerns such as childcare, money handling, etc.
A medical emergency	
A disruption	
An explosive device or explosion	

ROLE AND FUNCTION ASSESSMENTS

The chapter on *The Security role of Greeters and Ushers*, was developed for the specific roles those volunteers can have in emergency situations. Similar specific instructions could be helpful for many of the leadership and support roles of a place of worship.

Every part of their activities can be assessed and can be a great way to acknowledge excellence. Include: Status of training, the supplies provided (walkie-talkies, identifying clothing, flashlights, etc.), their interactions with members and guests and the overall security readiness of the team.

Focused assessments are appropriate for all of the many regular roles and assignments in services or activities. How many of these are in your place of worship?

Clergy and Assistants (More about Clergy security is on page 16.)
Directors/Board members
Congregational Leader
Educational Director
Business and Administrative staff
Teachers
Music Director/Cantor
Deacons
Trustees
Greeters and Ushers
Praise team/choir/vocalists
Orchestra/Band/Instrumentalists
Offering collectors
Nursery staff
Technological staff or volunteers

Child or youth workers
Bus or van drivers
Parking assistants
Maintenance team
Hospitality team
Bookstore or thrift shop staff
Kitchen workers
Chaplains
Counselors
Youth Leaders
Community outreach
Even the security team can be assessed!
Others in your place of worship

The value of assessing roles and functions: For some, the interview by the assessment team is the first time they have been given the opportunity to discuss their concerns or explain their work. From the viewpoint of church leadership, it may also be the most effective way to provide standards of conduct and ensure that everyone knows how to report crimes and concerns and what to do in emergencies.

Even a very small church has a responsibility to have the most safe and secure environment possible, so this type of assessment is not extreme, no matter how few or how many people are involved in the place of worship. You will be surprised at how interested everyone is in being interviewed and having their work or volunteer activities discussed.

Using role and function assessments as a developmental tool. Another benefit of security assessments is to involve volunteers, staff and members in security awareness and planning. Use their knowledge and enthusiasm and help them see the Church Life program as a positive effort for everyone.

•Conduct a two part role assessment: It is usually most effective to do each role assessment in two parts. The first part involves the initial interview (fifteen to thirty minutes is usually enough for an individual, with a little more for a group.).

The second part involves follow-up, either personally or through written material, about any changes, requirements or plans, related to the work of the individuals or group involved. More time may be used if briefings or training are held (as they likely will need to be.) This follow-up is also a good time to compliment and thank leaders, staff and volunteers.

•**Issues to be discussed during an interview:** The nature and scope of the interview and assessment will vary according to the setting, potential threats or hazards, recent concerns, the people involved and other issues. However, some basic concepts can be adapted to most roles:

Any recent events locally or elsewhere, related to the role
The concerns of those being interviewed, related to safety, security, and emergency responses.
Suggestions by those being interviewed about how to make things more safe or secure.
The person's usual activity before, during and after services or events.

Guidelines and directions as they are understood. Are they correct?
Sample scenarios and sample responses. Keep these non-stressful, just basic discussions.
Concerns of church leaders about the role and activities.
Recommended responses to several likely situations.

Background investigations: Many roles and functions have such potential for concern that background investigations should be conducted before even apparently qualified people are entrusted with the task. This is especially true in larger churches where the personal life of a volunteer may not be well-known.

A PRE-ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

CREATE LISTS OF WHAT WILL BE ASSESSED OVER TIME

Security assessments nearly always involve lists and notes—sometimes many of them. Before the first assessment, create a list of all the places, people, property, processes and programs that need to be inspected, assessed, audited or reviewed. It is helpful to see the big picture of what needs to be considered over the first few weeks, the next six months and the next year. You will probably add to the list as you and others go along.

Adapt the following information for your place of worship

1. Develop an assessing plan and a way to ensure you don't miss any area. The best way to do that is prepare a sketch or graphic of the facility with doors and windows marked. For multiple storied buildings draw a separate graph for each floor. Blueprints are often too confusing and difficult to read, and a simple sketch or graphic is just as useful. (Your place of worship may be too complex for this. However, it nearly always can be done in segments and is helpful.)



2. Develop a list of the usual purposes of an area, room or space, including closets and equipment rooms. One way to do that, in addition to using a church schedule if one is available, is to consider the activities and events each day through the week. Then, add special events and activities or mark the rooms in which those are usually held. (Youth party room, baby showers, club meetings, etc.)

3. Prepare a highly secured list of especially vulnerable people or situations and the risk factors involved. These may include crime concerns, medical issues or known problems of some other kind. (The material should be kept highly secured, of course.)

One way to develop that information is through a mental review of members and frequent visitors and their situations or talk to church leaders or Sunday School teachers about people of whom they are aware.

Another way is to occasionally remind members to keep church leaders or the security team informed about the status of the health of members and their families, any potential concerns, any recent problems or conflicts that might erupt at church.

Domestic violence and restraining orders: Members of the church family should be asked to let church leaders or security team members know if they have placed a restraining order against anyone or if there are issues related to child custody, business conflicts or similar situations that might erupt into violence at the place of worship. If the member is assured of confidentiality except on a need-to-know basis this is usually understood as a reasonable request.

New member packets should have general security information as well as a request for the new member to keep key members or staff informed about important issues that might affect safety or security.

Clergy security: During the pre-assessment analysis detailed notes may be compiled about schedules or special concerns related to their roles, media attention or other issues. This information should be secured and maintained by the main security coordinator.

Special items in the place of worship: Worship objects, artifacts, silver, historic items, etc., require special attention. If the list itself is not secured do not describe them fully, since it could provide information to those with criminal intent. They *should* be fully insured and perhaps a strong security program will reduce insurance costs.

Make notes about increased risks and special concerns: (The following three examples, from one place of worship, shows how these can become very specific.)

•"Increased risk: Two local cases of church burglaries in the last year. Both of them involved vandalism and taking computers and other electronic items. Entry and exit through classroom windows. (Info from Officer Walker, PD.)"

•"Increased risk: Rev. Beck is well known in the community and has been photographed for the newspaper twice. He runs in the park every morning from 6-7. On Sunday he stands at the front for Altar Call and is closely surrounded by members and visitors. Music and singing are high volume and there is a lot of movement in the congregation."

•"Special concern: Golden Girls and Guys Lunch, Fridays in Dining Hall, 11:00-1:00. Average attendance, 30. Many use oxygen. Several have extreme medical concerns. (Don Kent is very frail.) Westland Nursing Home sends a van with 6-8 people and one assistant. We need to make sure the server team knows how to respond."

Off-site: List activities that occur off-site that are sponsored by the place of worship. When possible, conduct assessments during activities or prior to the activities, to develop plans and procedures that may be useful.

4. Develop a plan and a schedule for assessing. This can be done in any order that works well, as long as everything is assessed over time and in a timely manner. Even though it can't all be done at once, it should be completed in a reasonable to ensure that safety and security has been evaluated and improvements made if needed.

OPTIONS FOR PATTERNS FOR ASSESSING A BUILDING

Weather conditions, available time and recent concerns will usually be part of the decision. Some options:

1. Start with the exterior, roof, parking areas and buildings and objects outside.
2. Start at the front door, on the outside, and work inward.
3. Start at most vulnerable door and work inward.
4. Start inside at the sanctuary or auditorium and work outward.
5. Start in basement and maintenance areas and work upward.
7. Include one of each type of area in each assessing session:
8. Identify priority concerns and assess the areas in which those might occur, then move to second level priority, etc.
9. Assess one process or program, one space and one function, each session.

Supplies and Materials

- 1. A flashlight.** Each person on the assessing team should have one if possible.
- 2. A full size flathead screwdriver.** There are often situations where it is handy to have something with a point or tip that won't easily be damaged, and with a handle that can be gripped easily.
- 3. Three ring binder and pen.** This is better than a clipboard or a legal pad, because you can flip back and forth through pages as needed. Contents can be plain paper or prepared questions and forms to document your work.
- 4. Digital camera.** You should be able to take many basic close-up photos. Have a fully charged battery with a spare.

A camera with an optical viewfinder (not only an LCD screen) allows easier viewing in a variety of light conditions. Many relatively inexpensive digital cameras work just fine and probably someone on the team has one or can get one.
- 5. Keys or other access.** You will need to be able to open up every door and space, unless it is a private office space. (The occupant of offices can use a checklist to assess the space if that is preferred. Have all the keys or have a maintenance person on the assessment team. Key control is a process that needs to be assessed as well.
- 6. A copy of any emergency plans or procedures for the space.** This is often overlooked as an item to have during assessment, but it is very important. Any directions, advice or suggestions to users of the space should be checked during the assessment to see if they appear to be valid and appropriate.
- 7. Cell phone and contact numbers in case there is a need for notification or questions during the assessment.**
- 8. Moist hand wipes.** These are very convenient and needed more than most people would realize. Thorough assessing can be very dusty or dirty work!
- 9. This document or lists developed from the information in it.** You will likely have to adapt a great deal of the information in this document, but it might be convenient to have excerpts from it for review.

Assessing Spaces and Places

1. Look at the space from the viewpoint of people who want to commit a crime, or disruption, attack people violently, or exploit people or the situation in some way, as well as from the view of someone who may inadvertently cause harm. This list was shown a few pages earlier, but is worth reviewing.

- Criminals
- Pranksters
- Terrorists
- Protesters
- Mentally unstable
- Angry
- Arsonist
- Sexual predators
- Resentful
- Suicidal or homicidal
- Vengeful
- Attention seekers
- Litigious people
- Domestic violence
- Addicted
- Custody disputes
- Vandals
- Gangs
- Hate
- Frauds
- Embezzlers
- Violent
- Careless, reckless
- Negligence
- Lack of information and knowledge
- Miscommunication

2. Look at the space from the viewpoint of all the people who might be in it, at any time, whether authorized or unauthorized.

- What ages are they?
- How many might there be?
- How will they be using the space?
- What might they do, accidentally or purposely, to cause harm?
- What are risks to them and threats to others?

3. Look at the space with the thought of what is beneath it, around it, in the walls and overhead, according to the area involved.

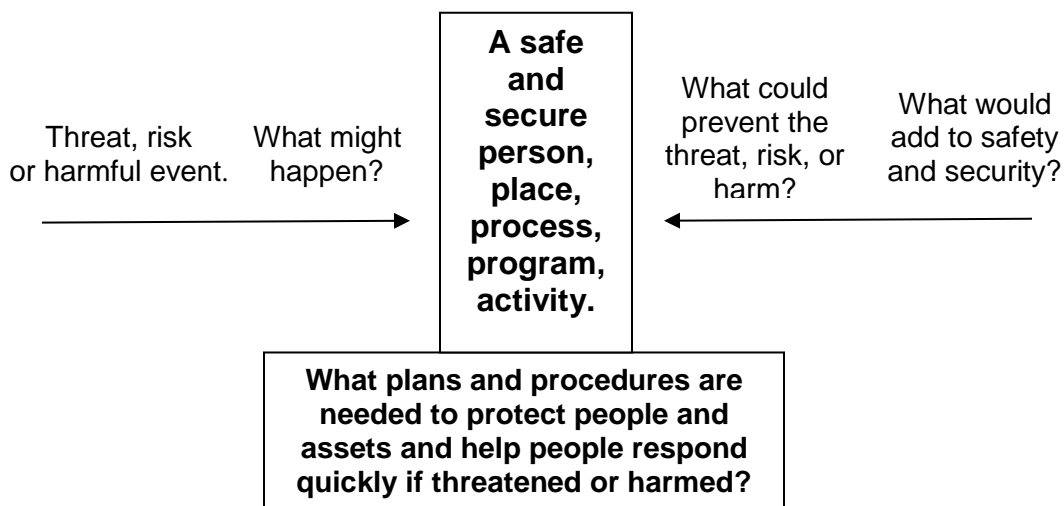
- Geological, water and weather possibilities.
- Streets, driveways, alleys.
- Parking, parking lots, illegal parking.
- Fire hydrants, fire dept. access.
- Trees, bushes, rocks, moveable or stationery objects.
- Barriers, barricades, items affording protection.
- Things attached to the building, on top of it, beside it.
- Access from roof, basement, doors.
- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC).
- Vents, outlets, receptacles, pipes, wires, cords.
- Plumbing, pipes, water heaters, faucets, fixtures.
- Stoves, flames, fumes, burners, coils.
- Floors, walls, windows, doors, roofs.
- Machines, equipment, appliances.
- Items that can fall, break, flood or contaminate.
- Situations that cause accidents, injury, illness.
- Conditions that are unsightly, unhealthy or unsafe.
- Items with expiration dates, warranties, batteries.

If you combine Lists #1, #2 and #3 you will have a picture of a wide range of potential problems. The purpose of your security assessment, in whatever way you conduct it, is to identify areas that need to be improved and to develop recommendations. Those lists will ensure you don't overlook anything.

4. In each space you assess, stand or sit and thoroughly look at each aspect of the room—floor to ceiling, all around. Consider obvious and not so obvious risks, threats and responses. You may find it helpful to have each team member observe and write, then share thoughts and notes. (Suggested issues to consider are listed at the end of this document.)

- Most of the time you will not find dramatic security failures or flaws, only a few things that might seem unsafe or that could be secured better. (Often you will observe “housekeeping issues” more than any other situation.) When all are combined throughout the place of worship, they present a picture of weak and strong areas.

- You will probably find the most useful thinking is done about “what if” discussions. These will help you consider emergency responses and how to make sure people know what to do, and do it.



- How is the space used? When?
- Who is responsible for the area?
- What harmful thing might happen?
- What could prevent it from happening?
- What actions might reduce the harm even if the event occurred?
- What emergency responses should be taken if the event occurs?
- Who needs to be trained or informed? How?

Take the *immediacy* approach. Rather than wondering *if* something will happen:
 What should people in or near this room do *when* _____ happens?
 How will they know to do it? Can it be done given the current situation?

5. Make notes about each space. (The following suggestions might not be appropriate for your place of worship or your security policies, but are generally applicable and can be adapted.)

(1.) *Potentially problematic conditions observed.* Is there a hazard that could result in injuries? Does some aspect of the space increase the risk of crime or other harm? Could some aspect of the space, equipment or other thing lead to problems of any kind that could affect the place of worship?

(2.) *Actions suggested to correct or reduce a problem that is observed.* These will probably be fairly obvious. They are always subject to discussion and approval later, so any reasonable suggestions should be considered.

(3.) *What written procedures might be useful for routine situations or emergencies?* Is training or information needed? By whom? How could it be provided? This kind of thinking about emergency preparedness takes time and will probably not be accomplished fully during the assessment. However, assessors are better able to consider situations when they are in the exact space being discussed.

(4.) *Other issues or concerns?* Is there something about the space, its maintenance, condition, the value and security of equipment or items, or any other situation, that should be brought to the attention of leaders, decision-makers or those responsible?

(5.) *In a violent, hazardous or threatening situation, is there an area that would offer increased safety?* Could the room be evacuated without using the door? Could the door be locked from the inside or barricaded, without increasing danger to occupants? Could fire suppression devices help if occupants were trapped inside? Are there supplies or equipment to assist in various emergencies?

(6.) *(If people are using the room during the assessment)* Are concerns observed about room usage, risks or other potential or actual problems?

6. Take photos. These can be used to document problems, for insurance purposes or to have as a record of assessing. Take an overall photo from the door or inside the room, as well as of problem areas or situations. Photograph items for insurance purposes, if that is desired.

Tip: Put a paper sign with an identifier in the photos, so the files can be more easily recognized when downloaded. (Many classrooms look alike.)

7. Before you leave the space: Make sure you can say you have looked at every wall, surface, item and aspect of a space before you move on. Do not rush, even in apparently obvious situations. Walk along each wall, look down, up and around.

- Have you considered all the potential hazards and threats when the room is being used or when it is vacant?

- Have you made notes about what is needed to improve the situation, especially if procedures or plans need to be discussed with the primary users of the space?

ASSESSING PROPERTY

Property or Assets may be considered in a general sense during the assessment of rooms and areas. However, a complete security program will include a focused inventory and evaluation of items and equipment, as well as making decisions about maintenance, safety and security, and plans for replacement when and if that is required.

LIST ASSETS

The easiest way to develop an inventory list is to have a notebook page for key categories, then go area to area, eventually developing a complete list that will include the items, locations, status and verification information.

Computers and Electronic Items

Item and Description	Location	Status/Concerns	Date/By
Desktop computer 2008 HP (Purchased 2008) Value: \$800)	Main office	OK. Used by Phil and Anne. Office door locked. Covered by CM Insurance policy rider.	10-15-08 T. L.
MSI Wind Notebook (Purchased 2-15- 09) (Value: \$500)	Phil's work computer	Phil takes it with him. Covered by CM Insurance Policy rider	10-15-08 T. L.
HP Printer (Gift from Stan and Barb Michaels in 2006) (\$125)	Main office	Works OK. In locked office.	10-15-08 T. L.
RCA CD Player/Radio (Gift in 2000) (Value: \$35)	Social Hall	Was out on a table. Should be kept locked when not in use. In good condition as of 10-15- 08. Looks old, but works good.	10-15-08 S.R.
Roxometer Sound System (Unknown date of purchase) (Value about \$2,000)	Auditorium	This isn't used often. Mike Powers has the paperwork and is in charge of it. (Memo from him about replacement needs, is attached.)	10-15-08 S.R.

Categories: Some general categories that apply in most places of worship:

1. Computers and electronics, including phones, copiers, cameras, etc.
2. Audio/Visual equipment (according to the numbers of these items they might be included in electronics.)
3. Furniture. (In office, sanctuary, classroom, social hall, etc.) This category is often overlooked, but information about the status of these items are important and should be evaluated at least annually. If the items were purchased through catalogs, the catalog page is good to add to the inventory file.)
4. Worship items. (This might include the items for sacraments, special ceremonies or other purposes.)
5. Hymnals and other materials.
6. Musical instruments.
7. Robes and similar items.
8. Artifacts and art, hangings, banners, posters and other décor. (These should be well insured, but some art and artifacts cannot be replaced at any price. A security assessment can focus attention on how to better protect these items.)
9. Appliances (large and small) and electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems. (Knowing the condition of these items is important for planning.)
10. Vehicles.
11. Outdoor items (statuary, signs, maintenance equipment, etc.)
12. Other? (The list will vary based on the level of activity and items in a place of worship. For example, some places of worship may have a large inventory of athletic equipment while another may have a large amount of student supplies and classroom items, or many kitchen implements, dishes and flatware.)

EVALUATING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF ASSETS

For each asset being inventoried, consider some key questions. These don't have to be written and answered in the actual assessment (although they may be used in that way). The answers can certainly point out concerns—or reassure you that everything is as secure as possible, given the realities of the situation.

Most insurance companies have material about inventorying and evaluating items, and some provide checklists. One way to approach this process is to think about what would need to be replaced to continue services and activities. However, be sure to include those things that have emotional and historic value, whatever their monetary values.

Questions to consider:

1. Detailed description of item and location. (Model number, appearance, brand, etc.)
2. When was it/they purchased or received?
3. What is the approximate replacement value? (If that is applicable for the item.)
4. Who is primarily responsible? (If that is applicable.)

- 5.** What is the overall status? (Condition, repair history, appearance, amount of use, warranty, usual life span of the item, etc.)
- 6.** What are general and specific risks? (Accidental and purposeful damage, theft, normal wear and tear, vandalism, misuse, malfunction, accident or injury to those using it or to others, access by children, etc.) Are these risks greater at some time than others?
- 7.** What might reduce the likely risks? Are methods or processes in place?
- 8.** Were the methods and processes being applied at the time of the inventory?
- 9.** Replacement if needed: Cost, methods, difficulty, insurance, etc.
- 10.** Recommendations, if any?

ASSESSING PROCESSES AND PROGRAMS

With the exception of financial records, most processes and programs are established and simply kept going, without review. These are often foundational to your place of worship and should be assessed regularly. Page 56 has additional material about assessing processes and programs.

Challenges: The processes and programs of a place of worship are usually coordinated or directed by one or a few individuals. By its nature assessing is a critique—and that can create conflict and discomfort for most people. The following guidelines can make the assessing process be viewed as a positive activity.

•**Limit assessing to the factors that relate to the scope of the security program.**

The key areas of assessment discussed in this section should be the main focus of assessing: Safety and security for people, assets and the facility and the overall well-being of the place of worship. Other concerns should be conveyed to church leaders, but it might create conflict if the security team critiques them to the person responsible for an area or program.

•**Work in partnership with leaders and coordinators:** Use the gifts, knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers who are involved with the program all the time. They often have concerns or ideas they have not expressed, and certainly want their part of church activities to be safe and secure.

•**Be caring, respectful and positive.** The safety and security program of a place of worship should be done *for and with* everyone involved. The actions of the security assessment team should be focused on serving others. This is especially true when assessing programs and processes.

HOW TO ASSESS PROCESSES AND PROGRAMS

1. Develop a list of the processes and programs to be assessed *in areas related to safety and security*. These may include:

Worship service activities	Youth activities, on-site and off-site
Money handling procedures	Camps, conferences, athletics
Key control	Social functions
Security of equipment and files	Community outreach or charitable functions
Counseling protocols	Kitchen activities
Policies for working with youth and children	Events, planning and production
Training staff and volunteers	Social functions
Vehicle operation and maintenance	Building and grounds maintenance
Ceremonies and special services	Anything that might have a safety, security, emergency response or continuity of operations need, now or in the future.
Background investigations for select staff and volunteers	
Nursery protocols and worker training	

2. Interview in person or in writing, those in charge of the process or program.

Ask those in charge what areas they think have the potential to be problems or that have been problems in the past. This interview or survey can be guided with some basic structure and questions, based on the process or program involved. You might also want to interview some who have participated in the program in the past or who are regular participants.

The following are not necessarily the actual questions you would ask, but are examples of the types of things you need to know. You may have others, based on your knowledge of the programs of your place of worship.

•All programs:

What are the threats and hazards that could cause harm? (What might go wrong?)

What are the highest risk times or situations?

What plans, procedures, rules or protocols do you use as guidelines now? Are they in writing?

If you were going to train someone for your work, what are the main rules for safety and security you would tell them? (Equipment and supplies, people, participants, other volunteers, activities, risks and hazards, potential threats, worries you have had, etc.)

What has happened in the past here, or other places of worship?

What would you do if(provide a few potential crisis or emergency situations to discuss—without making it sound like a test!)

What is usually happening in the rest of the building while your program is taking place? Are doors open or locked?

Do you know how to get assistance from staff, maintenance or others, in an emergency?

•Programs involving money: How can we ensure money is accounted for and kept in a safe place? How can we avoid even the appearance of mismanagement or wrongdoing?

•Programs involving people: What emergencies might happen?

Considering the rooms or spaces you use, is there anything in them that could be harmful either normally or if misused?

How can we make sure everyone is safe and secure at all times during the activity?

How can we make sure no one causes harm to others or the facility?

What methods are used for discussing safety and security issues with participants?

3. Be present during the process or program activities. It is very difficult to assess something you have not seen in action. It can be done by using the information provided by those in charge, but it is preferable to see how a program or process works.

The assessing team can be divided into sub-groups or individuals can be assigned to observe. Notes should be shared with the person in charge, to dispel concerns about the assessment focus.

4. Keep the three way focus:

- The big picture of this process or program:** How does it look from an outsider's perspective? Is there a potential for harm or problems that should be considered? What worries you, as someone who is focused on safety and security?
- The mid-range focus:** Break the process or program into segments that work for the situation—the timeline for activities, different activities during a program, moving people from one area to another, what it takes to make the program or process work.
- The micro/close-up focus:** What could cause harm? What if an emergency happened? What could protect the program or people?

Look at the place, the space, the people and the potentials to consider if there are ways to improve safety and security or to be better prepared for an emergency.

5. Prepare the assessment report. The information in the next section provides an overview of the assessment report. However, an assessment of processes and programs may be somewhat different than for a space or place.

A structure for a report might involve the following issues:

- Description of the process or program
- People usually in charge (may not be a specific person)
- Who is usually involved as a participant?
- Potential threats and hazards. These might be stated in general terms, but should also include specific issues that assessors or those in charge want to mention. This should include safety and security as well as liability concerns any other situation that could bring harm to the place of worship, in any way.
- Criticality of harm: What are the most negative results that could happen if there were to be a crime, accident, injury, disruption, or accident or error involving this process or program?
- Concerns noticed during the observation assessment.
- Positive issues noticed during the observation assessment.
- Emergency preparedness. Based on your questions and the statements of those in charge, does it seem there would be effective responses to most emergencies? Have any plans or guidelines been given to those in charge? Do participants have information they need for safety, security and emergencies?
- Continuity of Operations. Does this program need to continue immediately, even after emergency disruption? If so, are there plans for making that happen?

THE ESSENCE OF A PLACE OF WORSHIP

Most people only think of major emergencies, violence or crime by strangers when they think of safety and security. However, worship and fellowship activities and service and administrative aspects are the essence of a place of worship, because these are the things that affect people. Give them the attention they need during safety and security assessments.

THE ASSESSMENT REPORT AND FOLLOW-UP PLANS AND PROCEDURES

After you have completed an assessing session, prepare the report as soon as possible to ensure you can still read your notes and recall the information and ideas discussed.

1. Keep it brief: You and others will find the report more useful if you avoid lengthy introductory statements and long paragraphs (such as those you find in this material!). Simply report the basics:

- A list of problems, concerns, negative observations or potential problems.
- The opinions and concerns of your team about anything you noticed.
- Recommendations and suggestions. (May only be ideas to be researched.)

2. Be thoughtful and reasonable about your comments and recommendations.

This document could be reviewed by others for a variety of reasons. Keep the well-being, reputation and liability issues of your place of worship in mind.

For example, do not use phrases that indicate the current status of the building, processes or programs are so unsafe as to be reckless to continue them. If you believe that to be true, take action through personal conversation about it.

One way to approach suggestions is to list the optimal solution then what would be a possible option. For example, it might be optimal to install an alarm system but an option would be to secure areas with valuables better or to install brighter lights.

3. Not all problems have immediate solutions. Your team may discover a problem situation that does not have an easy or immediate solution. For example, the kitchen may be in an open area that is not able to be locked. As a result, the appliances and water are accessible to anyone, presenting a possible hazard as well as a problem about misuse or vandalism. However, that situation will probably not be changed unless renovations are done.

It is still worthwhile to mention as a concern, with a commitment to consider ways to make the area more secure.

4. Most observations will involve “housekeeping” or general safety matters. Almost every security assessment discloses concerns about such issues as extension cords stretched across an area, food that attracts insects, dirty bathrooms, wasted supplies, evidence of people being in places they should not be, and similar situations.

These are valid subjects for assessment because they address issues that lead to lack of care and maintenance for the facility and the potential for other negligence. They also often disclose severe safety issues and issues effecting the reputation and welfare of the place of worship.

5. Suggest plans, procedures and rules that might be needed. Emergency response plans and safety and security guidelines do not have to be extensive, but they should be in writing and they should be reviewed with leaders, staff, volunteers, teachers, and others who would need to assume a leadership role. Some aspects of plans—those involving emergency responses, for example--can be copied for every church member.

- Church leaders working with the security assessment teams should develop a basic checklist of safety and security actions and requirements in the event of an emergency or a violent situation, for distribution to staff, volunteers, teachers, group leaders and others.

Suggestions for emergency responses can be developed by police, fire or military resources, or security team coordinators or members, or found through on-line sites, books and other resources for places of worship.

- There may be a need for rules to prohibit certain actions. (For example, two non-relatives must be present when money is counted. Or, no candles capable of being lit are allowed in classrooms unless an adult is present and the candle is doused before leaving.) Excessive rules will probably not be received well, but there are nearly always requirements with which everyone should comply, for the safety of all.

6. The report should ensure follow-up. Not all suggestions will be implemented immediately—if ever—based on time, money, practicality or the decision of church leaders. However, some basic actions can be done fairly easily. Consider assigning specific team members to follow-up on each item.

7. Report as each assessing session is completed. If the security assessment is going to be conducted in several sessions, it may be helpful to make brief reports about priority areas or situations. The important thing is that action items are considered as soon as possible, rather than waiting until all assessing is completed.

8. Create a security file and locker. If you and others keep a file for your materials and supplies you will be ready to assess and it will be more likely that you and your team will assess often. Make security assessments a frequent and ongoing activity, rather than an infrequent event that requires a lot of time and effort just to get organized.

ORGANIZING THE ASSESSMENT

This section includes potential questions and concerns for rooms, areas and spaces in a place of worship. Some questions and answers will apply to every space and may only need to be considered once, at the beginning of the assessment. Others will require close inspection in each space.

You may wish to create a list, spreadsheet or word processed table or form that each assessor can use to structure the assessment, while one assessor makes notes for the report. Some assessors find it just as convenient to simply write notes and transfer them to a typewritten copy.

Keep a record: The important issue is to have a record of your observations and notes, and to structure it in such a way that it forces you and other assessors to be thorough about:

- Every area or room.
- Features of the space.
- Items or group of items in each area.
- Mechanical and utility elements, hardware and other “invisible” features.
- Potential hazards or concern.

An effective approach during the assessment: How could this space, item, process, program or the people using it be harmed to any degree, minor or critical?

Consider how the space, the people in it or the entire place of worship could be purposely or accidentally harmed because of:

- Vulnerabilities of the area or the people using it.
- Weaknesses in the condition of safety and security features or compliance.
- Hazards based on any current or potential factor
- Actions by people—purposely or inadvertently—that could cause harm.

CONSIDER THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF PEOPLE WHEN ASSESSING

What are the concerns when this space is empty? What if it is full? What if only one or two people are present? Those questions help you consider a variety of risk factors, preventive measures and responses.

•For example: A parking lot presents a different set of concerns at night, in the day time, when only parked vehicles are present, when only one person is present or when several people are present.

•Another example: There is a different risk if a criminal leaves an area when a person enters, compared to if the criminal is purposely concealed and waiting for someone. Considering both situations can help in the assessment process as well as in planning to prevent a crime.

Consider a room or space in your place of worship from these perspectives:

Source of Harm	When no one is present	Usual occupants
Burglar, thief, vandal or other criminal.		
A sexual criminal or sexual predator, or sexual activity.		
Litigious person (Looking for a reason to sue or complain.)		
People who are violent, angry, homicidal, suicidal, unstable, addicted.		
Situations involving the curious or snoopers, loiterers, or clandestine activities.		
People who are careless, reckless, negligent, preoccupied, untrained.		

Other questions:

1. Is there an obvious condition that seems to be unsafe, insecure or not correct for some other reason?
2. Now or when the space is in use, what items or issues are/will be a special safety or security risk? For what reason? Are reasonable changes or improvements possible now or over time?
3. Is something present or lacking that is a violation of a church policy, rule, requirement or expectation?
4. Is there any aspect of the space, activity or situation that does not present the place of worship in the correct way or that is a negative element for some other reason?
5. Does it appear there are items or issues that, while acceptable now, will need to be improved, replaced or changed in the future? What and how?
6. Is the safety and security of this space or situation acceptable, exceptionally good, somewhat lacking or insecure/unsafe? Status of other issues being assessed?

FOCUS POINTS FOR ASSESSING

PERIMETER SPACE AND PARKING AREAS

Most places of worship have adjacent parking. Other aspects of the perimeter space may vary widely. A place of worship may be situated on a small lot or on multiple lots or acres of land. It may have:

Playgrounds and equipment	Cemetery or memorial garden
Athletic fields	Surrounding land with dense or sparse vegetation or trees.
A garden or other landscaped areas	Open space or vacant lots
Scenic walkways	Sidewalks or alleys
Lawns on one or more sides of the building	Urban, rural, business or residential surroundings
Picnic or cookout areas	
A pond or stream	

These areas are often open and accessible all the time and may increase risk for the place of worship because of crime, inappropriate activity, accidents, injuries, loss or damage. You will need to develop a site-specific plan for inspecting and assessing the safety and security of the area around your place of worship.

CPTED (*Cep-ted*): *Crime prevention through environmental design* is a well-researched concept that should be considered for new development and for maintenance and improvement of existing areas. CPTED principles provide guidance for keeping an area attractive while reducing the risk of crime and inappropriate use. You can find information in libraries and bookstores as well as on the Internet.

Goal: All of the outside space and property of a place of worship should be kept clean and well maintained. It should be inspected often enough and thoroughly enough that church leaders can be informed about problems and action can be taken.

- Multiple security assessments should be conducted to reflect status changes with time of day, day of week, season and activities. Open land or areas with natural growth should be inspected as much as the terrain and vegetation allows.

- Look for evidence of loiterers or inappropriate or unsafe activities. (Cigarette stubs, litter, graffiti, clothing, blankets, odors, paraphernalia, or disturbed areas behind shrubs, trees or out buildings.)

Within reason for the specific setting and situation of a place of worship, the following elements are preferred:

- The property line should be clearly defined with signs, fences or other indicators of private property. In large areas, multiple private property signs should be posted, with a

statement that legal action will be taken for trespassing. (Be clear that you won't forgive those who trespass against you in those situations!)

- Effective seasonal maintenance of driveways, sidewalks, trees, shrubs and other elements of the grounds, perimeter and parking.
- Shrubs and trees immediately around the church building should be cleared or trimmed enough to prevent concealment, fires, or other damage.
- Within reason there should be no items that can be used to further crime or that would be an attractive hazard for children or others. Rocks, water features, open storage buildings, unused vehicles, secluded areas, statuary that is not firmly fixed, all should be assessed and at the least, monitored closely.
- Within reason, there should be no items that could block vision for vehicles or pedestrians or allow concealment of people or hazardous items.
- The area should have enough lights to light up the perimeter, parking spaces, exterior of the building, doors and areas of potential concealment.
- Sheds or storage should be kept locked, even if maintenance staff or others are gone for only a few minutes.
- Maintenance items, liquids, seasonal chemicals, etc., should have safety labels, and safety signs should be posted.
- There should be no hazards to traffic flow, vehicles or pedestrians.
- Signs assisting visitors and emergency responders are beneficial: Arrows to main entrance, contact numbers, parking row or section identifiers, etc.
- No illegal parking by members or guests should be allowed. Overflow parking should be directed to legal parking areas.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PERIMETER AND PARKING

1. Surrounding area

Are there any aspects of the community, neighborhood, terrain, geology or other issues that might affect the safety and security of the place of worship? (Water, rocks or other natural elements, weather patterns, crime in area, traffic, threats, etc.)

Are there preventive or protective devices or elements in place specifically for any of those, if beneficial? (Earth barriers, walls, shelters, water channels, alarms, pumps, graffiti resistant paint, removal of elements that attract unauthorized people, etc.)

2. Surveillance or patrol of area

Overall status?

•Cameras? Operable? Located optimally?

Who monitors and when?

Is this program effective?

•Patrol?

Is the property line of the place of worship patrolled, including open spaces or natural areas? Is that conducted at least weekly and more often if needed for the area?

Is it done on foot or by vehicle?

Can some areas be observed from inside the building? Would occasional more close-up patrol be helpful?

Who conducts patrol?

Hours of patrol?

Training? Documentation?

Is this program functioning effectively and without liability concerns?

3. Parking

Status and condition?

•How many vehicles can be parked in marked parking spaces?

•On average, how many are present during services?

•Lines and markings clear?

•Signs as needed? (Emergency reminders, phone numbers, directions to entrance, etc.)

•Pedestrian risks?

•Risks to children? (Are there play activities in parking area at other times?)

•Snow/ice removal status?

•Any parking spaces more risky than others for any reason?

• Are staff or pastoral vehicles obvious to strangers? (Note: This may be acceptable or not, according to the situation.)

- Parking assistance?

Who is in charge? Training? Documentation?

Is this program functioning effectively and without liability concerns?

4. Lighting for perimeter and parking

Overall status? (Type and location)

- Are most parking spaces reasonably illuminated at night?
- Lighting controls secure?
- All lights operable and at reasonable brightness level?
- Are they tamper resistant and appropriate for weather?
- If lights are motion activated are they set for effective distance and movement?

5. Driveway(s):

Overall status? (Location and number)

- Visual barriers or distractions?
- Traffic concerns expressed by members or visitors or by motorists?
- Issues that might cause vehicle damage or impair movement?
- Emergency vehicle access marked if needed?
- Fire hydrants clear?
- If exit is into alleys or similar throughways, are signs needed to encourage caution about pedestrians, motorists, limited sight, etc?

6. Fences, borders, walls, other perimeter markings

Overall status?

- Is the perimeter of the property clearly defined?
- Are fences and walls well maintained and free of damage or graffiti?
- Is there some reason the height or material in fences creates a concern?

7. Outbuildings, sheds, items

Overall status?

- Are they in use? Empty? Used for storage but not accessed often?
- Potential hazard for children, others?
- Secured so not accessible to anyone other than authorized staff?
- Electricity in the sheds? Is it safe and operable?
- Propane or other fuel tanks? How are these secured? Can they be used as a place of concealment?
- Air conditioning units and fans and similar equipment: Condition? Safety factors?

8. Grounds care

Overall status?

- Are grounds well cared for seasonally to give the appearance of attention not neglect?
- Are items locked up or stored in a secure manner?
- Are all items inscribed with identifying information?
- Fuel or other liquids in safe containers?
- Safety signs and labels as needed?

9. Trash receptacles other bins, cans or containers

Overall status?

- Away from buildings?
- Fire resistant?
- Any combustible hazards anywhere on the grounds?
- Do dumpster or bin contents create potential problems?
- Are dumpsters or other containers located to make it difficult to get behind them?

10. Decorative items (Flags, banners, statues, symbols, crosses, etc.)

Overall status?

- Potential hazard for children or others?
- Updated and well maintained?
- High value? Could they be replaced with lower value items if they are unique and thievery is a concern?
- Off-season items. Are they secure and protected from damage?

11. Trees, bushes, shrubs and other landscaping features

Overall status?

- Trimmed to avoid blocking views, windows, doors, and to prevent easy concealment under or in them?
- Are tree branches trimmed for reduced weather damage or falling on buildings or vehicles?
- Any features that present hazards or potential for crime, vandalism, etc.? (Water, rocks, planters, etc.) Can they be made more secure?

12. Vehicle barriers, barricades and access

Overall status?

Are there natural, decorative or other barriers to prevent vehicles from crashing into doors or windows, driving into pedestrian areas, blocking doors, driving up close to allow quick crimes and escapes?

13. Parked vehicles

Overall status?

•List routinely parked vehicles such as busses, vans, carts, other fleet vehicles.

Who is responsible for their care and maintenance?

•Locked at all times when no driver is present?

•Maintained: Clean inside and out,
equipment working, operable, parked safely?

•If not used often, are they checked at least weekly?

•Long-term parked vehicles (List and list reason for having them in the parking area.)

Kept clean and maintained to prevent an unsightly abandoned appearance?

Locked at all times?

Trunks filled to prevent children from getting inside? (The trunks should be locked, not just have the locking mechanism removed.)

14. Sidewalks and stairs

•Are stairs and sidewalks to all entrances well-maintained and lighted?

•Are stairs clear on either side or without concealment areas?

•Railings in good repair?

•Stairs going into basement areas lit, clean and safe?

•Wheelchair ramps clear and lighted?

15. Playgrounds, basketball courts, etc.

Overall status?

Are these on areas that are also driveways? What precautions are used?

Are these easily observed to provide security for children and others?

Is it well lit, if it is used at night with church approval?

16. What other issues about the perimeter, grounds, parking or the general area, should be inspected? Any other areas of concern about crime, accidents or injuries or property loss or damage?

BUILDING EXTERIOR

Among the issues regarding safety and security are: building age, architectural features, patterns of use and the design and materials of the exterior. Many of the following questions can be adapted to fit the specific features of your place of worship.

Goal: All buildings should be well maintained, locked and lighted in a way that deters crime and unauthorized access and increases safety at entrances and exits. It may be appropriate for exteriors to be strengthened against hazardous weather conditions for the area or to have extra protection at doors and windows for other reasons.

- Doors and openings to buildings should all be able to be locked and usually should be locked between services and activities, unless there are other customs in your place of worship.
- Private entrances or other access points should be locked after every use, even between short intervals of use. No doors should be propped open.
- Devices such as peepholes and intercoms may be helpful, to allow screening on appropriate doors.
- As few entrance doors as possible should be unlocked and used any time.
- Entrances not used should be as well lit and maintained as those that are use often.
- Easily visible signs should direct people to preferred entrances.
- Windows and doors should be locked and able to be seen by patrols.
- Alarm systems should be obvious and working, and should be tested on a schedule. (Alarms are not always a practical answer for securing an entire place of worship. If they are used, consider having a mechanism for having flashing lights to accompany the alarm, to attract more attention.)

Hiring a locksmith or other repairman (or enlisting the help of a knowledgeable member of the congregation) to evaluate doors and locks may be helpful if the equipment is old, has not been well maintained or maintenance records are not available.

Potential Questions about the Exterior

1. Overall appearance and condition?

Are any portions damaged to the extent that it could be a hazard? (Loose stones, splintered wood, nails showing, sections missing, loose decorative features on roof or gables, etc?)

- Are drain pipes, trellis, decorative letters and symbols and other attachments to the exterior solidly attached?

2. Roof

How can the roof be accessed? Can it be secured?

- If access is gained, what is on the roof that could present a hazard to the person accessing it or to those in the place of worship?
- Is there anything to be stolen? (Copper, conduit, etc.)
- Are skylights and transom windows closed and locked?
- What is the status of vents, electrical equipment, HVAC installations, loose objects? (Check for repair needs or any apparent tampering.)
- Status and condition of roof? Water or wind damage visible? Fire hazards?

3. Generators, fuse boxes and other equipment

Compliance with codes and safety regulations?

- Locked when allowed by code? Inspection records maintained?
- Evidence of tampering?

4. Lights

- At doors: Are they tamper resistant? Sufficiently bright? Are they steady burning or on sensors?
- Other lights: Are there enough of them to help reduce risk to windows and doors? Are they placed correctly to be effective for their purposes?

5. Doors (Starting at one point and working around the building, open and close each door and inspect them carefully.)

- Are doors numbered or lettered (or a combination) with easily visible stickers or paint? This makes it easier to provide information to 911 and also for giving evacuation directions or for other purposes.
- Condition of door, parts and hinges as to repair, sturdiness, maintenance?
- Locking mechanism: According to the type of lock being used, is it workable, in good repair? When it locks, does the door lock solidly?
- Condition of door frame?
- Are emergency exit doors clear and operable?
- Is the timing of automatic and handicapped accessible doors appropriate for all times and conditions? (Should be long enough to allow exit, but not so long that the doors stay open after the person using the door has left, if others are not present.)
- Is there a method of knowing and controlling who has keys and how they are used? Have there been any concerns about key use or control?

6. Windows

Inspect all ground level windows, including those that cannot be opened or that are decorative.

- Are there indicators that anyone has tried to gain access? (Keep window frames repaired to make this more obvious.)
- Bathroom windows or other small windows locked when no one is present?
- Window coverings prevent seeing in when rooms aren't being used?
- Upper level windows secured and unable to be accessed or opened?
- Basement windows secured and in good repair?
- Are window wells clean and covered?

7. Other

Any other aspect of the exterior that needs to be assessed?

MAIN ENTRANCE/EXIT AND FOYER AREA

Places of worship vary considerably in configuration of entrances/exits, foyers, waiting areas, book stores, information desks and architectural features. Adapt the following suggestions by walking through the area and listing the elements in it that could be harmed or effected by safety hazards or security threats.

Goal: The interior of foyers and lobbies should be well-lighted when the doors are unlocked and the building is in use. Candles, electronic items and décor should be displayed or used in a safe, secure manner. Staff stationed in the lobby or foyer should have a way to contact assistance if needed.

Items of value: Many places of worship have displays, furniture or décor that are costly or have historic or emotional value. Members may be so accustomed to them they do not realize their appeal to collectors or criminals. Vandalism is also a threat.

- Items on display should be in easily observed, well-lighted locations and as secured as possible, or in a way that would make removal attempts obvious.
- Consider replacing real items (antique bibles or books, art work, chalices, silver candle holders, tapestries and other artifacts) with facsimiles or photographs.

Emergency preparedness: Issues for the main entrances and exits might include:

- Are light controls in a protected area or disguised?
- A procedure established for opening all front doors in the event of an emergency.
- Is there a procedure for quickly locking-down the building to prevent an attacker from entering? (While not creating a safety hazard in the event of fire or panic.)
- Consider the size, weight and location of furniture and fixtures that could be used as protective barriers if needed. Ushers and greeters should be aware of what areas might provide the best cover or be most easily secured in the event of a violent situation.
- Consider having a cabinet or nearby closet with emergency equipment: Flashlights, first aid kit, air horns, identifying vests and anything else that would be appropriate for the setting in potential emergencies. (Consider having enough flashlights to be able to distribute some to the congregation if needed.)
- Fire suppression items? Who is trained to use it? Have the items been tested?
- Are doors and hallways leading into private areas locked or kept closed if they must be kept unlocked? (Consider self-closing doors or doors with buzzers to alert staff.)
- Plants, furniture or other barriers may be useful to prevent people from standing next to large expanses of glass. This may be helpful in a weather emergency or if the glass is broken in any other way.

Assessing at varied times, days and seasons is the best way to fully consider the safety, security and emergency preparedness factors of the foyer and lobby area.

SANCTUARY/AUDITORIUM/ OTHER WORSHIP AREAS

Goal: The main worship area and other areas used for worship should be maintained in a safe and secure manner during and between use, and emergency response options should be known by members. The space should be evaluated for hazards or concerns, maintenance issues, exit in case of emergency and for areas of protection in the event of harmful situations.

Features that do not change: Some general information may not change over time: Maximum occupancy, average attendance (or, actual attendance if the assessment is being conducted during a service) location of exit doors and location of light and temperature controls. However, having those items on the assessment list or form reminds assessors to evaluate current concerns about each of them.

Potential Questions for Main Worship Areas:

1. Overall space and seating:

- Maximum occupancy? Average attendance (or current attendance)
- Is the layout of the space or the placement of any item likely to be hazardous during an emergency exit? (Musical instruments, people standing or sitting in aisles, etc.)
- Status of light controls, thermostats, electrical outlets, etc.?
- If seating is on levels, are all levels able to be observed by ushers or others? Concerns?
- Hazards related to steps, furniture, candles, activities, large numbers of people, etc?
- Handicapped area status? Clear route to emergency exits?
- Seating: Condition of seats or pews and in and around seats. Status of books, materials, cards, etc. and holders. Hazards, concerns?
- Are there hazards related to clear movement (carpet condition, kneeling rails, congregational activities, etc.)? How can those be limited or eliminated?

2. Use and status of space

How is the space used on a daily basis, other than main worship times--daytime or nighttime? Have assessments been done during those times?

•If the space has other functions, is there a process for clearing and securing it between uses, if that would be beneficial?

•If the space is open for other purposes when few people are present:

Are emergency exits clear and open during that time?

Are valuable items secured?

Is there a way to contact staff quickly in an emergency? (Buzzer, intercom, etc.)

•Other concerns about how the space is used?

3. Entrances and exits to auditorium:

- Are side rooms or hallways locked to prevent the auditorium from being entered without the being observed?
- Are emergency exits lighted and marked and the path cleared?
- If emergency exit doors lead to other hallways or rooms, then to outside exits, are those doors and paths clear?
- Can doors be locked from either or both sides? If so, what is condition of lock, frame and hinges?

4. Windows

Overall status?

- If entrance could be gained from outside, are they locked, with locks and frames in good repair?
- If windows are decorative, are they firmly in place and in good repair?

5. Choir, musician waiting areas, etc.

Overall status or potential hazards?

- Are waiting areas secured to prevent access by unauthorized people?
- Are valuables secured?
- Are musical instruments secured?
- Fire suppression and other emergency equipment available?

6. Rooms or spaces adjacent to sanctuary or auditorium

Overall status?

- Are these rooms secured to prevent unauthorized access, or cleared after use?
- Are there areas that could easily offer concealment for people or items?
- Fire hazards?
- If the door is not always locked, when is it locked and how?
- Windows locked?
- Other issues of concern about the space or room?

7. Platform, pulpit area

Overall status of area?

- Is the area free of potential safety hazards (cords, loose rugs, steep steps, etc.)?
- If there are potential hazards have they been protected against in an effective way (located away from movement area, covered, barriers, warning signs, etc.)
- Are candles maintained safely? Is fire suppression equipment nearby?
- Is the path clear from the platform or pulpit to an emergency exit?

- Is an emergency exit available for choir, musicians, others on the platform?
- Is there an area of concealment or protection for leaders or others, if needed, either on the platform or in a side room?
- Have those who are on or around the platform during services, been briefed about potential responses in various emergencies (Review the Emergency Plan as part of a process assessment.)

8. Offering Collection

- Is there an effective protocol for collecting, removing and counting the money? (This can be reviewed under assessments of processes and programs.)

9. Areas for special activities during services: (List each)

This may include baptismal areas and altars as well as activities such as communion, prayer groups, altar calls, children's church, etc.

Possible hazard or other concerns, either during services or when the sanctuary is not in use?

10. Emergency Preparedness

- Is there an Emergency Plan that provides suggested responses to a variety of emergency situations (Fire, medical emergencies, accidents, violence and other crimes, weather emergencies, mechanical and utility emergencies, etc.) that has been distributed to key people and about which adult members are familiar?

(Review the Emergency Plan as part of a process and program assessment.)

- Is there someone present at all services who could provide CPR or other life saving actions? Are there guidelines or schedules for these people?
- Are there designated helpers for children and those with impaired mobility?
- Are ushers, greeters or other observers usually present during services, with designated emergency response assignments?
- Can ushers or others observe people who enter before or during services?
- Is there a security person or team designated to observe the pastor or pastoral team, and provide protection and assistance if needed? (Review the procedures through a process and program assessment with those in charge.)
- Are there any specific aspects of the service that increase threats or hazards?
- Is there a written plan about responding to emergencies that is reviewed regularly at least by the pastoral and worship teams or key members and leaders?

OFFICES OF CLERGY AND STAFF

These offices are prime targets for crime and should be assessed with a view to a wide variety of concerns. Usually the regular occupants want to be present when their personal space is assessed. During nighttime assessments you can limit your assessing to checking doors and windows, unless there is some aspect of their work areas that need to be checked more thoroughly. Then, perhaps they can be present for this unique perspective!

While assessing staff offices it is convenient to assess the overall safety and security program of clergy and staff. They are mentioned in the section on assessing special functions and some information will be provided here.

During this assessment you may also recognize liability concerns, concerns about some aspects of their work or a need for more oversight or accountability as it relates to money or some other function. Work with church leaders to be effective in these areas.

Concerns about offices:

- The presence of electronic equipment, office supplies, petty cash, a safe for large amounts of money, furniture, art, books and personal items is a temptation for burglars as well as for those who might commit a crime of opportunity.
- When the offices are occupied there may be purses or other valuables left out in the open.
- The clergy and staff may be vulnerable to attack or harassment.
- Often they are in more isolated parts of a building and may not be aware of intruders or visitors.
- The cars of staff are usually parked in obvious locations, which can signal how many are present.
- Places of worship are often visited by those who want financial assistance or those who have other problems. If assistance isn't available (or even if it is) they may react violently.
- The staff are more likely to be present if a mechanical failure occurs during the daytime and may not know what to do about it unless they have been trained.
- Visitors and others may seek assistance and not be able to contact staff persons if business areas are locked to prevent intruders. (Which is why they are often not locked.)

Assess with a view to vulnerability of people and items, as well as potential access to the rest of the building. Consider the space when people are present, after hours, during services, during special events, and all the other times when the offices may be at risk.

CLERGY AND STAFF SECURITY IN OFFICES

Consider how to make office areas more safe and secure against intruders during the day time, while still allowing required activities.

- Among the best methods are to have buzzers and intercoms (even very basic portable ones can work) and peepholes.
- Guidelines should be developed for who can be allowed in and under what circumstances.
- There should be sign-in sheets or other ways of letting staff know if teachers, kitchen workers or others are in the building. This will not only avoid nerve-rattling surprises but also allows the staff to know who is present in the case of a fire, medical emergency or other emergency situation.
- Staff should be trained about the mechanical and utility systems of the place of worship in case there are no maintenance staff or others present to do an emergency shut-off.
- Parking areas and doorways should be well lighted and staff members should avoid going to cars alone after dark in settings that may be hazardous.
- It is usually advisable to not mark parking spaces as belonging to specific people. This avoids the use of a name to gain further information and also prevents targeting cars.
- Clergy and staff should have a code word or phrase to help them communicate a need for assistance if they do not feel comfortable doing so openly.
- Prevention of intrusion is focused mainly on doors and windows. Window coverings that prevent people from seeing the contents of offices should be used after hours.
- All staff members should be aware of how to help visitors and others get to a shelter-in-place in the building, in the event of a weather emergency or a threatening situation of any kind. A safe room or area should be identified and supplied with emergency items, including flashlights, walkie-talkies, weather radios if that is needed, water and first aid supplies, among others.
- All emergency plans should be maintained in hard copy in staff offices. Computer files may not be available in an emergency and staff people should be able to grab a binder, leave, and have names and numbers of key contacts, as well as recommendations for responses in a variety of emergencies.
- Staff cell phones should have key contact numbers for maintenance, emergency response and church leaders, programmed into them.
- Whether or not staff members should have a non-lethal weapon such as pepper spray, may be part of the guidelines provided by church leaders. Everyone having them should be trained to use them correctly and they should be aware of the potential results. For example, the results of using pepper spray in a small space should be discussed.
- The business and church functions of each individual staff person should be evaluated to ensure safety and security. For example, the person who takes money to the bank, the person who stays late to lock up after meetings, etc. Often those people already have concerns as well as ideas for making the situations more safe.

CLASSROOMS

Goal: These rooms are used for bible study, church school and similar programs, usually for designated age groups. For those reasons they may present special concerns and those responsible for them should be briefed about how to keep them safe and secure.

Classrooms should be orderly and free of safety hazards. They must also be kept secure between use, since classroom windows are often closed for sound control and windows are opened for ventilation. Everyone should be aware of exit paths and teachers should be prepared to provide leadership in the event of an emergency.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT CLASSROOMS/MEETING ROOMS

1. Overall space

- Who usually uses this space (and does that present specific safety and security issues?)
- Who is responsible for opening/lock up or other security related to the space?
- Maintenance and appearance: Anything noted for improvement or change?

2. Doors and windows

- Windows locked, whether or not entry could be gained through them?
- Are locks in good condition? Can windows be moved on their tracks even though locked?
- Any aspect of areas outside windows that present hazards or threats?
- Do windows have screens if appropriate?
- If there are window coverings, are they kept closed when classes are not being used?
- Are doors able to be locked? Who has the key?
- Are doors locked when the room is not in use, if that is protocol?

3. Materials and furniture

- Are papers and materials orderly, off the floor, away from heating vents and not covering areas or items that need to be visible?
- Are scissors and similar items secured or out of reach by children?
- Are all walking areas free of any obstructions or items?
- Are all parts of furniture in good repair? (Do drawers have safety catches to avoid having them pulled out all the way? Are trims and metal solidly attached?)

4. Closets, storage

- Are doors locked when not in use, if there is equipment or valuables? Who has keys?
- Are valuables inscribed or labeled?

5. Fire and other hazards

- Are electrical appliances, cords and outlets in good repair?
- Are appliances unplugged if no one is in the room?
- Are extension cords rolled up and put away or at least not draped or stretched on or through areas where someone could trip on them or pull the appliance off a counter or shelf?
- Is any item that is capable of creating heat kept secured when no adult is present?

6. Emergency preparedness

- Is there a method for getting emergency assistance? (Buzzer, members use cell phones, phone in room, near other classrooms, etc.?)
- Is there a flashlight for emergency use?
- Is there an Emergency Plan and does the teacher or leader know his or her role in the event of an emergency? (Review the plan as part of Process Assessment.)
- Could the room be locked from the inside if necessary? If so, are there ways to prevent them from being locked in normal circumstances?
- If regular emergency exits could not be used, is there another way out? If so, is that way clear of obstructions and is it marked in some way?
- Upon leaving the room, are emergency exit routes to the outside clearly marked?

7. If there are protocols for opening and locking up the area, are those posted clearly to avoid mistakes?

8. If the space is occupied during the assessment, are there any concerns based on activities, classroom control, security or safety, etc.?

9. Are there written protocols for rooms used by children, with regards to such issues as leaving only with adult supervision, not allowing unplanned pick-up by non-custodial adults, etc.?

10. Are there other observable concerns about the space or use?

KITCHEN AND SOCIAL AREAS

Goal: These areas are gathering places during planned functions and often at other times. The areas should be kept as secured as possible between use to avoid accidents, removal of items, or purposeful damage, especially if there are electrical appliances and sinks or many food items or valuables.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT KITCHEN AND SOCIAL AREAS

1. Who is responsible for maintenance and use of the area?
2. Are there written protocols and requirements for those who use it?
3. Are there sign-in or scheduling requirements and are those maintained?
4. Are there clean-up protocols and are those posted?
5. Are cabinets and storage areas that contain valuable items or supplies locked?
6. Are there items or areas that would be particularly hazardous to children or those who do not know how to operate the equipment? If so, are those secured?
7. Are there ample fire extinguishers and are they in working order?
8. Are there several flashlights available in case of power outage when many people are present?
9. Are written instructions posted or readily available for using appliances or turning on electric or gas ranges or refrigerators?
10. Are chemicals or cleaning items kept secured?
11. Are cabinets organized sufficiently to avoid spillage when doors are opened?
12. Is the area free of rodents and insects? If not, are there specific efforts being made to control the problem?
13. Is the refrigerator clean, without spoiled or old food?
14. Are all cords and plugs in good repair?
15. If there are hot water heaters or other systems in the area, what is their status as to maintenance, age and condition?
16. Is all furniture clean and in good repair?
17. Is there a way to get emergency assistance? (Buzzer, cell phone, regular phone?)
18. Are exit doors unobstructed? Are exits marked clearly?
19. Is there a protocol that doors to the outside will not be propped open for ventilation if it will allow unsafe conditions? (This can prevent assaults on kitchen workers as well as unauthorized access to the rest of the facility when staff is not present.) Look for propping devices by the doors.
20. Are windows and doors secure?
21. If people are present during the assessment, are there circumstances that indicate a concern about safety and security for people or the facility?
22. Are there other concerns about the space?

CHILDCARE AND NURSERY

Note: The issue of protecting children and youth is a tremendously important one for places of worship and involves much more than the scope of this document. The following material is limited to assessing the spaces used by childcare and nursery workers, rather than advising about check-in and check-out policies, approving childcare workers, medical emergencies and similar issues.

Goal: To have a space that is clean, well maintained and free of hazards, and for which there are protocols and requirements related to safety and security. The same issues assessed in other spaces generally apply to these.

1. Overall status of space: Is the area clean appearing and smelling, free from litter and with floors and surfaces clean and orderly? Is all furniture clean and in good repair? Are all fabrics clean and repaired? Is trash and litter handled appropriately, especially soiled items? If there are municipal regulations regarding childcare, are these being followed?
2. If children are present during the assessment are there any issues related to their care or safety that should be corrected?
3. Are exit doors clear of obstructions and marked?
4. Can lighting be made bright for clear observation of infants and children and their status?
5. Are all electrical appliances, cords and outlets secured or childproofed in some way?
6. Are there methods in place to prevent children from leaving the area without adult knowledge?
7. Are supplies and valuables kept in secured areas when no one is present?
8. Are there fire extinguishers and are they operable?
9. Is there a flashlight for each worker?
10. Is there a first aid kit or appropriate first aid items?
11. Are windows locked when the area is not in use?
12. If windows are unlocked or open for ventilation, could someone enter easily? (If so, can this risk be reduced by making the window open only part way?)
13. Can emergency assistance be obtained easily? (Buzzer, cell phone, regular phone or intercom?)
14. Are there other aspects about the nursery or child care area that needs to be corrected or considered?

OTHER ROOMS AND SPACES TO ASSESS

Every room, closet and space should be looked at and evaluated as to safety, security, potential problems or how it could be used in the event of an emergency. Do not neglect to review every area in your assessment.

- Some places of worship have specific areas for worship items, artifacts and art, sacred documents or items, musical instruments, special rooms for counseling, worship or administering sacraments or rites, etc. The safety and security of these areas should be closely inspected, since they often attract the attention of the curious as well as those who want to harm people or property or to steal items.
- In very small places of worship there are few rooms, but those are often multi-purpose rooms that are used by many people and not always maintained safely or securely. It is especially common to have children return to their unlocked Sunday School classes when they are there during the week.
- Any rooms, areas or buildings that are historic or that contain art or artifacts are made more vulnerable because visitors may enter ostensibly to view the item or sanctuary or to take photos, but may also take anything that is in the open and can be concealed before they leave.

OTHER ASSESSMENT AREAS

MECHANICAL AND UTILITY SYSTEMS

The scope and nature of inspections and assessments will vary based on the complexity of the systems. Custodians or maintenance staff may be the point of contact for these systems, however the overall facility is still the responsibility of church leadership and oversight and assessment is appropriate.

Inspections by professionals: These should be conducted on a schedule to ensure the systems are well maintained and present no safety hazards. The areas in which equipment is maintained should be clean, easily accessible and well lit.

- Operating information, warnings, emergency shut-off information and repair information should be posted clearly, with a flashlight nearby for reading in darker areas. The same information should be maintained in security plans elsewhere, in case an emergency prevents getting close to the equipment.
- Systems should be secured as effectively as possible, in compliance with zoning and fire and building regulations, to prevent unauthorized access.
- Optimally, there should be restrictions on who can operate, adjust or maintain the systems, and there should be a log of activities and access.
- Instructions should be provided to those who regularly use the building about how to respond to various situations, including smelling a gas leak, finding a hot water heater or pipe that is broken and flooding an area, or observing some other system failure or problem.

PROCESSES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Every place of worship has different needs based on their services, ceremonies and routine and activities involving members as well as the community. Consider a routine week as well as special events, to determine a list of situations that might present risks and hazards.

The following material is not meant to provide all the safety and security guidelines needed for these processes and programs. It is meant to be a discussion starter about assessing them, recognizing concerns, and working with others to develop ways to improve safety and security.

1. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS FOR SELECT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

There are some programs and processes that should be entrusted only to those whose character and history is above reproach. Among those are:

Bookkeeping or money handling
Childcare and nursery workers
Teachers, leaders or volunteers of children and youth
Transportation volunteers or staff
Counselors and others in high liability positions.

Those who will be responsible for valuable equipment
Those who are hired to perform tasks for which their knowledge, skills and work history should be verified.

In those situations, even if family members in the church vouch for an individual, or if they were former members in good standing, applicants and volunteers should be subject to some level of background investigation.

- For some jobs it is enough to get references and work history resumes, combined with an interview and perhaps a work sample to test their abilities.
- Other volunteer or staff positions require more thorough investigation, to include criminal history records or driving records. Check with the state criminal investigation bureau or local law enforcement where you live to find out what records are available and how you can obtain them legally and ethically.

An Internet resource: An excellent resource about background investigations is on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce site in their section for small businesses. At the time of this writing, the specific URL is: http://business.uschamber.com/P05/P05_1500.asp. However, their entire series of articles on hiring employees is useful for review.

2. MONEY COLLECTION AND HANDLING

A protocol should be established that ensures safe and secure handling of cash and checks and immediate accounting of funds, as well as safe storage of funds and safe transport to a bank.

What is considered safe will vary according to the location and the people available. This is a situation in which most people can use intuitive thinking to evaluate concerns and

develop at least a degree of improvement. Resources provided by insurance companies, banks and others, can be helpful.

3. BOOKSTORES, THRIFT STORES, WELFARE FUNDS

These programs can be a temptation for visitors or members, since money is often collected hurriedly and not kept secure. Protocols should be established that require using receipts, having two people present when funds are counted, and keeping an inventory when practical. Those in charge are often most able to develop policies and procedures. However, the programs should be audited and evaluated by others, to ensure objectivity.

4. CEREMONIES AND SPECIAL SERVICES

Any function that involves potential risks such as filled baptisteries, candles, unusual worship items or artifacts, dimmed or darkened areas or similar situations should be assessed prior to the activity and occasionally while a ceremony is being conducted, to see if there are obvious security needs.

- Each ceremony and special activity should be considered by security coordinators and those involved in the programs, to assess what and how there could be harmful actions or results from accidents, injuries, inappropriate behavior, crimes of opportunity, planned crimes, or anything else that could harm the place of worship of the people attending the function.
- During special events children often are more likely to play in around the building and in side rooms. This is a hazard for them as well as for church property and should be limited through locking-off sections if possible, or by having staff patrol through the building.
- These programs are often attended by guests and others who do not know their way around a building, which means extra greeters may be needed to assist.
- Purses, equipment and other valuables should be kept secured. For example, keyed lockers or a storage closet in rooms used by wedding parties, choir members, clergy or staff can protect items that are often left in the open during ceremonies.
- It may be wise to assign a specific individual or group to security posts in high risk areas during ceremonies and special services.

5. COUNSELING

Programs such as counseling for couples and individuals should have protocols established to prevent justified or unjustified accusations about the actions of counselors or clients. These might involve requiring other staff to be present in the area or to only conduct counseling during business hours or with two counselors present.

Counselors themselves are usually the best sources of knowing what might be of concern and how those concerns could be reduced. However, church leaders or the ministerial team can also determine guidelines based on those used in other places of worship or specific issues for the locale.

6. YOUTH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

These are among the most potentially problematic of all programs. Among the issues to consider are the requirements for adult supervision of all activities as well as selection and training of youth leaders—who are often young adults themselves. The well-being of youth, leaders and the place of worship depends upon oversight and caring but concerned control.

It may be helpful to have the youth participants assist in developing guidelines and emergency response plans, since they are often more aware of potential problems than their leaders might be. Problem areas may include:

Transportation safety	Criminal acts by participants or by strangers against participants.
General safety in the environment (such as at outdoor activities).	Conflicts, arguments, relationship issues.
The presence of inappropriate or unwanted items or substances.	Actions that could potentially bring discredit to the place of worship.
Inappropriate or unwanted activities of any kind.	Accidents, injuries and illnesses.
	Getting separated from the group.

Among the ways to reduce hazards and risks in youth activities:

- Youth should receive written instructions about safety and security before significant events, especially those involving large crowds or unusual settings.
- The group should stay together.
- Leaders must be notified when someone leaves the area and when they return.
- A leader should generally not be alone with individual youth.
- Both youth and the leaders should receive clear guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in many areas of concern.
- Leaders should provide a strong leadership role and observe closely to ensure safe, secure actions by youth, as well as to be prepared for emergencies.

The best way to assess these processes is to occasionally be present to observe or to occasionally conduct interviews of youth and youth leaders.

7. TRANSPORTATION

Busses, vans and cars used to transport anyone involved with church activities should be well maintained and driven safely, with ample time for rest for the driver on longer trips. Develop a list of do's and don'ts and have drivers sign it before a trip.

A review of accidents involving such vehicles, as well as information from other churches, automobile associations and insurance carriers, will provide many ideas for guidelines for both vehicles and drivers.

Everyone who transports people on behalf of the church should be approved using reasonable criteria focused on driver experience, history and acceptance of church requirements or prohibitions for the situation.

8. OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Conferences, camps, special events, concerts and retreats, are all areas of responsibility for church leadership if the events are sponsored by the church. These events and locations vary tremendously, but some general guidelines can help you develop detailed ones for specific events.

When assessing off-site activities consider these issues to decide what might improve the safety and security program.

•**Safety and Security Coordinators:** One or more people should be assigned to coordinate safety and security activities for off-site activities. Their responsibilities should be clearly defined and they should be prepared to focus their attention on issues related to their roles:

- Awareness of the overall environment
- Identification of potential threats or hazards or safety or health threats
- Knowledge of basic precautions related to concerns
- The general location of participants at all times
- Being available for regular contact and making status reports
- Having emergency contact information for participants and for church leaders and local assistance if available

•**Leaders, counselors or other volunteers:** These people represent the place of worship and should be well known by church leaders or approved through a process that ensures they are dependable and trustworthy.

They should receive written material about their responsibilities, including concerns to be alert about and responses to them. When possible they should be contacted by security coordinators ahead of time, so their concerns and those of the church leadership can be discussed.

•**Participant information and responsibilities:** Participants should be briefed verbally and receive written guidelines or information ahead of time about safety and security during the event. In the case of children and youth, a separate communication should go to parents. Information may include:

- The role of security coordinators and other leaders
- The overall environment of the locale or event
- Threats or hazards related to the event or location
- Precautions related to concerns
- Their responsibilities for conduct and for reporting problems
- Any prohibited items or conduct.
- Contact information to give to family or others

•General safety and security guidelines:

The following guidelines do not cover every setting and may not apply to all off-site activities, because the situations vary so much. However, it can provide a starting point for further discussion by leaders in your place of worship.

- Guests who are not well-known to staff should be observed for problems as well as being given extra attention and assistance to ensure they feel safe and secure.
- When members invite guests to off-site events involving travel or overnight situations, event leaders should be notified in advance, in case extra information must be provided or obtained.
- At indoor events everyone should be made aware of exits and hazards related to the venue. If possible, get a floor plan ahead of time so the coordinator is familiar with it. If possible, attendees should gather for a briefing at the site.
- Develop plans and requirements based on safety and security as well as on reinforcing positive messages about conduct during off-site events. This is especially true for youth groups or when many guests will be participating.
- At hotels and other overnight locales, it is particularly important to stay aware of the location of participants and to ensure they do not leave the area without notification. (And also that they do not disturb other guests.) Coordinators should identify themselves to counter staff and security personnel, if any, and provide a cell phone for emergency contact if needed.
- Cell phone numbers of participants should be programmed into the coordinator's cell phone to allow for quick contact. In some settings, walkie-talkies will be needed to stay in contact, and enough should be used to allow groups to stay in contact.

Outdoor or camp events:

- At outdoor events or in camps or similar settings, no one should leave the immediate area or go outside cabins or tents without the knowledge and permission of leaders or coordinators. This is particularly important with children and youth. Even seemingly benign walks in the dark can have harmful results in unsupervised settings.
- In outdoor nighttime settings, coordinators should have several flashlights as well as access to first aid items and a way to get emergency assistance.
- Rustic buildings, dorms and tents should all be inspected for safety and security. Fire safety is crucial, but so is safety regarding fumes from generators and heaters, electrical systems that may be subject to damage during off-seasons, structural damage, fire pits near buildings, and stairs, railings and balconies that need repair.
- Camp kitchens and bathrooms or toilets should be checked for cleanliness, safety regarding chemicals, fixtures, appliances in need of repair, and other factors that are neglected in facilities that are not used often or are used by a variety of groups throughout a season.
- The best way to assess these activities is to visit the site well in advance of use if possible. If that is not possible, try to find a way to be present during at least one similar

activity elsewhere, to observe concerns there. Or, contact others who have had activities in that location.

As with other events, have participants and coordinators prepare a list of considerations related to safety and security, to allow for planning the next time. Unfortunately, some of the concerns may be too late to help at the time, which is why pre-assessment is so important.

9. TRAVEL

The destination and method of travel will have an effect on the information needs of those who attend events off-site. At least one briefing should be held a week or so before the travel, to allow for questions about specific issues to be researched if needed. Among the issues to consider are:

- The overall safety and security of the location and travel methods.
- The culture of the location as it relates to foreigners or travelers.
- Precautions related to crime or terrorist activities in the locale involved.
- General guidelines about safety in groups as well as alone.
- In some countries bomb awareness and safety information should be provided.

Information can be obtained through Internet resources, by talking to contacts at places or worship who may have visited there in the past, from church members with knowledge of the locale, and through travel clubs.

The information should be updated after the event so it can be used by coordinators the next time.

10. SPECIAL EVENTS

These may include special services, music programs, bible conferences, guest speakers, large dinners, awards banquets, seasonal programs, holiday programs, and other functions that may attract attention, be attended by large numbers, or are open to the public.

- Develop a list of special events and schedule a time for safety and security planning as well as assessing. Assess during these events, as a way to be better prepared for the future and to see if there are problems that need to be corrected at the time.

Among the security activities that may be helpful:

- Someone specific to assist in the event of a medical emergency should be on-site at all times when possible.
- An announcement may be made to point out exits in the event of an emergency.
- Greeters and ushers should be particularly observant to note visitors or strangers who exhibit unusual behavior, and be ready to get assistance if needed.
- Areas of the building that are not being used as part of the program should be closed to public access if possible.
- Parking lots should be patrolled or checked often to prevent break-ins.

- Exits should be kept clear of people, musical instruments or other items.
- As with all services, the pastor or leader of the service should have someone specific who is responsible for observing and responding to assist if the pastor is threatened or needs help in some other way.
- Any large event usually means there will be activities and situations that are unexpected, and that systems and people will be pushed to the maximum. There is a temptation to eliminate some security or safety requirements as too difficult to follow. This is the very time when those requirements are most important.

For example, when items are being brought into the building, rather than propping doors open, someone should stand and hold the door, or the door should be relocked each time it will be left unobserved.

Discussing safety and security with coordinators of events may reduce problems and help everyone stay more safe and secure.

11. OTHER PROGRAMS

You may need to get information and schedules from several sources to ensure that every program is reviewed. Your goal is not to critique the programs, but rather to work with coordinators to ensure there are written guidelines and that safety and security is a priority when the place of worship is the sponsor of an activity or function.

12. INSPECTION DURING MAIN SERVICES

During every worship service, a brief inspection of key elements should be conducted, to ensure that safety and security is being maintained at a high level. Without this inspection, assessment is limited to reviewing the space when it is empty—not very realistic!

Among the things to consider:

- Is the parking lot orderly and are all the safety features working correctly?
- Are people able to move safely from parking areas into the building?
- Is there any aspect of traffic, movement or activity outside the building that could be a safety and security concern?
- Are greeters and ushers and other volunteers and staff in their places and performing their tasks appropriately, especially as it relates to safety and security?
- Are security staff relatively unobtrusive and not disruptive?
- Are emergency items in place? (Flashlights, first aid, etc.)
- Are doors opened or locked, according to the security plan?
- Are off-limits areas locked?
- Are there valuables left in the open and at risk? Can they be better secured?
- Are there any activities inside the church that appear to have the potential for harm—either inadvertent or purposeful?

- In the sanctuary, are reasonably clear path to exits maintained throughout the service?
- Are the choir and musicians able to exit safely and quickly?
- Are the security staff who are assigned to focus on the security of the pastor and/or his family, in place and performing their tasks appropriately?
- Is there any aspect of the service that could result in harm or that could prevent emergency responses as needed?

Interviews: Consider occasionally interviewing members (and perhaps guests, in some carefully chosen situations) about their observations regarding safety and security measures. It is also beneficial to have a few non-stressful, quick quiz questions for staff and volunteers, to test their safety and security knowledge.

•For example, assessors might ask the following questions of greeters or ushers:

1.) If there was an emergency right now, where is the closest exit, other than the front door?

2.) If the building is evacuated and someone asks you where they should gather outside, where would you tell them to wait?

3.) Where is the safest room near this position, if you had to lead people to shelter inside the building?

•Guests or members might be asked:

1.) Did you notice the signs in the parking lot, reminding people about safety for their vehicles? What did you think about that or how did it make you feel?

2.) How comfortable were you with the greeting you received when you first came in the door?

3.) Did you notice anything before, during or after the service that concerned you about safety or security?

4.) Were you aware that we have an extensive safety and security assessment program and a variety of security plans that all leaders, staff and volunteers are trained about?

Photos: Within reason, take photos to document positive and negative issues in every area assessed during the main service. Sometimes a photo will dispel a concern or reinforce the need for action, far better than the statement of the assessor.

Emergency Plans and Training

One of the benefits of plans, apart from using them to train people about how to respond in emergencies, is the process of planning, in its own right. That is why many people should be part of the planning. It helps everyone think more clearly about all the details that are required for effective emergency responses.

There are many joking comments about having plans that are never read or used. That situation usually occurs when there is no requirement or encouragement to read or use them. A review at least three months is helpful and may be part of staff meetings, deacon meetings or special briefings before or after services, according to the nature of the plans.

Staff who are present in a mechanical, weather or medical emergency may not have access to computers, so the plans should also be in hard copy format and tabbed for easy reference and review. Consider having most security plans in a binder that also contains phone numbers and other information that may be accessed often, so staff are more likely to have them handy.

Copies should be distributed to all church leaders and regular volunteers. Every church member should at least have material that applies to them and their activities.

Among the plans and information that should be part of a church security program are:

1. General guidelines and information about safety and security in every aspect of activities, processes and programs.

Over time there should be guidelines developed for leaders and participants in all of the major activities of the place of worship. This takes time, and it may be that the information is needed before the planning is completed. That is why a routine focus on safety and security is so valuable. Even without written guidelines, people are more likely to have given some thought to their personal emergency responses.

2. Instructions and plans for specific people, leaders and volunteers.

These instructions may be general or very specific, according to the tasks being done by the people involved. For example:

- In the material about the security role of Greeters and Ushers, a suggestion is made to use a code word, name or phrase, so Greeters and Ushers can communicate the need for assistance if a suspicious person is nearby.
- There may be a schedule established for a pair of observers to patrol the building during services, or to check the bathrooms at regular intervals, or similar inspections that need to be assigned specifically.
- Those on the platform may all be instructed to be prepared to yell directions about evacuations or to shout at people to get down and get out, in the event of an emergency.

3. Evacuation plans:

- What would be the cause of an evacuation? How will notification be made?
- What should parents do about their children, if they are in another building or area?
- Where should people go after they leave the building?
- Who will assist visitors and those who are less able to assist themselves?
- If primary routes are blocked, what exits could be used?
- Will there be a method for notifying people when or if they should return?
- Who will be coordinators for various locations where people will gather? What is that person's role?
- Will weather have an affect on how evacuation takes place and where people should go for safety?

4. Bomb threat or other threat plans:

There are several governmental and internet resources with information about responding to phone threats. A plan should include guidelines for the call taker as well as for who makes the decision to evacuate, especially if the call appears to be a hoax (a child's voice, for example). There should be information about where to evacuate and how far away should everyone stay after evacuation.

If the threat involves someone saying a device is hidden in the building, someone may need to assist responders by identifying suspicious items.

5. Emergency medical plans:

- Who can provide emergency medical help until regular help arrives? Will there be training provided for those people if they are not professional medical responders?
- Have non-professional medical responders been given guidelines?
- Is there equipment available and who has access to it?
- Are there specific medical needs that should be identified?

6. Fire and smoke: These are routine plans that generally call for evacuation and emergency notification. However, such plans might also involve notifications to church members, special instructions for specific areas, assignments for specific individuals to notify others in the building, etc.

7. Response to violence: In these situations there is usually no warning and there may be no way to prevent the event from happening. However, having a core group of people who have thought about responses may lessen the harm to many people.

A plan for responding to an violent attack, especially if weapons are involved, should focus on getting people down to avoid gunfire or the attention of the attacker, and out of the building if possible.

Even if the police are called to the scene, it may be many minutes or many hours before they enter the building. Leaders and security team members may need to support, assist and comfort people or provide medical care throughout that time. This is at least somewhat easier to do if there is a feeling that responses have a purpose.

A violence response plan might include:

- Guidelines for when doors should be shut to keep individuals or groups out.
- Lists of safe areas for concealment or furniture that could provide short-term barricades.
- Guidelines for locking off areas of the church and assignments for doing so.
- The location of safe rooms or areas that can be secured quickly and with extra reinforcements.
- Advice for those who have a leadership role in safe rooms.
- Assignments for leaders and members about specific areas of responsibility, or specific people or groups to assist. Assignments should be reviewed regularly to ensure everyone is aware of their roles.

Weapons and other responses:

- An individual or group may decide to confront an attacker directly, no matter what the threat to their own safety. However, others may decide to try to stay concealed or help people to safety. The situation will usually dictate the options and available responses.
- Whether or not weapons, including non-lethal weapons, should be or may be carried by members other than police officers, is a decision to be made within a specific place of worship and based on the law in that location.

It is likely that some members may carry concealed weapons (guns, knives, pepper spray, etc.) without approval from church leaders. The risks and liability involved should be discussed openly enough to alert those people to the concerns.

Firing a weapon in close quarters can result in unintended death or injuries to innocent people or may not be justified for the situation. There is tremendous moral and legal liability associated with the wrongful use of a deadly weapon. On the other hand, using a weapon against an assailant may stop him or her from further deadly action against the congregation.

If a decision is made to specifically approve having some members carry concealed weapons, strict precautions should be taken about the legality of the action, who is involved, the training they have received, and the knowledge others have of their armed status.

Some places of worship have members who are active or retired law enforcement officers. Church leaders have varying views about whether they feel more comfortable with the officer in uniform or not. Those issues should be discussed by everyone involved.

8. Weather and natural emergencies: These will vary according to the setting, but might include:

Shelter-in-place information.

Supply lists.

Instructions for moving some items to safer places in the facility.

Call lists to alert members who can respond to help.

Similar information according to the nature of weather and natural emergencies in the area.

9. Mechanical emergencies: As was mentioned in the section about mechanical systems, it is worthwhile to have contact and emergency shut-off information in a binder or manual away from the potentially hazardous system and also posted near the system itself.

Directions should give step-by-step instructions for turning water, utilities or other systems off or on, as well as contact phone numbers for maintenance people.

Staff and people who are frequently in the place of worship could be given hands-on training about turning off hot water heaters, checking fuses and other mechanical first-responses that are not dangerous.

10. Community emergencies: If an emergency occurs in the community, the place of worship may be asked to assist in varied ways. If that is likely in your place of worship, a plan for quick response should be in place, according to the potential emergencies in the area.

These plans might include methods for setting up a shelter site, providing food, securing the rest of the building while others are using it, extra cleaning and maintenance, and similar issues. Keep a list of contact information for local and regional emergency responders (Salvation Army, Red Cross, etc.)

11. Continuity of operations plans (COOP): If you were not able to meet in your place of worship starting right now, where would you meet for the next service, and how would you notify people about it? What would you do about the assets of the building? That kind of information is part of continuity planning.

- The plans will vary according to whether the place of worship is still accessible and has items that can be transferred to a new location, or if it has been destroyed or is damaged severely.

- Continuity of operations plans may also include plans for dealing with such varied issues as the emergency absence of the pastor, temporary lack of electricity or water or damage to roofs or windows,

- Plans should also include information about for restoring computers, reestablishing programs, contacting insurance providers and similar issues.

- One way to consider what plans are needed is to track the activity of your church for one week, using the church calendar and talking to the pastor and administrative staff. When you realize what it takes to keep the doors open, you'll see what is needed in the way of plans.

12. Communication plans. There is often a need to communicate quickly with members and the community. Quick and frequent communication can stop the spread of rumors and misinformation as well as explaining what will happen next.

- Who, besides the pastor, is authorized to speak for the church in the event of an emergency? Has that person received training about the task, at least as it relates to liability concerns about statements?
- Is there a way to use a website to inform the public about events related to emergencies or events at the church? Who would ensure that happens?
- Is there a radio station that can make announcements? If so, who is the contact person?
- Is there a phone, computer or personal network of contacts to inform people about emergencies? What if the most obvious methods of communication don't work for some reason? (Phone lines down, cell phones in dead cell spots, etc.)

SUMMARY ABOUT SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

The material in this document can help you get started assessing the safety and security of your place of worship. As with all activities it requires effort and a degree of knowledge and skills. However, anyone with the commitment to be thorough and focused, yet well-balanced and reasonable, can do an effective job.

Use this material in conjunction with Internet and library resources, information from other churches and the intuitive judgments of you and your team of leaders and volunteers.

An ongoing process: At the beginning of this material the statement was made that safety and security assessments are ongoing and must be continuous and consistent in focus and balance. The same is true about advice and ideas for conducting assessments. This material is a good foundation, but you will find many ideas through other resources, and some of that will change over time—especially as technology changes and becomes more affordable.

Target Hardening and the Target Hardening Trap: Briefly stated, *target hardening* is the process of making a target (something or someone that could be harmed) so resistant that harm is deterred, delayed or can be detected. It incorporates protection, prevention, resistance and response. The *target hardening trap* is spending large amounts of money, time or effort to prevent something harmful from happening *again*.

One of the challenges of security is keeping the macro focus that is neither excessive nor unconcerned, but that always has the big picture and ultimate goals in mind. At the same time you must have a micro focus to ensure you do not make assumptions about safety and security, but instead that you inspect and assess closely.

The Three C's: The three C's of safety and security planning are to be, Continuous, Consistent and to Communicate openly and often. A security assessment process is one of the key elements of each of those elements.

You can have a tremendous leadership role in your place of worship when you work with others to know the safety and security status of every aspect of the people, places, property, processes and programs of your church and work to improve them in reasonable, effective ways. You can also have a leadership role by helping everyone be prepared for potential problems and emergencies.

The goal of this material: The goal, as stated in the introduction, was to:

- 1.) Give you the information, ideas and guidelines you need to conduct an effective assessment of your place of worship.
- 2.) Encourage a focused and balanced approach to safety and security planning.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CLERGY AND THE WORSHIP OR PLATFORM TEAM

This chapter will include information about a *Clergy Care* program (called by a variety of names in places of worship—Sword Bearer, Shield Bearer, Security Assistant, etc.) and the role of the worship leader and the platform team in an emergency situation. It will all need to be adapted for your place of worship and your church leaders, but it is a valuable component of a complete security program.

The material will also include information about the role of the Platform Team in an emergency.

Clergy and Worship Leader Security

Reasons for having a well-defined *Clergy Care* program (or, whatever you choose call it):

- All clergy are representatives of the place of worship and can be targets for that reason.
- Some clergy are more vulnerable because of their high-profile in the media or the community.
- Most worship leaders are highly visible during and after services but may be too busy to be aware of what is going on around them.
- Sometimes there is simply a need to diplomatically help a pastor move away from a well-meaning but problematic person.
- A pastor may have a medical emergency, have an accident or injury or just need assistance of some kind, during a service or event.

Two realities that can reduce program effectiveness:

- For some security volunteers, being on the Clergy Care team leads them to be over-zealous and overly dramatic about their duties. There is rarely a need for Secret Service-level activities and many pastors will stop the program if that occurs.
- Some pastors want to avoid any kind of special attention and will resist efforts of Clergy Care team members. This usually isn't a problem if the team is unobtrusive and appropriate. The pastor should be consulted briefly on a regular basis to get input and hear about concerns.

A basic program: The most basic Clergy Care involves assigning two or more capable individuals to focus on the worship leader before, during and after services. They should be ready to:

Assist immediately, if needed for any situation.

Help (push, pull, or accompany) the worship leader to safety if required.

Shield the leader from problem people or situations, if that is desired.

Escort the worship leader through crowds, while traveling, or in other situations as requested or required.

•In some circumstances it may be reasonable to have the minister accompanied to and from his or her vehicle. This may also extend to the spouse or family members.

Other Clergy Care Planning and Procedures

•The pastoral team, worship leader and selected others should have a code word, name, phrase or action to let security personnel know he or she needs assistance, in case it is not obvious. This can even be valuable when the pastor is in the pulpit and sees a problem from the vantage point, but no severe threat is present.

•The worship leader and other members of the pastoral team and staff, as well as their families, should be alert for suspicious events, packages, phone calls and other situations, and report them to authorities and/or security staff.

•The minister should vary his her actions around service times rather than having a pattern.

•All ministers, staff and volunteers can benefit from security reminders about:

*Travel safety.

*Package security.

*Parking security and checking the vehicle after being parked.

*Parking and walking in isolated or higher crime areas.

*The need for observation and caution at the place of worship after hours.

*Advice about non-lethal weapons such as pepper spray.

Safety and Security information should be provided as a briefing or staff training, or distributed regularly in memos. What may seem obvious to those involved in the Church Life program may not be so obvious to pastors or others, so don't neglect training.

The Role of the Platform Team in Emergency Situations

Who is part of the Platform Team? The Platform Team consists of those who are in leadership roles during services, who are on or near the platform and who are known by many in the congregation. Your church may refer to those as Worship Team members, but those often include behind-the-scenes technical staff and others. You can designate this group in any way you wish—it's the roles and locations that matter.

•A wide range of emergency or unusual situations might require the Platform Team to provide information, direction or commands:

*Fire, smoke or a mechanical failure or emergency.

*Weather or other natural emergencies.

*A medical emergency.

*A threatening situation or violence in the auditorium.

*A non-violent disruption to the service that needs to be handled or that *is* being handled.

*A disturbance outside the auditorium that can be heard inside.

*An event outside the church building that requires notification of the congregation.

Your place of worship may have unique concerns based on its location, some aspect of the facility, or attributes or issues related to specific members or guests, the pastor or publicity about the church.

Variations in auditoriums and settings: The general suggestions in this material will need to be adapted for every worship format and environment. They are written with the assumption that light levels allow those on the platform to see the congregation and that the congregation can hear those on the platform.

The Observation Role of the Platform Team

Stay aware (and stay awake, too!) Members of the Platform Team may be involved in singing, reading scripture, presenting a sermon or listening to the sermon. However, each should stay aware enough of the sights and sounds of the congregation and auditorium to notice if there is an obvious emergency or other concern.

That may not be easy to do in a large auditorium or in some portions of the service if people are standing or moving about as part of worship. However, just as lifeguards learn what is usual and what is not, most people can learn to notice what seems right for the situation and what does not, even when many things are going on.

Signals and Codes: It isn't always possible or desirable to communicate openly about a safety or security concern. Signals and codes can be helpful if they are known by those who need to know them, used correctly and acted upon immediately. Of course, in a life or death situation, any method that works should be used.

Two Signals: Consider having at least two signals that can be used by security team members, greeters or ushers, or deacons or others. One signal can indicate the need to communicate with the Platform Team about a situation—someone could leave the platform and go to the location of the Security Team member.

The other signal could indicate that a severe emergency exists that requires the services to stop and potentially for the congregation to leave the building. (Weather or some other emergency.)

- Having signals allows the Platform Team or pastor to maintain the attention of the congregation, rather than having someone rush into the auditorium shouting that there is an emergency, which increases the chance of fear and confusion.

- The signal could be a wide arcing arm wave from the back of the auditorium, both hands held in the air, by someone standing close to the platform, or anything else that conveys the message clearly to the Platform Team, without being unusually disruptive or upsetting.

- The Platform Team leader at the time (usually the one with the microphone) can respond by calling on the person directly or asking someone to go to his or her location to find out the problem.

Codes: At least one code should be developed for use by the Platform Team to communicate security team or others who can call 911 for assistance, even without knowing exactly what the situation might be. (It is preferable to know enough to tell the 911 operator, but may not be possible in every situation.)

Such a code might be used to indicate that the Platform Team member thinks he has seen someone with a weapon or someone who is behaving in a way that appears to be dangerous.

The code phrase can be anything that can be used comfortably but that will get the attention of those for whom it is intended. Be clear with everyone that the code word or phrase means “Get police help immediately.” If other codes are used they should be very different from the 911 code.

The service form makes a difference in what kind of code is used. One pastor had an agreement with his deacons about how he would alert them if a specific person was starting to be disruptive. He said, as though part of the sermon, “Brother Jim, I want you to stand on the left side of the congregation, near the back, and be ready to pray down manna from Heaven.” That comment might not work so well in other churches, but it worked well for them on that occasion!

Maintain awareness before, during and after services: Emergencies of all kinds or threatening or violent actions can happen at any time, That is why some churches have at least one or two people (or a security team or leader) who stands near the platform before and after services to observe the auditorium in a casual appearing but alert manner.

The Response Role of the Platform Team

The leaders who are on the platform when an emergency occurs have a unique ability to help the congregation. The most effective actions will require thought and preparation *before* the event.

It is also worthwhile to take a few minutes during services, every few months, to let the congregation know what kind of guidance will be provided in an emergency.

Be prepared to get to safety or find safety in-place. Everyone on the Platform Team should be aware of the nearest exit they can use if evacuation is required or the best protection or shelter in-place on or near the platform.

The podium, chairs or benches or a place near a large piece of furniture or behind a plant, may all provide protection and/or concealment if it isn't possible to get out. However, except in dire circumstances, the Platform Team or assigned leaders on the team should ensure that the congregation is assisted as much as possible before they seek safety for themselves, even if that only involves a quick command.

•In larger churches it may be helpful to have assignments, so that in an emergency one person knows to stand to one side of the platform to give directions and another goes to the other side. The ultimate goal is to provide as much assistance as possible and reasonable for the situation.

Be prepared for clear communications: The best way to ensure clear communications in an emergency is to think about what is needed to help a group of people in such a time and to be prepared with some clear phrases to assist them.

In the case of an obvious fire, shouting, "Fire! Get out the nearest exit and get away from the building!" will get people going. In an earthquake, shouting to take cover will be clear enough. In the case of a violent event, yelling a direction to "Get down!" is probably sufficient to signal that something bad is happening and everyone should take cover. In other situations, more direction may be needed.

- | | |
|---|--|
| * "Get down and get out!" | |
| * "Get down and take cover!" | * "Medical assistance. Now!" |
| * "Get out the front and get upstairs!" | * "Cover the children and get down!" |
| * "Get down and stay down!" | * "Medical emergency! Call 911!" |
| * "Get away from windows and get down!" | * "Grab someone's hand and get outside!" |

Non-emergency communications: Sometimes events occur that are not life-threatening but which require communication from the Platform Team to keep things calm while the situation can be handled. As with more serious situations, those on the Platform Team should be in a state of readiness to observe and respond.

Examples:

- *A sudden illness, but it doesn't appear to be life-threatening.
- *Someone has a seizure or becomes ill and family members are nearby to assist.
- *A non-physical disruption, perhaps by someone who is emotional.
- *A disruption of some other kind, without immediate violence or threats.
- *An accident happens but no serious injury results.

*Any of dozens of other things that might occur and someone on the Platform Team can reassure the congregation while others move to handle the situation, either to call 911 or in some other way.

•Examples of non-emergency communications that have been reported as effective when used by Platform Teams:

*"Deacons, would you go to the left side of the auditorium to assist? Everyone else please stay in your places in a state of prayerfulness."

*"Our security team is helping with this. Let's stay quiet."

*"We have plans for these kind of situations and those are being followed. Let's continue on with our service and not let this disrupt our fellowship."

*"I'm going to stop speaking for a moment while this is sorted out. Please quietly wait with me."

*"This is just a temporary disruption, so stay where you are and we'll go on with the service in a moment."

*"911 has been called and assistance is on the way. We have someone helping Mr. Vickers until the ambulance gets here. Let's change our order of service while we wait for the ambulance to arrive. Let's pray for our brother."

SUMMARY: The ideas presented in this section, as with all other security measures, must be adapted for the *specific people* involved, and should be talked about often and practiced at least every few months.

It is often difficult to get those in formal leadership positions to feel comfortable with the necessity of protocols and procedures designed for their safety. It is also sometimes difficult to get pastors, praise team leaders and members, choir members and others involved in worship, to practice--either in real time or slow-scenario-time--some basic responses to emergency situations.

Nevertheless, everyone in the place of worship will benefit if the worship team views leadership in an emergency as part of their service to the congregation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPING A SAFETY AND SECURITY MANUAL FOR A PLACE OF WORSHIP

Why Have a Safety and Security Manual?

The safety and security *manual* most often is a collection of written material maintained in a binder or folder as well as in a word processing file. It is the documentation of the safety and security program of a place of worship.

There may also be edited versions of the large manual, distributed to staff, volunteers and others. The security material for a church member may only consist of a page or two of information, while the manual for the Music Director may be large and the main manual will contain everything.

Suggested Manual Contents

It will be a *work in progress* that will change over time. The important thing is to give it structure and get it started. The following suggestions for contents can be customized to the specific needs of a church and can be changed as needs change or new information becomes available.

For example, the section on childcare or nursery programs may start with a few pages of basic procedures, then expand as higher levels of safety and security are implemented or as the program grows. Eventually, the main manual may only refer to the Childcare Manual, which will contain full and extensive information.

1. Overview information

- This provides the organizational structure of the church with staff contact information, assignments of responsibility and who is a resource for what activities.
- Community resources (law enforcement, fire department, public utilities, wastewater drainage, street maintenance, etc.)
- Contractors, vendors and others that are resources for various tasks or responses for church maintenance or emergency assistance. (Plumber, locksmith, glass repair, water clean-up, alarm companies, mechanical maintenance supplies, etc.)
- Phone chains and contact lists for members.

Note: Putting important contact information in the manual means that people are more likely to keep it handy and review it occasionally or regularly.

2. Sections for major components of church operations. The sections will vary between churches. Very large churches may have full binders just for the safety and security procedures and plans for educational areas and programs. Very small churches may only need a few pages of material with a few sections to cover needs for one or two rooms and one weekly service.

•**By space and areas.** (Church buildings, floor, area or other division of space. Parking lots, exterior of the building, sheds and other out-buildings.)

•**By groups and responsibilities.** (Pastoral team, counseling team, administrative team, maintenance staff, youth leaders, security team and/or security committee, etc.) These will vary according to activities of staff or volunteers and how often the building is open.

Among the procedures or plans may be:

*Protective measures for staff and volunteers when alone in the church.

*Requirements for times when two or more staff members must be present for liability purposes.

*Requirements and rules about counseling services.

*Safety guidelines for doing various tasks.

*Sign-in requirements for participants.

*What doors should be locked, how equipment should be stored, in what condition should a room be left after using, etc.

*Key control procedures.

*Lists of dos and don'ts for using the church after hours.

*Other rules, requirements and responsibilities.

•**Programs, processes and activities.** (Worship service, Sunday School, nursery, childcare, Choir (services, practice, etc.), social and other events, baptisms, Vacation Bible School, youth conferences, vehicle use, travel to and from sponsored events, etc.)

•**Procedures and Plans:** Information about how to develop them is in the next section.

•**Include examples of forms or other material.** The manual should contain blank copies and/or examples of any forms, sign-in sheets, approval forms, placards, etc. This is a good way to easily review all forms and to see how they fit with other procedures.

3. Distribution of the Manual Or Excerpts

•Although a computer file will be saved as material is developed, maintain hard copies in offices and classrooms.

The ultimate goal is that everyone is so aware of the information they do not have to refer to the manual in a dire emergency. However, if they need to find a contact number or what to do in the event of a non-emergency situation, the readily available manual will be convenient.

•It generally is best for individuals and groups to receive only the material they specifically need. Church leaders and other designees would have the complete manual to maintain at home as well as on-site and be familiar with all of it, while volunteers may only be given instruction sheets for their activities.

4. Steps for Developing the Safety and Security Manual

1.) Identify the person or group who will have the primary responsibility for developing the manual. They should work in cooperation with everyone involved and under the guidance of church leadership.

2.) Begin assessing the current status of the place of worship. The document on safety and security assessments that is available from the author of this material provides a method for a very thorough assessment, with an initial assessment and further assessments taking place over the course of a year.

3.) Develop the most immediately needed plans and procedures. After initial assessments, start to develop preventive measures and response plans for each major component of the church. Think about the most frequently discussed concerns, the most likely situations or the problem that is the most severe right now.

This list can remind you of the many issues that may need to be considered. Don't focus only on violence or threats—think of this as a whole-church safety and security project.

*Medical emergencies

*Violent actions (shootings, attacks against individuals or congregation.) Accidents and injuries or damage involving people and property.

*Criminal activities involving property (Building, property and equipment crimes.)

*Criminal actions involving people (threats, assault, kidnapping, sexual assault, phone calls, other crimes.)

*Disruption of services or activities (protests, emotionally disturbed persons, angry responses, etc.)

*Mechanical emergencies (Electrical outages, water line breaks, overflowing sinks, etc.)

*Weather emergencies

*Explosives or bomb threats

*Other threats or threatening situations.

Your church may not need extensive information about all of those areas, but anything *can* happen and those most likely to be involved and responsible should be prepared.

4.) How to Write Procedures and Plans That are Read and Remembered

A plan answers the question: "What do I do when this happens?" It may not be doable in every detail, in an emergency, but it provides preferred actions.

A procedure answers the question, "How do I do that task?" It can be followed as written and there is often a church requirement that it will be followed as written.

Those two terms get used, misused and confused many times and are often used synonymously. Sometimes the term SOP (Standard Operating Procedure or Standing Operating Procedure) is used, even though that may not be correct either.

For most Church Life programs, the most important thing is the effectiveness of the directions, guidelines, instructions and checklists you develop, whatever you call them.

Procedures: These will help people perform tasks that are:

**Not done often enough to be remembered.* (How to set the alarm or turn it off (if this isn't a regular activity for the person doing it), or how to open the kitchen and close it up after use.

**With so many steps that it is not easily remembered.* (How to prepare the van for an off-site activity, how to decorate for Christmas, with a focus on safety or how to set-up for a safe baptismal service.))

**So important or so crucial, that the procedure should be followed precisely every time or all the time.* (How to check-in and check-out babies and children in childcare, how to schedule and conduct counseling sessions, how to structure security training.)

**Likely to be used in an emergency or when reminders are needed.* (How to turn off the water going into the hot water heater, what to do if there is a report or observation of a crime.)

Plans: These are usually developed to give people guidelines for what to do in an emergency. For example, if there is a fire, if someone is injured, if someone becomes ill, if a threatening phone call is received or similar situations.

Tips for writing plans and procedures:

- Make them clear, concise and in an easy-to-read format. Once you've written a procedure or plan, give it to someone (preferably someone who might be implementing it) and ask them to say back what they understand from it or what they will do if a situation occurs. Ask for their critique about how easy it was for them to read the key points and follow them.

- List brief steps to be followed rather than using a lot of text, unless the text is necessary to explain a complex activity.

For example, exiting a classroom, leaving the building and gathering a block away, may not be difficult to describe in five or six short sentences, but setting up the Living Nativity and ensuring safety for participants and guests, probably will be.

- Write in a directive format ("do this" or "will do this") rather than suggesting ("should do this").

- Developing preventive measures and response plans requires reasonable, logical thinking, but it does not require large amounts of expertise in most cases. Most people, with input from others, can identify problems and determine reasonable responses.

For example, it will take expertise to determine where to place alarms, if those are used. It does not take expertise to know that purses should not be left unsecured in the choir room. With the input of others, including choir members, a solution can be found.

4.) Get approval for the manual while it is being worked on. Get a second opinion or the approval of a team or church leader.

5.) Distribute and train. Keep a list of who has the entire manual and who has portions. As changes are made, everyone should sign acceptance of the changes and get rid of old material. Otherwise, there will be a dozen versions in use at once!

- Training does not have to be time consuming or very formal, although as much time as possible should be given to it. For example, all Sunday School teachers should gather at least annually to discuss safety measures, security activities, things to be cautious about, how to evacuate the class in case of an emergency, what to do about a medical emergency and similar issues. New teachers or volunteers should receive a briefing before they begin.

At some point, each teacher should be able to stand in his or her own classroom and talk about how safety and security procedures and response plans will be applied in that room with the usual children or adults present.

- People and groups should informally or formally train about the procedures for their specific interest or location. For example, the music director may want to do frequent reminders about not leaving valuables in the choir room. In addition, he or she might do an emergency drill every six months, to refresh information about the evacuation route and what to do after leaving the building.

6.) Update and edit. Keep the manual a vital, immediately applicable document. As events occur or incidents happen elsewhere, add to it. When a new program or process is started, put procedures about it in the manual.

Summary: There are no rules about how a safety and security plan or manual is developed—and it often changes mid-way and looks differently than planned. The goal is to develop a manual of helpful material that works for the people using it.

Unfortunately, the real test of the effectiveness of the material and the training received about it often takes place in an emergency when it is too late to make corrections. The contents and format of the manual should be closely considered and it should err on the side of too much useful information rather than not enough.

The final version of a manual, with all of its procedures, plans and information, may not be completed for months. Even then it will be in a constant state of adjustment and change. The important issue is that all of the elements of a church—people, places, property, processes and programs--are being considered. That alone will increase the safety and security of a place of worship.

CHAPTER SIX

Security Concerns For Churches: The Role Of Greeters and Ushers

The following material was first published in 2008 and has been updated several times since then. It focuses primarily on responses by Greeters and Ushers to potentially violent or disruptive situations. However, it can be adapted to many other roles and activities.

It contains some specific scenarios and potential responses that can be helpful for security briefings and training with any staff members or volunteers.

Even when there is a full-time security team, greeters and ushers can have a leadership role in safety, security and emergency planning related to many concerns in a place of worship. Their knowledge and experiences about church schedules, members and visitors and concerns or problems they have observed or handled, can make them invaluable contributors to the overall church security program.

The Role of Greeters and Ushers: Establishing A Foundation For Church Security

If you are like most greeters and ushers (G/Us), you have little or no background in emergency planning, protection or security activities. You may be a senior-aged member or have a disability or illness, or you may be youthful and inexperienced in dealing with people who are upset. You may be friendly in a quiet way or assertively outgoing. You probably thought your role as a greeter or usher would involve smiling, shaking hands, directing guests, passing the offering plate and helping during services. Fortunately, those will continue to be your primary tasks.

However, greeters, ushers, deacons, assistant ministers, teachers and the pastor, all share responsibility for the safety and security of the congregation. You are not expected to do it all yourself or act as a police officer or security guard but you *are* expected to continuously observe people and the environment, assess the situation to see if there is danger, and respond appropriately. ***Your challenge is to fulfill the dual roles of greeter and guardian.***

If your church has a Security Response Team who is responsible for security, you may be directed to notify them of any suspicious thing you observe or any emergency that happens. Call 911 in a dire emergency—a life and death situation, a fire or a serious health emergency, then notify security, rather than waiting for someone to respond before calling.

Discuss emergency scenarios with your Security Response Team, especially in situations where they may not be immediately available.

•**You must be balanced in your approach.** You must balance the need to provide a feeling of welcome and openness with being watchful and appropriately wary. Some G/Us are so unconcerned that they are rarely aware of what is happening around them, while others are so concerned that they are tense and on edge all the time.

•**You must be realistic about your church environment.** When people gather for worship, things are rarely as organized as they might be in some other meetings:

- People arrive early and late and in groups and alone.
- Members and guests may roam around the lobby or wander down halls.
- The lobby may be packed with people of all ages.
- Your church may not have a greeting area, or it may have a large lobby.
- If there is more than one service some people will arrive as others are leaving.
- Your post may be in the sanctuary and focused on seating people, or you may be at the front door or in the lobby. You may be busy greeting, conversing and handing-out

materials. Some guests may not want to be greeted while others may want to stand and talk.

Your task is to keep these realities in mind as you look for even small ways to plan and prepare for an emergency. You may not have a perfect situation from the viewpoint of safety and security, but you can improve the situation you have.

•**You must be knowledgeable.** You need to know what to look for and what to do if you see something of concern. You do not need extensive training to be reasonably effective. Your life experiences and some review and discussion will provide you with most of the knowledge you need.

Other ways to gain knowledge about your security role:

- Read all of the written material you receive and review it regularly.
 - Ask about anything you do not understand or with which you disagree.
 - Talk to other greeters and ushers, perhaps even those in other churches, to develop plans for a variety of potential emergencies.
 - Find other resources and share them—but be sure they fit the guidelines established by your church leadership.
- You must be willing and able to fulfill your security responsibilities.** Your role is too important to treat it as a joke or something you do not intend to do because it is not comfortable for you. On the other hand, you must not react to people in a hostile, humiliating or excessively fearful way. Being balanced, knowledgeable and proactive is your goal.

**Your security challenge: Be balanced; Be knowledgeable; Be realistic;
Be willing and able.**

THE SECURITY ROLE OF GREETERS AND USHERS

You serve as a representative of the church and the pastor. You work as part of a church team and must be careful to not go outside guidelines you are given. You should not be more strict or more lenient than the guidelines, or base your actions on your personal likes or dislikes about people or behaviors. When in doubt, get another opinion and assistance, unless the matter is an emergency.

Not all harm to a church or congregants are related to violence. You should also be concerned about other emergencies: Medical, weather, fires, mechanical, accidents, injuries. You should also be ready to respond to observations about misuse of property or equipment, inappropriate activities in rooms or church areas, noise, or reports from congregants about other problems.

Your primary security tasks are to observe and assess, then get assistance or take appropriate emergency action. The best way for you to fulfill your role is to be aware, alert and ready to get assistance. Going beyond that role can make a situation worse, or get you or others killed or hurt in the case of a violent or threatening person.

- You should not carry guns, pepper spray, *tasers* or other devices without permission. If permission is given the devices must be carried and used within the law.

- Get assistance if you have a concern:** Ask one—preferably two—G/Us to assist you if you need to talk to someone whose behavior concerns you or if you are checking on a suspicious situation. Do not confront someone on your own unless you have no other choice. Stay alert to such situations so you can assist others quickly.

- Some G/Us have a well-meaning desire to counsel or pray with someone who is upset. However, while you are talking to a person who seems threatening, volatile or irrational, have another G/U call 911. There may be no time to get assistance if your attempts to communicate and counsel fail.

Your security activities should focus on:

- 1. Observation:** Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully.
- 2. Assessment:** Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm.
- 3. Action:** Get help, then warn and help others. You may be able to do something to prevent violence or keep it from getting worse, but first try to get help and warn and help others.

The security role of greeters and ushers:

- 1. You are a representative of the church.**
- 2. Your primary security tasks are to observe and assess people and situations and take appropriate action.**
- 3. Get assistance rather than trying to handle a situation on your own.**

THE POTENTIALS

Among recent tragic events that have happened in places of worship in the United States have been:

- In December 2007 in Arvada and Colorado Springs, Colorado. Four young people were killed in two locations. If not for the actions of a volunteer security officer, Jeanne Assam, the attacker might have killed hundreds of people.
- On July 27th, 2008, Greg McKendry and Linda Kraeger were shot and killed in the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. Mr. McKendry, a board member and usher sacrificed his own life to shield others. Ms. Kraeger was a visitor who came to watch a play. Seven others were injured.
- On March 8th, 2009, Senior Pastor Fred Winters of the First Baptist Church in Maryvale, Illinois, was shot in killed at the close of services, in front of his congregation.
- On August 5, 2012, an attacker killed 6 and himself at a Sikh temple in Milwaukee.

Around the world similar and even worse acts of violence have occurred.

•By the time you receive this and read it, there will likely be other tragic events that could be added to a chronology of violence or disruption.

Other crimes and acts of violence:

A scenario of someone on a hate-filled rampage is the one we tend to think of most often when we consider violence or disturbances in a church. However, other violent and criminal situations have occurred that could happen in your church as well.

- In Neosho, Missouri, two members and an assistant pastor were killed at the conclusion of a Sunday morning service, by a man who had argued the night before with the two members he shot, both who were relatives of his.
- In Arkansas, a man involved in a child-custody dispute came to his wife's church and shot her while she was getting out of her car in the parking lot.
- In Chicago a young church musician was unloading musical equipment when he was shot and killed by a gang member who had intended to shoot the first person he saw.
- In Florida a man was brought to church on a Wednesday night by a friend, so he could talk to someone about the fact that he murdered a female neighbor. He caused no harm there, but the potential for other actions were great.
- In California a church building was damaged, the pastor's wife was injured, and services were disrupted, by protestors who objected to a scheduled guest speaker.
- In North Carolina a church worker who assisted a homeless man was stabbed to death by him in the church kitchen, after which he took her purse and fled.
- In Laurel, Maryland, a man entered a church during an evening meeting and sexually assaulted three girls, ages 6-12, who were playing in a basement area, then abducted a 4 year old and sexually assaulted her before releasing her. None of the three girls

reported what happened to them until the mother realized the 4 year old was missing, almost an hour later.

- In 1963, the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed, killing four young girls. Since then other churches have been bombed or vandalized for a variety of reasons or for no discernible reason.
- In 1998, in Illinois, an Assembly of God church and a Methodist church were bombed, killing one and injuring many others. Two weeks later the prime suspect was killed while making a bomb in his garage.
- Several churches in recent years have had shootings during funerals.

In many of the cases above, a church building was viewed as more vulnerable than other locations. In some cases the church or a member was the specific target. It is clear that violence can happen, even at your church.

- No amount of planning can stop someone from wanting to harm others. Nevertheless, having a plan of prevention and response can make your church a more difficult target and can help reduce the harm if violence occurs. A frequent recommendation for effective planning is to prepare for *when* something happens rather than *if* it happens.

CONSIDERING THE RISKS

Everyone involved in church leadership, including those who are often the frontline of security responses—greeters and ushers—should be involved in considering the risks that are present in a specific church. Do some of these issues fit your church?

- Churches in urban areas have a higher likelihood of random violence—although, no church is immune from the danger.
- Churches in isolated or rural areas may be viewed as easier targets or defenseless.
- Every church has beliefs that may be controversial to some and these can result in threats, vandalism or violence.
- Churches that are near highways and main thoroughfares provide escape routes for criminals.
- Churches with schools may be targets for that reason.
- If a church is thought to provide food, lodging or financial assistance it can attract people who are disturbed, resentful or desperate, as well as criminals. If a request for assistance is turned down, there may be a criminal or violent reaction.
- Churches who have had conflicts with individuals, groups or neighbors may be the subject of revenge or retaliation.
- People who have already committed criminal acts may go to a church to seek help, then become violent over the way they feel they were treated.

- Churches that attract attention, even for very positive reasons, can also attract the attention of those who want to commit a crime or do a violent act. The attention may be from publicity, special events, television ministries, church programs, sports, signs, crowds, music, well-known pastors, guest speakers, or any of dozens of other reasons.

Human risk factors:

- If there is a family conflict, it may continue at church.
 - If one member of a family is a new convert, a spouse, child or sibling may resent the role of the church in creating unwanted changes at home.
 - Former church members may have grievances and become violent about them, even years later.
 - Someone who was once asked to leave may come back to get revenge.
 - Someone who feels rejected or criticized by even one church member may react violently toward the entire congregation.
 - Divorces, separations and child custody issues may create violent conflicts.
 - Someone whose church membership is well known can have a conflict away from church that results in someone following him or her there.
 - People who are ill or on medication, or who have mental illnesses, can react violently for no logical reason, or because they think they are doing the right thing, getting revenge or simply making themselves famous.
 - Churches may become the focal point of general grievances against society.
 - When there is violence in one church, there is the likelihood of copycat violence.
- What else might place *your* church at risk?** Talking about that with other G/Us and with your church leadership is the first step in prevention, planning and preparing.
- A total comprehensive security program:** The security program of your church may involve a safety and security committee, a security response team, an emergency medical response team and security items and technology.

The comprehensive security program of your church may be developed with advice from a security firm, security consultant or the police, or through research by informed church members such as you and other G/Us. Your pastor may appoint a committee to provide oversight for the program and your insights would likely be very helpful.

This document is focused solely on how you can effectively fulfill your security role as a greeter or usher, as part of the church team. You may not have control over other aspects of security, but you can do your part.

PLANNING FOR THE RISKS

Generally, decisions about the level of planning and preparation for any church security program are made by the pastor or his designee. The material in this document can be used by them to help train and guide greeters and ushers. Even if you are not in charge, you will probably be able to offer worthwhile input. Whether or not your church has a formal security plan, you can think about what *you* would do and mentally prepare for a variety of potential situations.

If you are ever tempted to think security planning is unnecessary, do this: The next time you are at church, look at the people of all ages who are laughing and talking in the lobby, kneeling in prayer in the sanctuary or enjoying refreshments in the fellowship hall. Ask yourself what you and the other G/Us would do if one of the violent events you have read or talked about were to happen right at that moment. It's a chilling thought!

•**Plan as a G/U team.** Purposely spend some time talking about what would be the best way to handle sample scenarios that all of you develop. Even though your G/U group may change every Sunday, or at least now and then, a core group can benefit from thinking about those questions.

What should the first G/U who becomes aware of a problem, do?
Who will help the first G/U, and who will warn the pastor and congregation?
Who will call 911?
Who will lock the doors to keep an assailant out, and is that possible?
Who will guide people to safety and how will they do it?

•**Know the locations of your G/U team members.** The ideal situation is for each G/U to have an assigned location and stay in that general area throughout the greeting time. G/Us in the sanctuary should stand or sit in the same general area throughout the service. If G/Us conduct a security walk-through of the building or outside, other G/Us should be informed. This allows everyone to be able to depend upon where a security resource will be most of the time. That level of planning may not be easy to accomplish and may be more than your team decides is necessary, but it is a good goal.

•If the parking area is not visible from inside the lobby, G/Us should work together to determine specific locations with the best view of the parking lot, to allow for occasional checks of the area. As with the lobby and sanctuary posts, this consistent outside post will let G/Us be better aware of the location of others and can increase safety.

•If your church has parking lot attendants or assistants, include them in your security conversations since they may be the first to observe a suspicious vehicle or person. They should call 911 immediately if that is necessary, or let the G/U team know that further observation might be a good idea.

INCLUDE CHURCH MEMBERS IN THE SECURITY PROGRAM

Church members of all ages can help protect themselves and others if they are given tips about how to report their concerns immediately, and how to respond to situations that might occur. Let members know you depend upon them to help.

•**Children:** Even very small children can be taught to tell adults immediately about people or situations that are strange or scary. They should not play in isolated rooms or areas when trusted adults aren't around, and they should not play in the parking areas or away from the immediate view of teachers or other adults.

•**Adults and young adults:** Adult and teenage church members should be briefed on the overall security plan of the church and the role of greeters, ushers and others. They should also be given guidelines about common safety and security concerns and how to respond effectively. This can include information about fire and medical emergencies, the characteristics of dangerous devices, safety hazards and violent situations.

•**All members:** Everyone should be encouraged to be observant about people and situations in the parking lot, in areas adjacent to the church, in rooms and hallways inside the church, and before, during and after services and activities. They should write down license plate numbers or physical descriptions. If they feel concerned about any aspect of a situation—medical, criminal or other—they should immediately report it to a G/U or call 911 if it is an emergency.

•**Basic guidelines for church member response to a violent or threatening situation:**

1. Get down.
2. Get out if possible.
3. Get to a safe place and stay there if you can't leave immediately.
4. Get help by calling 911 or asking someone else to do it.
5. Guide others by directing children, the elderly, guests or others to get down, get out through the nearest exit, or get to a safe place and stay there.

•**Inform the pastor about potential problems:** Members should inform the pastor immediately if there is a risk issue, such as a potentially violent conflict involving the family, neighborhood or work, or about stalking, threats or child custody conflicts.

•**An alert word, phrase or signal:** Consider establishing an alert code word, phrase or signal for G/Us and members of the congregation to use if they want assistance or for 911 to be called, but cannot ask openly. This security technique can be helpful in a variety of situations if used correctly.

Any word, phrase or signal that will get attention but not alert a potentially violent person, can be effective if everyone knows it and responds without questioning the person using it. It should never be "tested" as a joke. Note: The "phone call" gesture with hand to ear, is too obvious a signal for calling 911, so don't use that!

Observation: Continuous and Purposeful

The same diligence that is necessary to ensure that guests and members are made to feel welcome will also allow you to do a brief security observation of each person. It may be helpful to have one or two G/Us whose primary job is to observe and assist.

Assigned responsibility: Each door, group of doors, or general entrance area, should have an assigned G/U. One of the main causes of security failures is when everyone assumes someone else is doing a task. The attitude of, “If it’s going to be, it’s up to me” applies to the security function as well as to everything else.

- If your church does not have G/U post assignments, you will probably notice that you and others have a favorite location. Make sure the location you pick allows you maximum time to observe people who are walking up to the door, and lets you see areas adjacent to the door, if possible. In the sanctuary, you can stand at a slight angle to be able to see both the entrance and the congregation.

- If a door is used infrequently and there is no G/U posted there, it would be far safer to give keys to the few people using it rather than having it unlocked.

- Observe with purpose:** Visually scan and personally greet members and every non-member, if possible. This not only fulfills your greeting role, it allows you the chance to observe people close-up and establish a friendly relationship with them. A friendly greeting and good eye contact can make a difference in how someone reacts, even when angry or upset.

Hands and body first: Before you make eye contact, look at the hands, general appearance, items being carried or worn, and the overall actions and demeanor of the person you’re greeting. With practice, you can do this effectively in a few seconds while reaching out to shake hands or give the person a bulletin.

Remember the old adage: No one hits you with his face—so look at the hands and general behavior first. Then, you can make eye contact with a smile and say a friendly greeting. That is when you can observe the person’s facial expression and reaction. In addition, *really* looking at someone and smiling at them, is the best way to show warmth and welcome.

Limited entry areas after services start: Consider reducing the number of doors that are open and post a sign about which door should be used after that time. Fire department restrictions may affect which doors can be locked when people are present.

Security walk-through: Your church leadership may prefer that G/Us not engage in security patrols, so be certain of your responsibilities. However, if no one else is doing it, you may want to suggest that you and other G/Us could perform a quick walk-through, and still be done in time to be in the service and participate in worship.

Purposeful observation during a security walk-through:

- Check unused offices and rooms and lock those that should be locked. If *you* can walk in a room or office, someone who wants to commit a crime can do so as well.
- Unless there is a legitimate reason for people to remain in halls, rooms and offices, or to stand outside, courteously remind them that the service has started. If you have a reason for concern, linger in the area until the person either goes into the service or leaves. Do not leave someone in a place where he or she should not be.
- If there is a child-care area, check to ensure there are no outside doors propped open and that all the children are in the child-care area.
- Look for anything that could be a safety or security hazard or evidence of a crime. Among those things are suspicious packages, boxes left in unusual places, tools in areas where they should not be, items and equipment moved about, or unusual odors.
- If you think a crime has been committed, call the police immediately and notify the person responsible for the area. You may want to notify the person responsible before you call the police, to have them verify that something is wrong. Otherwise, it may be enough to lock the area and notify the person in charge after services.
- Quickly inspect the parking areas and other areas you can easily see around the church building. Your church campus may be too large to make this practical, but if it is possible, it is a good security check before the service starts.

Maintain your role to maintain your effectiveness: Your role in all of your security activities should be limited to looking for situations and areas of immediate concern and dealing with emergencies. You will be resented and will lose your effectiveness if you are viewed as being meddlesome, over-bearing or excessive. If you see that tendency developing in other G/Us, gently help them regain their focus or discuss it as a team.

During services: Some churches keep one more G/Us in the lobby at all times, while others prefer to have all members in the church service. Even if G/Us are in the lobby, at least two should sit at the back of the sanctuary, in a location where they can observe doors and the congregation most effectively. They can sit with their families or friends, but need to be alert for problems.

The degree to which you should be active during services will depend upon the guidelines you are given and the nature of the situation. The pastoral team is in charge of services and may want to deal with non-emergencies such as talking, emotional outbursts or someone standing or moving about unexpectedly. They may prefer that greeters, ushers or deacons handle those situations for them.

- If someone becomes ill, appears to be having an emergency emotional or physical crisis or is asking for assistance, you may need to respond to the area immediately, or step out and call 911.

- Get direction from your G/U leader about potential security problems related to people leaving the sanctuary during services—especially in unusual circumstances. People often need to leave to use the restroom or for other reasons, but usually they will return in a reasonable amount of time. Failure to do so could be a cause for concern.

Assessment: A Reasonable Evaluation of the Potential for Harm

While you are observing a person or situation, you should be mentally assessing what you see. Is everything normal? Is there something that bothers you? Do they seem to need assistance in some way? Is there a potential for danger? If the danger is obvious you may need to quickly decide the degree of danger.

If you try to visualize someone committing an act of violence at your church you probably envision a man—probably a young-to-middle-aged man who does not attend your church. Statistically you would be correct in making that assumption. However, violent crimes have been committed by men and women of all ages, ethnicities and religions. Anyone—a member, a guest or someone walking by—could do something to harm people, buildings or assets. Remember also that violence can be caused by one person or by two or more people who have plotted to do harm.

The fact that there is no one type that commits violent acts doesn't mean you should think the worst of everyone, or that you can only call for assistance if you have proof of violent intent. However, it should remind you not to base your assessment solely on factors such as clothing, hair, race, age, or the fact that you do or don't know someone.

- Use your reasonable judgment.** Your reasonable judgment will usually be enough to help you decide whether to call the police or what other action you should take. You don't need to be a doctor or psychologist to be able to tell if someone seems to be drunk or drugged, or if he or she is already angry or talking in a depressed way. You don't need to be a police officer to see if someone has a weapon or if they are wearing or carrying something that might conceal a weapon.

The same reasonable judgment you would use to decide if your safety or the safety of your family is at risk is appropriate for your role in church security. Your biggest decision is whether to call the police. Sometimes that is obvious. If it is not, it is better to call than not to call if you have any concerns.

- The presence of the following behaviors and appearance do not make it likely that someone is going to do something harmful.* However, each has been observed in the behavior and appearance of those who have committed crimes and acts of violence and it is reasonable and appropriate to watch for them. Action to take if these indicators are present will be discussed in the next section.

1. Look for indicators of unusual emotion.

- Anger or rage
- Crying
- Unusual laughter or hilarity
- Nervousness, furtiveness or evasiveness
- Fear or panic
- Out of control or “wild-eyed”
- An unusual absence of any emotion

2. Look for unusual behavior.

- Standing or sitting in a vehicle for an extended length of time.
- Taking unidentifiable items out of a vehicle.
- Walking up to the door and looking around as though on the lookout.
- Running up to the door.
- A suspicious appearing person being dropped off but the car stays idling.
- Someone walking in with members who do not seem to know the person.
- Two or more unknown people entering together and going different directions.
- Obviously trying to go unnoticed, being furtive or looking for concealment.
- Confrontational or angrily questioning or arguing with you or someone else.
- Asking for monetary or other assistance, especially if you know it cannot be provided.
- Asking about a church member or about the pastor.
- Talking or muttering, or fidgeting or moving excessively.
- Indicating self-hatred or disgust with self.
- A grin or smile that seems inappropriate for the situation.
- Intoxicated, drugged, flustered or confused.
- Responding with anger to greetings or questions.
- Staring in an exaggerated way; especially, staring while moving toward someone.
- Standing very still when others are moving forward.
- Seeming to stall for time.
- Standing alone or facing the congregation in the sanctuary instead of sitting.
- Doing something that does not fit with the service at the time.
- Going into areas other than the sanctuary when no one else is present.
- Spending an excessive amount of time in the bathroom.
- Attempting to get a G/U or someone else to go away from the main area.
- Note: A frequent action of those who have a concealed weapon, explosives or drugs, is to touch the area or keep a hand in the pocket or bag where the items are hidden.
- Walking awkwardly, as though having concealed weapons.

3. Look for clothing or characteristics that might be linked to problem behavior.

It is becoming more the norm for people to wear casual clothes to church. Even though some clothing may seem inappropriate or offensive to you, clothing alone is not an indicator of problem behavior.

However, the characteristics of some attire seem to be linked to a potential for disruptive behavior. Observe more closely or talk to the person in a friendly way, to assess the situation.

- Wearing unusually inappropriate clothing for a church environment.
- Wearing military, hunting or camouflage clothing without a reason.
- Wearing menacing-appearing clothing: Pulled-down hats, all dark, long-coats, etc.
- Wearing clothing with wording or a photo to convey a hostile message.
- Being noticeably dirty or unkempt or having a very offensive or unusual odor.
- Carrying or wearing a bag or backpack, especially if it looks stuffed full.
- Wearing a coat or other clothing that looks as though something is being concealed.
- Looking much less heavy than the bulkiness of the clothes would indicate.

ACTING ON YOUR ASSESSMENT

You will not have time to observe and assess much of anything if someone runs into the church lobby, sanctuary or other area with a weapon and begins to fire it at people. That frightening scenario would require immediate action in a panic situation. There are many other times when you can prevent a conflict or violent situation, or reduce the harm, by responding in an effective way.

A TOOLKIT OF RESPONSE OPTIONS

Plans, suggestions, tips and ideas don't have to be followed exactly to be useful. Even a very good plan may not fit every emergency. However, plans, suggestions and tips can give you a toolkit of options for responding to situations.

The following guidelines are not in order and all of them may happen at once, according to the number of G/Us present and the situation. Some portions of these guidelines are written as though you are directly involved with a suspicious, threatening or violent person, but your actions will depend upon your role at the time. Adapt them to your personal situation, the layout of your church and the assistance you might receive. They are a starting point for your own planning.

SECURITY CONCERN: A PERSON WHO DOES OR SAYS SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU CONCERNED ABOUT HIS OR HER INTENT FOR BEING AT THE CHURCH.

Most visitors will walk in the door, be greeted by you according to your church's protocol and continue into the sanctuary or other area. If you are in the sanctuary, you will find that most people walk in and look for a seat or get your assistance and sit down.

Occasionally someone will concern you for some reason. There is no harm in finding out more about the person. Your effort to establish a positive relationship may change the mind of someone who was going to create a problem. Your focused attention may make someone realize he or she could be easily identified. The best result is that your extra observation assures you there is no reason for concern.

1. Observe and assess further to determine if a threat exists. As part of your friendly welcome, step slightly to the side with the person and have a brief conversation. (“It’s great to have you visiting with us! I’m Bill Logan. Have you been here before?”) If you are in the sanctuary you might even sit next to the person for a moment as a way to have a more personal conversation.

You might say: “Do you know someone here?” “Is there something special that brought you here today?” “Have you visited a (type of church or denomination) before?” “Is there any way we can make today more meaningful for you?” “If you have questions after the service please ask me.”

2. Signal to another G/U if you become more concerned during the conversation. Use an alert code or other subtle method to let another G/U know to come over to stand by or to call the police if that seems necessary.

This is when a well-trained G/U team is helpful. It would not be good for a G/U to rush over and ask what the trouble is or if he should call the police! However, if he were to calmly walk over and allow you to introduce him to the person, he could provide reinforcement if something were to occur or be a witness to what is being said. Or, based on your signal to him, he could call for help.

3. If you are still concerned, but nothing seems problematic, let a G/U in the sanctuary know about your concerns. If you are a G/U in the sanctuary, alert other G/Us so they can watch when you are busy. This will not happen often, but it is better to stay aware than to not tell anyone of your concerns for fear of sounding foolish.

What would you do? You see a young man walk into the lobby from a side door that is not often used. He seems to purposely avoid making eye contact with anyone and heads for the sanctuary in a hurried manner.

Some suggested actions:

- Immediately catch up with the young man and get his attention verbally in a friendly but direct way. Visitors aren’t required to talk to greeters or ushers, but the fact that someone will blatantly avoid being noticed could be reason for concern, if combined with other factors. On the other hand, he may simply be shy or not want to be pressured. Your friendly greeting may help him see that there is no need to worry.
- Or, signal to another G/U to take your place before you leave your area to contact the young man. You might explain what happened and ask that G/U to contact the person.

- Even if a visitor who concerned you is already seated in the sanctuary and service has started, you can make a brief, friendly contact to allow you to do a quick visual and verbal assessment. Offer the visitor a hymnal, bulletin or Bible, or introduce yourself briefly and say you are available if the person has questions afterwards. You could also offer to introduce them to someone appropriate, such as a youth worker, women's leader or others.

**SECURITY CONCERN: A PERSON WHO SEEMS TO BE
EMOTIONALLY OR MENTALLY DISTURBED, BUT IS NOT
IMMEDIATELY VIOLENT OR VERBALLY THREATENING.**

- Some people are more emotional than others are. You may encounter people who seem highly emotional because of a spiritual or personal situation. This section specifically refers to someone who is acting unstable or disoriented, seems mentally or emotionally ill, seems irrational or has some other condition that makes him or her potentially harmful.

- A person who is emotionally or mentally disturbed may not consciously want to harm anyone, but may do so anyway. You must be very cautious in your dealings with such a person because their demeanor can change quickly and for no reason.

1. Observe and assess the physical and mental state of the person and the immediate level of threat. Is the person drunk or drugged? Is he or she crying or angry? Is there a weapon or something that could be used as a weapon? Is the person saying or doing anything that is unnerving or a cause for concern?

If a G/U is talking to a disturbed acting person, one or two other G/Us should assist or stand near enough to hear and see what is happening. In a normal, non-threatening situation, a female member of the church might be asked to assist with a female guest or member. But, when dealing with a problem person it may be safer to have only the G/Us or a member of the pastoral team involved.

One G/U should be prepared to call for police assistance immediately if necessary. This is another time when a code word or signal is useful.

2. Separate the person of concern from others. This safety space could be created by you and/or other G/Us standing between the person and other people, or by moving the person to the side of a lobby or sanctuary. You could also go to an adjacent space or office or take the person outside to talk.

One way to get someone to move to another area is to start walking while looking at the person and conversing with them. More often than not they will walk with you. Non-threatening phrases can be used: "Let's step over here so I can hear you better." "Why don't we move to this room so we can talk without being bothered."

3. Talk in a normal and calm tone of voice and keep some distance between you and the other person. Ask non-threatening questions: “What did you say your name is?” “Where did you park your car? Did you find a parking place OK?” “Where do you work?” “Do you live around here?” “Do you know someone in our church?” “I can tell something is bothering you. Can I help?”

Asking questions and having a conversation can help keep the person calm, and will also be helpful if you need to give information to the police later.

Do not try to grab or hold a disturbed or agitated person unless there is no other way to avoid harm. Keep some distance between you and them rather than standing right next to them. If someone gets increasingly upset, step back and away to allow more safety if he or she becomes more agitated or violent. You do not have to keep talking to someone who is threatening you or acting irrational. Step back and keep stepping back, all the way outside if you must, until help arrives.

4. Call the police or have someone else call immediately, if the person:

- Appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Says or does anything that indicates he or she may harm anyone, including comments that he or she doesn't *want* to harm anyone.
- Does not immediately cooperate with requests to leave or stay out of the sanctuary or other parts of the building, or to stay away from members of the congregation if he or she is disturbing them.
- Appears mentally ill or severely emotionally upset or for some other reason should be questioned by the police, given protective custody or evaluated further. The person may leave your church and harm himself or herself or others, so you cannot consider the situation over when the person leaves.

5. Do not attempt to detain a person who wants to leave before the police arrive.

Get a good description and write it down and watch or follow to see where he or she goes. There is an inclination to try to keep someone there until the police arrive, but that can create the violent situation you are trying to avoid.

What would you do? You see a young man walk down the street, then stop and stand in front of your church, staring at it for a few minutes before coming in the lobby. He is wearing a winter coat and has nothing in his hands. He looks around in a confused, disoriented way. His conversation is rambling and incoherent and he says he wants to talk to the congregation. You courteously explain that it will not be possible, but he is insistent that he wants to do so. Many people are in the lobby and some seem unnerved at his belligerent tone of voice.

- Did your assessment include some of these thoughts?
 - You do not want this person to feel he is being rejected, but you know he will not be allowed by the pastor to speak to the congregation.
 - Until he is more rational you do not think he can be reasoned with or assisted to his satisfaction.
 - You know your church wishes to help everyone, but this person seems to want and need more than brief counseling or prayer.
 - You realize a person who is disoriented and confused has the potential to be violent if he or she feels upset or threatened.
 - You have looked at the young man's hands and do not see a weapon, but he is wearing a coat in which something could be concealed.
 - You are concerned that he could come back and harm someone if he is treated badly this time, or he could leave and harm himself or others.
 - You notice that people are already unnerved by his demeanor.
 - You think this person would probably be disruptive to the service, but you also worry that he might react in a violent way if you tell him he cannot go into the sanctuary.
 - You worry that people standing around the two of you might be hurt or frightened if there is a verbal or physical altercation.

Some suggested actions:

- Your best response, unless there are other circumstances, would be to signal one or preferably two G/Us to your area and signal another G/U to call 911.
- You may wish to get the assistance of a member of the pastoral team, a deacon or some other person, if it seems safe to do. They might ask the person to come back for counseling or prayer or ask him to convey his message to them. You could get the young man's name and phone number and have someone contact him later.
- If the weather is good enough to allow it, consider telling the man you want to talk to him about his request and you would like to step outside to do it. This adds an extra layer of protection for church members. You may want ask the disturbed person to step to an adjacent office area if that is safe and you have assistance.
- In the meantime, a G/U or other person inside should calmly ask people to move from the lobby or entrance area into the sanctuary. There may not appear to be a need for serious concern, but the fewer people who are close to the situation the better, if something occurs.

Some greeters or ushers hesitate to call the police about an otherwise nice person who is mentally disturbed or disabled in some way, if no crime has occurred. However, the police may have information you do not have about the person or his or her previous actions. They may be able to contact relatives or transport the person home or to a

community resource. You need to call the police about anyone who is irrational, disoriented, confused or who seems to be in need of professional care.

**SECURITY CONCERN: SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE BUILDING IS COMMITTING A CRIME,
OR APPEARS TO BE DANGEROUS OR READY TO DO VIOLENCE.**

The nature of the crime or threat will dictate some of your actions, but in every case 911 should be called and as much detail as possible provided about the situation. You can be on the phone while moving to take other action or directing others to safety.

- Know how to lock the doors quickly and be ready to do so the moment you see trouble developing. Your role generally is to prevent outside danger from coming inside to harm the entire congregation, then to do what you can to respond to the situation that is happening outside, if you can do it safely.

- Whether you should let a criminal or violent person know you have seen them will depend upon many factors: Your ability to protect yourself, the assistance you have, the number of criminals and weapons involved and the nature of the crime.

- Generally, if you see someone committing a crime or apparently intending to commit a crime, stay in a safe place and yell that the police have been called.

If you do not think you can safely yell at the criminal, you may be able to turn on outside lights or shine a flashlight at night to stop the criminal activity.

- Circumstances may compel you to intervene more directly to save a person's life or to prevent some other dire act such as the taking of a child. Otherwise, you should limit your role to calling the police, letting the criminal know he or she has been seen, getting good identification of people and vehicles, and observing from a safe distance.

- It is not worth being killed or injured to prevent a car from being stolen or to chase a purse-snatcher.

- **Outside:** Yell to others in the area of the criminal activity to get down and get to safety by coming into the church building, locking themselves in their cars and leaving if possible, or going to adjacent business or residential areas.

- **Inside:** Lock all the doors to prevent the criminal from coming in the building.

- If there is imminent danger, warn the congregation and pastor.

- If it is safe, stay at your observation post and tell someone else to take the appropriate action about warning or contacting others.

- According to the nature of the criminal activity, you or the pastor might tell everyone to stay where they are and be ready to get down. You and other G/Us might need to move people to areas of safety.

What would you do? Services have just begun and you have stepped outside for a last visual check. You see a man who is a member of your church walk angrily up to a car driven by his wife and begin to yell at her. He kicks at the door and picks up a rock and breaks the window.

Suggested actions:

- **Call 911.**
- If you are in a safe place, yell and let him know he has been seen and that the police have been called. You can do this even while on the phone to the 911 operator.
- Tell another G/U to let the pastor or other church leader know what is happening.
- Do not approach the man unless you feel you must do so to prevent a violent crime. This is where your judgment of the situation will be vital.
- The fact that he is a church member you know does not lessen the crime or make him less of a threat to you or others.

What would you do? Your church is having a local community leader as a speaker. You look out the door and see a group of apparently angry protestors approaching the church, waving signs and chanting. Many people are in the lobby and others are walking in at that time.

- That specific scenario might not be likely at your church, but something similar might occur. The key point is this: How should you react to a situation that involves people or groups that are not thought of as criminal, but that could be threatening or dangerous?

Suggested actions:

- **Call 911.**
- Tell those outside who can safely get inside to do so, otherwise tell them to leave immediately, go back to their cars and leave the area.
- Lock the doors, while telling another G/U to alert the pastor and congregation.
- Keep everyone away from the front doors and windows and stay away yourself to avoid agitating the group more, and also to avoid injuries if windows are broken.
- The pastor or speaker will likely decide what to do about confronting the group. Your role is to take immediate action to reduce the level of harm to the congregation until the police arrive, then to provide information about what happened.

SECURITY CONCERN: AN ARMED PERSON OR GROUP ENTERS THE CHURCH.

This is the scenario that brings the most fear to everyone. You may only have a few seconds for your immediate response and you may or may not have other G/Us to assist you.

- A violent situation can involve many scenarios:
 - An assailant targets one or more people in your church, but does not target others.
 - An assailant shoots randomly, with no specific target.
 - The purpose is to kill, to take hostages, to commit other crimes, or a combination.
 - There is one assailant or more than one.
 - The assailant has one loaded weapon.
 - The assailant has many weapons and a large amount of ammunition.
 - The assailant only has firearms.
 - The assailant has other devices, such as explosives or tear gas.
 - Services may not yet have started.
 - Services may be in progress.
 - The church may be in meetings or Sunday School, instead of a regular service.
 - People may be in the sanctuary or in the fellowship hall or classrooms.

- By the time you can react, the assailant may have already shot people you know, or may have taken hostages and threatened to kill them. Your own family may be involved. This is when your preparation and self-control can help the most. Even though you may not be able to do much, there may be some things you can do that will save lives or stop the violence. It is in these extreme situations that having thought about such an event ahead of time can help you and others.
 - If you have discussed possible responses with other G/Us, you may be able to take coordinated action without much communication.
 - If you and your family have discussed how to respond in an emergency you may not need to direct them to exits or safe locations.
 - If you know the building in detail, you may not need lights to guide others to safety.
 - If you have spent some time checking the building, you may know the most sturdy protection in the sanctuary or lobby, or the most easily fortified rooms.
 - Even if your plan of action is not the absolute best one, by having a plan you maybe able to do something immediately rather than taking too long to decide.

The knowledge, plans and preparation that are helpful for responding most effectively to violent events include:

- Regular briefing of each key person about their roles: Pastor and pastoral team, ministers of programs, greeters and ushers, deacons, teachers, key adults, etc.
- Briefing the church membership about how to respond in emergencies.
- Knowing exits in every area of the building, including windows that can be used for exit in an emergency.
- Knowing areas and items of concealment and/or protection and how they can best be used. (Can pews, desks, chairs or tables be easily turned over, picked up or moved? Is the lectern or podium solid? How many people could hide in what locations?)
- Knowing the most easily secured inner areas of the church and how to lock the doors or barricade them quickly.
- Knowing the layout of the building, including overhead and crawl spaces.
- Being able to quickly direct guests who are unfamiliar with the building.
- Having methods for communicating with 911, other G/Us, the pastoral team, teachers, or people in other areas of the building or church campus.
- Knowing the location of fire extinguishers, phones, water valves, electrical and mechanical equipment, ladders, tools and other items and equipment.
 - Having each G/U pre-assigned a primary responsibility for this and other emergencies. (Some may be assigned to help Sunday School classes get to safety while others are responsible for helping the handicapped or the elderly.)
- Having each G/U know some basic First Aid techniques.
- Reviewing emergency information regularly and at least walking through possible events, with a focus on observation, assessment, and suggested actions to help members and guests.

If a shooting incident is threatened or occurs:

- The minister or worship team should provide direction to the entire congregation if possible, by yelling “Get down and get out!”, or some other quick guidance. If it’s not possible for them to do so, you and other G/Us should direct those around you.
- Get in the most protected area you can and call 911, unless you know others have called. (Having several hundred calls made in a few minutes is not helpful, and your time could be better spent if the call has already been made.) If you have information about the assailant or the location of victims that other callers to 911 may not have had, you should call.
- You can’t help if you are injured, so you should attempt to stay down, be undetected and assess your options.
- The presence of children always creates an added risk and responsibility. If possible, have adults shield them and get them to exits or get them under pews.
- Even though you may have a responsibility as a greeter or usher, if you are with your family you will likely be most concerned about them. Discuss this with your family

members ahead of time and talk about how each of you might respond to protect your family or those around you in church.

- Sometimes staying down and staying put is the best solution. However, in some situations people had options to escape but were fearful to leave. The decision to try to leave or to stay in a concealed location will likely have to be made quickly, based on where the exits are located, the level of concealment available, and the actions of the assailant.

- Direct those around you to get down and get out if they can do so, or get to a safe place if they must stay inside. If you can go with them, do it and lock and barricade the door to the room, trying to ensure that as many people as possible are using the safe place. You may not be able to help everyone, only the group you are guiding, but you will have to do your best in the situation.

- Unless you know for sure it is safe to do it, do not call others in the building to check on them. Answering a phone is not the best use of their time! And, if they are concealed the ringing may give away their location. It may be possible to contact people if you know their phones are set on silent or vibrate.

- If you are directly confronted by someone with a weapon who is demanding you to do something, your response will depend upon the imminent threat. If the person threatens to shoot, but has not shot anyone so far, you may think it best to comply with the person's demands long enough to allow you to take other action. Or, you may feel the circumstances indicate you should not comply.

- If you are with several other people you may be able to work together to overpower an assailant. You will have to decide the risks and the likely outcome quickly. This kind of decision is not one that can be planned ahead. However, talking about your options *prior* to a violent event, and considering how you think you could respond, may allow you and others to act with much less obvious communication at the time.

- Remember that help may arrive quickly but not enter the building quickly. It may be many hours before you can move from a safe location.

If that happens, the reality is that children will cry, people will need to relieve themselves, some may be injured, some may become ill, sorrow may engulf the group, fear will be overpowering for many. Your leadership role will be best fulfilled by keeping everyone as quiet and calm as possible until you feel completely confident that the threat is over.

What would you do? In the middle of congregational singing a wild-eyed man kicks open a door to the sanctuary and opens fire with a long barreled weapon. Several people fall and the noise of the weapon, combined with screaming and yelling, seems deafening. You are standing with your family.

There is no way for you to know exactly what you would do in the tragic and frightening situation described above. However, having security information and plans in mind can help you be a better observer and be able to assess effectively and take action. The material in this document can help you with that planning and preparation.

Use this checklist to decide if you have the information you need to effectively fulfill your dual role as a greeter and guardian.

Greeter/Usher Security Checklist

Y/N

1. Do I know the policies of my pastor or other leaders about my security role?	
2. Do I have a G/U post assignment?	
3. Do I know where other G/Us are supposed to be?	
4. Have I talked with other G/Us to develop plans about emergency responses?	
5. Am I comfortable being assertive with a suspicious person or situation?	
6. Do I know the best route to every exit in my church building?	
7. Do I know how to covertly signal another G/U to call 911 or to assist me?	
8. Do members of my church know my role if an emergency occurs?	
9. Have I walked the route from my G/U post to every exit in my church building?	
10. Have I ever practiced getting to another area while staying low?	
11. Do I have a plan for how I can separate a suspicious person from other people in the lobby or sanctuary?	
12. Do I know what items or areas in every part of the building would provide the best protection, barricade or concealment?	
13. Do I know where mechanical and utility areas and items are located and how to access them? (Electrical boxes, water supply, alarms, gas, fire extinguishers, ladders, tools, potential weapons, office keys, etc.)	
14. Do I know where crawl spaces, overhead storage and closets are located and if they would be useable for concealment?	
15. Could I lock every front door quickly?	
16. Do I know which interior doors have locks?	
17. Do I know the best location outside for viewing each parking area?	
18. Do I know where there is a flashlight in several areas of the building?	
19. Have I ever checked to see if I could move a pew, desk, table or other item if it was necessary to do so in an emergency?	
20. Do I have a plan for how I might respond to an emergency in a variety of church areas? (Lobby, during the service, classroom, fellowship hall, parking lot?)	

Are you prepared for your dual role of greeter and guardian? You can be better prepared by knowing your role, your resources and your options for responses.

Best wishes to you and thank you for your service in helping others!

CHAPTER SEVEN

PLANNING FOR A SPECIAL EVENT

Dwight Eisenhower said, “In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless but planning is indispensable.” That has often been quoted to show why planning is important. It also has been used to justify the absence of plans or to explain why the plans are vague and imprecise. I don’t know about battle plans, but when it comes to special events in churches, planning is indispensable and effective plans are repeatedly useful.

- A plan is simply a collection of scheduled activities, assigned responsibilities and preventive and response procedures, policies and guidelines. They are a logical part of having a smooth, well-run, successful event.
- If the plans are not written, discussed and trained about, they may not be implemented consistently—and consistency is crucial for safety and security activities.
- Plans can be used like a checklist. In the area of safety and security they can ensure that all that is reasonably possible has been done to keep people and property safe.
- When there are written plans that are followed consistently, even a negative event can be reduced in severity. At the very least the church is less likely to be considered at fault for not planning at all or not planning enough.
- It is probable that plans will start as vague and imprecise concepts—they will become more precise as the whole event is scheduled and planned. This is one value of planning—it encourages people to consider potentials and options.

This document is an overview of how safety and security plans can be developed and implemented. It doesn’t cover every aspect of plan development, but may be useful as an starting point. (The ideas may also be useful for general planning.)

1. Assign a safety coordinator, under the direction of the event coordinator.

One person should be assigned to work directly with the event coordinator to ensure that no aspect of the event is planned without considering the impact on safety and security for people, property and the well-being of the event and the church. That person may have others who work with him or her.

- It is just a matter of semantics, but it seems to work best to shorten the title to either *security coordinator* or *safety coordinator*. Trying to combine the two produces a lengthy title and also results in jokes or sarcasm about the SS and their rules. (Just a reality of life!)

- The coordinator does not need to have a law enforcement, fire service or military background. Police officers are not routinely trained to plan events or to develop safety and security plans, so any church member who is effective at taking care of details could do well.

- Whoever serves in the role should work closely with the event coordinator—and the event coordinator should feel comfortable asking for changes in plans or directing plans that are needed.

2. Establish the role and tasks of the event safety director and gain a safety commitment from all volunteers and staff.

The Five C's: Procedures must be **communicated clearly** and there must be a **commitment** that they will be implemented **consistently** and **continuously**. This is rarely emphasized enough at the beginning and it results in most of the problems of major events--not only in the area of security but in every other aspect.

- The most common problem occurs when volunteers, church leaders or staff (or their spouses) think they know better how something should be done and decide to change a procedure. This is usually well-meant but often creates chaos!

For example, a church leader arrived with his daughter for a youth retreat. He didn't understand why the busses were being loaded in a way that would result in some having few passengers (and his daughter wanted to travel with her friends) so he started directing the drivers to help him get the passengers consolidated on fewer busses, thus reducing the need by two busses. The drivers knew he was a high level church staff member and did as he suggested.

The travel coordinator rushed over to see what was happening and was able to stop the process, but it required taking people off the busses and removing their luggage, then reloading them on the correct bus.

What the church leader didn't know was that the young people and their counselors had to be dropped off at widely separate locations the first day. Further, all the busses had been paid for already and the drivers were being paid for a specific schedule. The travel coordinator knew what she was doing and why—the procedures just needed to followed to make the travel plans go smoothly.

- Volunteers, church leaders and staff should always consult with the event coordinator or the task coordinator before making changes in plans or directing something different than is currently being done, except in emergency circumstances. It is better to ask someone to stop doing what they are doing and wait for clarification than to direct them to do something different.

- Everyone involved should promise to follow safety procedures and rules. Nearly always it is the volunteers and staff that violate the most procedures. For example, a church had a rule that the back door would stay locked. The women cooking for a church BBQ, blocked it open with a chair for ventilation, which allowed someone to come in and frighten the women as he aggressively asked for money. A few hours later the child of one of the workers wandered out of that same propped-open door!

The general guideline should be: If there is a problem created by a safety procedure (lack of ventilation, no easy access to an area, long wait lines, etc.) solutions should be developed prior to the event if possible. If there is no way to improve things, the safety procedure—if it is reasonable—should take priority.

In the case of the door, a locked screen door was installed (and at the same time a peep hole was put in the solid door.) That could have been done years earlier, it just wasn't done until something negative happened.

3. Start planning by listing the components of the event and in another column list what could go wrong.

This probably sounds like a negative way to approach things, but can be very effective. Most of us are much better at thinking about what could go wrong than we are at what could go right! This approach gets those things out of the way at once, leaving people prepared to prevent problems. There is nothing more frustrating than hearing someone say, "I was afraid that would happen."

This is the idea behind a Force Field Analysis in problem solving. It's not complex and it doesn't have to be excessive, but the concept is useful.

What could keep the desired results from happening

The desired results for each aspect of the event.

What will ensure that the desired results happen.

When you do that kind of thinking, consider the risk factors involved.

- What is the event?** Reasonably, what might be likely to happen that could create harm or confusion? Church functions should always be prepared for the presence of those who are more emotional than the norm or who are there seeking help or to confront someone because of past grievances.

- Clientele:** Who will be present? Strongly consider the various groups involved and what risks are more likely with each. (Age factors, health factors, status of visitors, etc.)

- Number of people involved:** A small number of people can be as problematic as a large number in some ways and not as much in other ways. However, the larger the number of people the more likely it is that someone can be harmed or cause harm without being noticed.

- Time of day and season:** There are inherent concerns when the weather is inclement compared to when it is comfortable and clear, and whether an event is in the daytime or nighttime.

- Resources required:** Think of the impact on costs, the effect on lawns, traffic, facilities, electric use, clean-up and other issues. Work with those who may need to deal with the issues.

For example, because no one thought about how much toilet tissue might be used during a conference, volunteers were going to nearby residences asking for it! In another case, citizens were outraged at how parking overflowed into their residential area—and police kept busy for the first hours of the event trying to deal with complaints.

4. Walk over and through the areas that will be involved in the event and consider them as though the event is beginning, in progress and ending.

Plans should involve preparation time (volunteer, facility and materials safety and security), the hours before the event and after the event as people are leaving, clean-up time, and when the last volunteers and staff depart.

•If an event has been advertised or if activity surrounding it is obvious, anyone who wants to commit a crime or cause disruption or harm may be planning as well. Volunteers and staff should be observant and following safety procedures long before people start arriving and they should continue after guests have left.

5. Concentrate procedures and response plans on key areas of safety and security, customized for the event.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1.) Medical emergencies. | 8.) Liability concerns. |
| 2.) Accidents by volunteers or visitors. | 9.) Disruptions. |
| 3.) Theft or damage of church property. | 10.) Violence, planned or spontaneous. |
| 4.) Loss or misuse of property. | 11.) Inappropriate activities by participants or volunteers. |
| 5.) Crimes against children and adults. | 12.) Other? |
| 6.) Crimes to vehicles. | |
| 7.) Parking and entrance/exit safety. | |

Plans and procedures don't have to be lengthy, complex or harsh and repressive. The most important attribute is that they are complete so volunteers or staff people have guidelines for action regarding situations that might affect safety or security.

It is also beneficial for the safety coordinator to be ready to develop instant procedures as they are needed. For example, a large street fair was being held in the block in which a church was located. A bus of developmentally disabled youth arrived at the fair with two counselors. The counselors asked a church food-booth volunteer if some of the youth could use the restroom facilities at the church since public ones were busy and the young people were upset and worried.

The volunteer wanted to say yes immediately, but knew she was supposed to contact the event coordinator and the safety coordinator. They quickly worked together to assign hastily assembled volunteers to create smaller groups, according to bathroom needs and gender, and to accompany each group into the church, directly to the restrooms and back out the door, keeping count of everyone involved and checking the facilities afterwards.

This also highlighted the need to have custodial staff or volunteers present throughout even an outdoor event, just in case supplies are needed or cleaning must be done.

6. Consider the basic areas of planning in the twelve or more key areas above.

- 1.) Entrance/Exit for vehicles and people.
- 2.) Off-limits areas and how they will be secured and instructions for those responsible for securing doors or areas.
- 3.) High risk activities or situations (High risk for crime, accidents, illnesses, inappropriate activity, disruption, panic, etc.)
- 4.) Emergency evacuation. (This applies even to outdoor events, when it might be necessary to get people away from the scene quickly. Always plan for a holding area and train volunteers to instruct people to go there, rather than just dispersing into a neighborhood or business area.)
- 5.) Medical response access and exit. Medical treatment area.
- 6.) Comfort maintenance. Water, food, restroom facilities.
- 7.) Special needs. (Age, gender, mixed-gender, health, etc.)
- 8.) Identified concerns from similar events. (Consider contacting others who have been involved in similar events or brainstorm with volunteers and staff.)
- 9.) Safety and security for volunteers and staff, their vehicles, purses and other items.
- 10.) Assign safety staff and volunteers to quadrants, rooms, areas or activities. Or, inform those who are responsible for an area or activity about what to do in the event of an emergency.
- 11.) Plans for response in the event of a serious incident: Violence, disruption, weather or other emergency, accident, etc. Plans should be customized to the specific area or activity and the person responsible.
- 12.) Other plans, using guidelines in a variety of material or from advisors.

7. The biggest concern of everyone: What to do in an emergency.

1.) Response plans for volunteers and staff should focus on:

- 1. Observation:** Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully.
- 2. Assessment:** Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm to people or property or involving anything related to safety, security or an emergency.
- 3. Action:** Get help, then help those involved if possible. Or, help others get to safety or away from the area, to clear the way for emergency responders.

There really are only a few options for response by the average person, especially given variations in age, health, physical condition and aggressiveness, and those things should be focused on getting help and preventing the situation from getting worse.

2.) Volunteers and staff should walk through their responses on-site.

Written guidelines should be distributed—not too brief and not excessive. However, nothing can take the place of meeting with the volunteers on-site and asking them questions about their responsibilities.

For example, they should be able to walk the path they would take to evacuate people from the area for which they are responsible.

- Use short quizzes and scenarios and make it a fun way to test awareness of the best responses to emergencies. This is especially important with youth volunteers, who may need to be reminded of the seriousness of their responsibilities, but will be more likely to participate in a light-hearted quiz.

8. Conduct a final walk-through, checking the preventive procedures and response plans.

The week before the event is a good time to check all of the safety and security issues related to it.

- Have emergency responders been notified of the times and the number of people expected?
- Are police aware of workers who might be in and around the building at odd hours and the times when no one should be present?
- Are all supplies in place and does everyone know how to get them if they are not in locked areas?
- Is everything involved in safety and security in working order? (Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, locks and alarms, etc.)
- Are there procedures in place to prevent the things that could cause harm or disruption? Are volunteers trained about those procedures and committed to them?
- Are there plans in place for immediate response to emergencies of any kind?
- Do the people responsible for the various areas or activities know what they are expected to do?
- Will there be a safety and security coordinator or assistant available and roving at all times? This role can double as a host or hostess role or a public relations and greeter role. Consider a walkie-talkie or just a cell phone close at hand.
- Are positive relationships being developed and encouraged as a result of this event and the planning involved with it? (This is not only important for the well-being of the church but also makes it more likely that procedures are followed.)
- Has your list of negative potentials been thoroughly planned for?

Summary

This material is a starting point and a reminder of the many issues involved in keeping a special event safe and secure. There is no doubt about it, it involves more than many people think is necessary or want to do.

The positive aspect of planning for a special event is that it can develop individuals and the group and it presents the church in an effective way. Many people begin attending a church because their first introduction to it at a special event was a positive one.

Best wishes to you!

SAMPLE SECURITY TEAM MANUAL

This is an example of part of the Security Team Manual for a medium-sized church that had a several people who participate in a security team.

You'll notice that safety issues are not discussed (fire prevention, electrical and other maintenance, child care security, youth groups and others). Nor does it mention the wide array of other issues related to overall safety and security. It is focused solely on the roles and activities of the Security Team as responders.

However, it can be helpful for seeing how one church approached the topics involved in main service and special event security. The group who developed it said they also will distribute security procedures and plans especially for office staff, Sunday School teachers and other groups. That kind of material doesn't need to be in every manual, but should be in the overall manual maintained by the security coordinator, pastor and/or others.

This format is not the tidy one that was eventually developed, but can provide you with some thoughts you might be able to adapt to your own place of worship.

Church Security Team Manual

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1. SCOPE	

These guidelines provide standard procedures for Ushers/Security, Ministry Workers and Church Leadership. Certain sections of this manual will be developed as a separate procedure manual for Classrooms/Teachers and for Church Leadership.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

These guidelines outline the measures to be taken to reduce risks and to provide a secure environment for church leadership, congregants and visitors.

Church security seems a contradiction, but Christian churches everywhere have been compelled to seriously address this issue. No place is sacred to the criminal, and all churches, large and small, are vulnerable. Church violence is a nightmare to every church member and visitor. Natural disasters often occur without warning. There is no possible way to predict the “if, what, when and where” of a violent act or natural disaster. The key is to be prepared ahead of time and ready to act in the event of natural disaster or hostile act.

In protecting lives, preparation is the proven key to success. The Church Security Team members may have to deal with issues involving lost children, administration of first aid, de-escalation or containment of mentally unstable individuals, security for the “offering,” pastor/staff protection, and security of all church special events and activities.

(Church name), after much prayerful consideration, believes that the reasonable steps outlined in this manual will bring worshipers together in a safer and more secure spiritual experience.

3. GUIDING VERSES AND MISSION STATEMENT

Guiding Verses (KJV)

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

.. Through experience, training, and common sense, we will make wise decisions while maintaining a peaceful atmosphere free from fear and full of trust in the LORD.

Matthew 10:22 “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”

. We recognize that love for God is enmity with the world, and that identifying ourselves as joint heirs with Christ will cause conflict with those who hate the Gospel and would prevent the fellowship of believers.
Hebrews 13:5b “...for He hath said, I will never leave thee or forsake thee.”

. God promises to always be with us; we will seek His guidance and help always.

Nehemiah 4:9 “Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”

.. God promises to protect us, and we will use the Holy Spirit given to all Christians to supply reasonable, sensible provisions to prevent harm to the assembled followers of Christ at (Church Name Here).

Mission Statement

To recognize that the days are evil and to show the love of God by sacrificing time, talent and treasure to provide a safe, secure and peaceful place of worship for followers of Christ, both members and visitors, at (Church Name Here). We pray continually that these policies never have to be acted upon, but if necessary, will be carried out quickly and effectively.

4. SECURITY TEAM REQUIREMENTS

Security Team requirements include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Must be a mature Christian.
2. Member of (Church Name Here) for at least one year.
3. Physically able to perform the duties required (walking and standing, possibly running a short distance).
4. Ability to remain calm in the event of an emergency.
5. Must be able to communicate clearly to other team members, authorities and/or the congregation should the need arise.
6. Security Team members should keep the Guiding Verses and Purpose in mind as they perform their duties.
7. Security Team members must remember to operate with a spirit of grace and love at all times.
8. In all actions, Security Team members should remember they are doing their duties for God, and not for men; all actions should be accomplished with a sacrificial, Godly attitude.
9. Security Team members should remember we are not Police but a Volunteer Security Team.
10. All Security Team members will use their level of authority in an approved manner and not abuse this trust placed in them. Any improper actions toward a member or visitor will be addressed and will not be tolerated.
11. Security Team members will understand the procedures set forth in this policy, with due consideration for common sense at the appropriate time.

Security Team members will be needed for all 3 services during the week, and for all Church special events, as assigned.

5. SECURITY TEAM DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

A. Overview

Security Team duties and expectations include, but are not limited to the following:

1. All Security Team members will have assigned posts. All Security Team members are required to be at their assigned post no later than 30 minutes prior to the gathering start time.

The Security Team members at Post 1 and Post 11 (numbers or descriptive call sign position) need to be in position 45 minutes prior to the gathering. These two positions are assigned for all 3 weekly services – Sunday AM and PM and Wednesday PM. You will receive a schedule of all assigned dates.

2. If a Security Team member cannot be at their assigned position they must contact the head usher as soon as possible. The Security Team members assigned to Post 1 and Post 11 (outside front position 1 and outside Back position 11) need to get a replacement for their position in the event either is unable to cover their assignment.

3. All Security Team members without specific assigned duties before the gathering have the responsibility to greet people as they arrive, to be friendly and to smile. Assist visitors to find a seat or to locate the appropriate classrooms for their children. At all times be prepared for possible disturbances inside or outside the church.

4. Additional duties may be required at other times depending on special circumstances, events or a specific threat known to the area.

B. "Post" Descriptions and Responsibilities

The posts are identified by "Call Name" 1 through 15 (see Church Plot Plan, details attached).

Post 1 - "(Call sign)" - Outside Front:

- Maintain a visible presence by patrolling the parking area at the front of the church. You are not to leave this area unless you are relieved by another Security Team member, or there is an emergency, or unless you are directed to leave your post by church leadership. A visible presence in Post 1-(Call sign), serves as a deterrent to criminal or disruptive activities.

- Pay attention to persons/vehicles entering the north and south lots and vehicles that park on the street.

- After the service has begun, broadcast over the radio when a car enters the parking lot late.
- As described in detail below, greet those entering the Church with a mindset of Observation, Assessment, and Action. Remember to be friendly when doing so, and not suspicious or aloof.
- When the Children's ministries notifies Post 2-(Call sign) that children are coming to the main building, Post1 -(Call sign) moves to the north driveway so kids can be observed as they change location. Position yourself so the front door and south driveway is still in your view.
- A main security role of this post is to prevent an assailant from entering the church and/or alert others of potential trouble before entrance is made.
- Post 1 (Call sign) is to maintain position after the service and until Pastors have left the property, remaining alert to activity in this area.

Post 2 - "(Call sign)"- Foyer:

- Performs a radio check with all stations 15 minutes before the gathering begins.
- Monitor the foyer during the service and observe visitors that enter through the west and east doors.
- Locks the west foyer door prior to offering and unlocks the door when service ends.
- When Children's ministries notifies Post 2-(Call sign) that children are coming to the main building, Post 2-(Call sign) moves to the east entrance area to observe the children as they come across the parking lot and when they return.
- Monitor bathrooms and be alert to individuals spending excessive time in the bathroom. Post 2-(Call sign) also assists the teachers when children are brought to the bathroom and observes to ensure noise level is kept to a minimum.

Note: No adults are allowed in the bathroom when the children are brought in.

- A main security role of this post is to prevent an assailant from entering the sanctuary and/or alert others of potential trouble before entrance is made.

Post 3 - "(Call sign)" - Back Wall Sanctuary, West:

- Observe and monitor the entire sanctuary.
- Assist with prayer and ministry time as needed.
- Notify parents when needed by children's ministries.
- A main security role of this post is to secure the sanctuary doors in the event of an intruder.

Post 4 - "(Call sign)" - Back Wall Sanctuary, East:

- Observe and monitor entire sanctuary.
- Maintain thermostat setting.
- Assist with prayer and ministry time as needed.

- A main security role of this post is to secure the sanctuary doors in the event of an intruder.

Post 5 - "(Call sign)" - Row 4, West:

- Observe and monitor the west and middle sanctuary seating area.
- Should be in the sanctuary 30 minutes before the gathering starts and remain there to greet new people and assist in an emergency.
- Assist with prayer and ministry time. This post moves to the front of the aisle when Post 10 goes forward.
- A main security role of this post is to respond/assist to any emergency call in or out of the sanctuary.

Post 6 - "(Call sign)" - Row 7, West:

- Observe and monitor the west and middle sanctuary seating area.
- Assist with Offering.
- Assist with Communion.
- Assist with prayer and ministry time.
- A main security role of this post is the responsibility to move church leadership to the assigned "safe area" by leading the group out of the sanctuary.

Post 7 - "(Call sign)" - Row 6, East Drums:

- Observe and monitor the east and middle sanctuary seating area.
- Assist music team on and off the platform.
- Assist with Offering.
- Assist with Communion.
- A main security role of this post is assignment to the Pastor during prayer and ministry, to respond/assist to any emergency call in the sanctuary and to observe for any possible entrance into sanctuary.

Post 8 - "(Call sign)" - Row Behind Pastor:

- Observe and monitor the area around Church Leaders.

- A main security role of this post is to ensure that individuals are not allowed to approach the Church Leaders.
- A main security role of this post during prayer and ministry time is assignment to (name of church leader) and assists (name of church leader) on and off the platform.
- A main security role of this post during an emergency is to move church leadership to the assigned "safe area" by serving as "cover."

Post 9 - "(Call sign)" - Middle Section, Front Seat Next to Pastor:

- Observe and monitor the area around the Church Leaders. This post ensures that individuals are not allowed to approach the Church Leaders.
- Assist with Offering.
- Assist with Communion.

- Maintain the front aisle during prayer and ministry time and move forward to assist as appropriate.
- A main security role of this post during an emergency will be to assist Post 8 in moving church leadership to the assigned “safe area” by maintaining the rear area during the move.

Post 10 - “(Call sign)” - Middle Section, Front Row, East:

- Observe and monitor the east and middle sanctuary seating area.
- Assist with prayer and ministry time by standing at the aisle to assist those coming forward.
- A main security role of this post is to ensure no one approaches the front and to respond/assist to any emergency call in or out of the sanctuary.

Post 11 - “(Call sign)” – Outside, East Church Grounds:

- Patrols the entire church property, including the back fence area.
 - Check with teachers prior to class to inquire as to any needs or special instructions or alerts – such as knowledge of a parent who may be coming early for pick-up. Make sure each classroom is staffed with at least one adult.
 - Will regularly walk through the children’s area during service and check with the teachers and nursery workers for any irregularities. Should any security situation that involves children arise, notify Security Team leads/Head Usher or Church Leadership as soon as possible. Anyone who appears suspicious or is in the children’s area without sufficient reason should be directed back to the Sanctuary and observed
 - Ensure cars are unoccupied and locked.
 - Escort children’s ministries anytime they leave their classrooms.
 - After the gathering, remain in position and watch the parking area to verify that children are not injured due to parking lot traffic.
- A main security role of this post is to prevent an assailant from entering any of the classrooms and/or alert others of potential trouble before entrance is made. During a “Lockdown,” make sure all kids are in rooms and classes locked, or assist in moving kids to a safe location.

Post 12 - Nursery - “(Call sign)”

Post 13 – 3- 5 year olds - “(Call sign)”

Post 14 – 1st – 6th grade - “(Call sign)”

Post 15 - Youth Room - “(Call sign)”

- All Children’s and Youth classrooms will contact Post 2-(Call sign)- Foyer and will wait for directive from Post 2-(Call sign) -Foyer prior to leaving classrooms.
 - The primary responsibility of the Children/Youth worker is the security of the children.
- Each Children/Youth worker must read and demonstrate understanding of these guidelines and other emergency response guidelines.

- Each classroom will have a two-way radio to use for communication with the Usher/Security personnel. The radio must be with a ministry worker at all times and be turned on. Radio call codes must be available at all times.

- If a parent is needed in the classroom, the radio can be used to contact the usher and request the parent.

At 10:30 am Sunday morning, 5:00 pm Sunday evening and 7:00 pm Wednesday evening, Security Team leads will conduct a facility walk. East grounds Security Team members, Post 11-(Call sign), to conduct if others are not available. (Is all ok, lights off on vehicles, vehicle doors closed, etc.)

6. OBSERVATION ..ASSESSMENT ..ACTION!

Security Team members maintain the following “mindset” and will utilize these skills to remain alert and prepared to prevent and/or handle situations that may arise.

A. Observation Skills

Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully. Visually scan and personally greet members and visitors. This not only fulfills your role as a team member but allows you to observe people up close and establish a friendly relationship with them. A friendly greeting and good eye contact can make a difference in how someone reacts, even when angry or upset. Before you make eye contact, look at the hands, general appearance, items being carried or worn and the overall actions and demeanor of the person you are greeting.

Remember the old adage that “no one hits you with his face”. Look at the hands and general behavior first. With practice, you can do this effectively in a few seconds while reaching out to shake hands.

Ask first time visitors to fill out the “Visitors Card” and direct them to turn the card in at the (designated area) so they can receive the packet. Good OBSERVATION skills allow you to be constantly aware of your surroundings.

B. Assessment and Indicators

You should be mentally assessing everything you see. Ask yourself, “Is everything normal?” Is there something that bothers you or does not seem right? Is there a potential for danger?

Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm using your judgment. Your reasonable judgment will usually be enough to help you decide what action to take, be it keeping your eye on a specific person, notifying your team for back-up or immediately calling the Police.

The same reasonable judgment you would use to decide if your safety or the safety of your family is at risk is appropriate for your role in church security.

As part of your continual assessment of people and situations, the following behaviors and/or appearances may be indicators of the potential for criminal or violent acts. It is reasonable and appropriate to watch for them.

Potential Emotional Indicators

- Anger or rage.
- Crying.
- Unusual laughter.
- Nervousness or evasiveness.
- Fear or panic.
- Out of control or “wild-eyed.”
- An unusual absence of any emotion.

Potential Unusual Behavior Indicators

- Standing or sitting in a vehicle for extended length of time.
 - Taking unidentifiable items out of a vehicle.
 - Walking up to the door and looking around as though on the lookout.
 - Running up to the door.
 - A person being dropped off, but car stays idling.
 - Two or more unknown people entering together and going different directions.
 - Obviously trying to go unnoticed, being furtive or looking for concealment.
 - Confrontational or angrily questioning or arguing with another.
 - Asking for monetary or other assistance.
 - Asking about a church member or about the Pastor.
 - Talking, muttering, fidgeting or moving excessively.
 - Indicating self-hatred or disgust with self.
 - A grin or smile inappropriate for the situation.
 - Intoxicated, drugged, flustered or confused.
 - Responding with anger to greetings or questions.
 - Staring in an exaggerated way, especially when moving toward someone: “Fixated.”
 - Standing very still when others are moving forward.
 - Seeming to stall for time.
 - Standing alone or facing the congregation in the sanctuary instead of sitting.
 - Doing something that does not fit with the service at the time.
 - Going into areas of the building/property when no one else is present.
 - Spending an excessive amount of time in the bathroom.
 - Attempting to get the Usher or someone else away from the area.
 - Walking awkwardly as though having concealed weapons.
- NOTE: A frequent action of those who have a concealed weapon, explosives or drugs is to touch the area or keep a hand in the pocket or bag where the items are hidden.

Clothing or Characteristics Linked to Potential Problem Behavior

- Wearing unusually inappropriate clothing for a church environment.
- Wearing military, hunting or camouflage clothing without a reason.
- Menacing appearing clothing: pulled-down hats, all dark clothing, long coats, etc.
- Wearing clothing with wording or pictures that convey a hostile message.
- Being noticeably dirty or unkempt or having an offensive or unusual odor.

- Carrying or wearing a bag or backpack, especially if it looks stuffed full.
- Wearing a coat or other clothing that looks as though something is being concealed.
- Looking much less heavy than the bulkiness of clothes would indicate.
- Wearing clothes not appropriate for the weather or time of year – heavy clothes in summer.
- Pay attention to “stuffed pockets,” or un-tucked shirts that may conceal a weapon on the waist.

C. Action

Observation and assessment may result in “no action” necessary on your part. At other times you may be required to perform some action. This may be as minimal as maintaining your observation of a specific individual, to notifying other team members to also observe and monitor.

Action may require that you make contact with a suspicious individual (should include at least two team members). Action may require that you warn and/or help others or that you immediately call 911. Effective action taken by you can decrease the chances of conflict, harm, injury and/or violence. Never try to handle a situation alone. Communicate your situation so others can assist.

D. Additional Tasks Requiring Attention As A Security Team Member

As detailed above, each Security Team post has specific responsibilities and expectations. All Security Team members are also responsible for the following tasks:

- During the Offering, be watchful of anyone you do not know. Stand watch until offering is delivered to a safe area.

During offering, you should maintain visual contact with your offering bags. Two Security Team members (Post# 2 and Post #4) should be with the offering at all times. In the event of a robbery attempt, Security Team members should not use physical means to stop an armed thief. Do not place any church members or guests at risk by trying to stop a robbery. Note a complete description and contact Police.

- Look for and report any safety or fire hazards. As you make your rounds, note any loose railings, tripping hazards, or anything that may cause a fire or other dangerous situation on the church grounds.

- In the event of an emergency, the Security Team member should notify the congregation and Children’s Ministry workers. Security Team members will help to guide members to the appropriate safe areas.

- A list of all Medical personnel (Nurse, EMT, etc.) that attend will be available. In the event of a medical emergency, sickness, or injury, the Security Team member should contact one of these individuals for assistance and also call 911 if necessary.

- Make routine checks of the parking area or any other activity going on away from the main gathering. Provide any assistance as long as it doesn't take away from the primary duty of protecting the congregation as a whole.

- Being prepared also means “psychological preparedness.” Do not cling to “denial” that nothing bad could ever happen or bluff yourself into thinking you are prepared for “every” situation. A very important way of preparing yourself psychologically” is to envision “what if...?” scenarios.

As you are performing your duty, think about how someone might cause a disruption and how you would react. What would you say or do? Think like a “criminal” to try to figure out what someone might attempt or how someone might try to get around the safeguards we have in place.

As you walk the buildings and the grounds, take mental notes of rooms, hallways, entry points, hiding spots, vulnerable areas, etc. Share your ideas and observations with other team members. In the event of an emergency, the mental notes you made previously may be vitally useful.

7. RADIO PROCEDURE

A. Overview

The radio is one of our most important tools for communicating among Security Team members and for ensuring church security. Each Security Team member will have a radio. A radio will also be located in the Nursery, 3 – 5 year old classroom, 1st – 6th grade classroom and Youth classrooms.

Proper use of the radio is vital to your role as a Security Team member. It is necessary for you to learn the Radio Codes and to become competent with the workings of your radio, including transmission and reception of information and use of ear piece and lapel microphone. Unless otherwise instructed, all Radios are to be “locked” on Channel # (select a channel that has no or little outside interference).

Radio codes are important for several reasons. Our radios are not on “secure” channels and thus our transmissions can be monitored by others. Use of codes thus provides a level of confidentiality. In the children’s classrooms, foyer and other areas where earphones might not be in use, codes are not as distracting as detailed information that may be transmitted. Codes are also easier to understand when receiving a transmission. Codes also make for a more succinct transmission and response, minimizing use of radio time.

Keep in mind, if a code is forgotten, always resort to use of regular verbal communication over the radio, especially in an emergency.

B. Radio Codes

The following Radio Codes will be utilized by the Security Team:

10-4.....OK / transmission received

10-7.....Out of service / in bathroom

10-8.....In service / ready for duty

10-9.....Repeat

10-20.....What is your location?

10-22.....Disregard last transmission

10-97.....Arrived at location

11-98.....Meet me at

Code 10.....Church / activity over

Code 33.....Emergency – Keep channel clear

Code 99.....All units respond (as appropriate) to location immediately

Code 918.....Dealing with “strange” or mentally unstable person (give your location)

Code Green.....All OK / No problems

Code Yellow.....Possible Threat / Problem

Code Red.....Physical Threat / Emergency – This code will result in entire Church Lockdown and call to 911

Code Orange.....Missing Child

Code Blue.....Medical Emergency

C. Radio Functioning – Transmission And Reception

1. When transmitting, depress the transmit button for one full second prior to speaking.

2. State the Post Call Name of the person you are attempting to reach first, and then state your Post Call Name, now transmit your message. For example, if 3 – 5 year old classroom (Call sign) was alerting Foyer Usher (Call sign) they are bringing kids to the bathroom, the following transmission would be heard:

3 – 5 year olds would transmit - “Post ?, this is (Call sign) bringing kids to bathroom”

Foyer Usher would respond – “(Call sign), Post ?, 10-4”

3. Enunciate clearly and in a reasonably loud voice using codes whenever applicable.

4. If you need to give detailed or confidential information, call for an “11-98” and meet with that person. We should avoid transmitting sensitive or secure information as radio channels are not secure.

D. Radio Check-In

A “radio check” will be performed prior to every service to ensure all posts are “on duty” and to ensure all radios are functioning properly.

Post 2 - “(Call sign),” is to verify all Posts have radios and conduct the “radio check.” Radio check for all Posts will be conducted at the following times:

- Sunday morning gathering 10:15 a.m.
- Sunday evening 4:45 p.m.
- Wednesday evening 6:45 p.m.

Post 2 “(Call sign)” will call each Post, in order, one at a time. Each post will respond to Post 2-“(Call sign)” with “10-8,” indicating they are in position and radio is being monitored. An example of the appropriate response and transmission is as follows:

Post 2- (Call sign) will transmit - “Post 2 (Call sign), (Call sign), radio check-in.”

Post 1 –will respond – “(Call sign), (Call sign), 10-8.”

Then...

Post 2- will transmit - “Post 3, (Call sign), radio check-in.”

Post 3 – Post 3 will respond – “(Call sign), Post 3, 10-8.”

This will continue until all Posts have been contacted.

Post 2-, will notify Security Team leads or Head Usher to make physical contact with any post that fails to respond to the “Radio Check-In” to ensure all posts are in position and radios are functioning.

8. POTENTIAL SITUATIONS REQUIRING “ACTION” FROM THE SECURITY TEAM

(This is by no means an exhaustive list...the “real list” is endless and we will add to it as appropriate!)

A. Suspicious Persons

If the Security team member believes that an individual is in the church with evil intentions (such as causing a disruption, or to commit an assault, or to vandalize, etc.), the Security Team member should make his suspicions known to the Security Team lead or Head Usher. The Security Team member should observe the individual as discretely as possible in order to ascertain the intentions. If it becomes obvious the person has evil intentions, the Security Team member will make the decision as to what level of action to take. These actions may include, but are not limited to, asking the person to leave, following overtly, physical removal of the person and calling the Police.

B. Dealing With Unruly Persons

If during the course of a service, any person causes a disturbance in the Sanctuary, the reaction of the Security Team member will be dependent on the following:

1. If the person causes a disturbance and leaves, or continues to disturb as leaving, the Security Team member should follow the person until they leave the church grounds. Do not agitate the individual, and if possible, get a license plate number and description.
2. If the person remains on church property, the individual should be observed until they depart the area.
3. If the individual leaves the Sanctuary, but remains in the building, the Security Team member will kindly ask the person to leave the premises. If the person leaves, follow steps (1) and (2) above.
4. If the individual causing the disturbance remains in the Sanctuary, the Security Team member should follow the instructions of the Pastor from the Pulpit. Security Team members should move to a location close to the person causing the disturbance to prevent them from being able to escalate the situation.
5. If a person outside the building causes a disturbance, steps (1) and (2) should be followed.
6. If at any time, in the judgment of the Security Team member, the individual appears to threaten the safety of the congregation, a direct call to Police should be initiated.

C. Communication Tips for Dealing with an “Unruly” Individual

There are many things you can say to an unruly or agitated person that will increase or decrease the chances the person will calm down. Keep in mind the following seven “Verbal Judo” techniques, or things to never say to a person in this situation:

1. Never say, “Hey you! Come here!” This puts a person on the defensive. Instead, try “Excuse me, can I talk with you for a moment?” This is professional and polite. More importantly, anything the person responds other than “yes” or “no” immediately provides you with tactical information about his emotional or mental state.
2. Never say, “Calm down!” This rarely works and is a criticism of behavior. Instead, try “What’s the matter?” This will soften a person’s response and encourage them to talk.
3. Never say, “I’m not going to tell you again!” This is actually a threat and may escalate a situation.

Instead, try “Is there anything I could say/do that will help you to _____?” This is professional and polite. If the answer is “yes” we may have found a solution. If the answer is “no” we have additional tactical information to gauge our next move.

4. Never say, "Be more reasonable!" This is the same as telling someone they are stupid and wrong, and it will probably escalate a situation.

Instead try, "Let me see if I understand what you are saying?" And then paraphrase back to them. This helps to absorb the other person's tension and helps them feel supported.

5. Never say, "Because those are the rules!" This just irritates people and invites argument.

Instead, try explaining the reason briefly. 70% of resistant people will actually do what you want if you just tell them why.

6. Never say, "What's your problem?" This signals to the other person, "It's you vs. me!" This phrase will almost always escalate a situation.

Instead, try "What's the matter or How can I help?" This is professional and polite. It will soften up the response of even the most agitated person.

7. Never say, "What do you want me to do about it?" This tells the other person you are upset or agitated. It is better to always appear in control even if you are upset when dealing with an "unruly" person.

Instead try, "I'm sorry, I'm not sure how I can help you?" This is professional and polite. Approaching an agitated person in this manner almost always contributes to de-escalating a situation.

D. Menacing/Armed Individual Threat

In the event of a potentially dangerous/armed individual(s) in the area, notify all Security Team members via radio call, "CODE RED, CODE RED!!" With the broadcast of Code Red, 911 should be called. Remember to give the location where assistance is needed.

"Code Red" is the radio code for a "physical threat" or "emergency." Keep in mind, when this code is broadcast, designated Security Team members stay in position and designated Security Team members respond immediately. Know your position requirement at all times! For example, Posts 6, 8 and 9 remain with Pastor(s). Posts 3 or 4 will be responsible for locking/blocking sanctuary doors to prevent entrance from an assailant outside of the sanctuary. If the threat seems immediate, lock the facility immediately. If confronted, remain calm and cooperate with the individual. Try to keep the individual isolated from the rest of the congregation. Do what you can to isolate, contain or fight off / stop the individual, knowing that help is on the way!

E. Lockdown

A "lockdown" will take place whenever a threat is perceived or known in order to protect all congregants and children's classrooms. Any Security Team member can radio for a "Lockdown" by broadcasting a CODE RED.

If Posts 1-(Call sign) or 11-(Call sign) call for a CODE RED, Post 2 locks West and East Foyer doors, Posts 3 or 4 locks Sanctuary doors and all Children's classrooms lock their doors.

During a "lockdown" emergency all children must be brought into the classroom as quickly as possible and the doors must be locked. No person is to leave the classroom until authorized to do so by the Security Team leads/Head Usher or Church Leadership. If the classroom is unsafe, go to the nearest safe classroom or request guidance via radio from the Security Team leads or Head Usher.

F. Evacuation

In the event that evacuation of the entire building/facility becomes necessary, Security Team members will help in the directing of members to the proper location. All members should meet on the northwest corner of the parking lot, if safe to do so. If not safe to meet at the primary evacuation point, seek guidance from Security Team leads or Church Leadership. Each family/teacher should account for members and the Security Team notified in event anyone is missing. The decision for evacuation will be initiated by Church Leadership based on the recommendations of the Security Team.

G. Dealing with Hate or Anti-Religious Groups

No Threat Should Be Taken Lightly. If on grounds, refer to "Dealing with Unruly Persons" above.

- If a phone call or letter threatens the well-being of an individual or the church building itself, notify Leadership and authorities immediately. The authorities can assess the actual risks.
- Other congregations may have received a similar threat(s). If a threat or unusual note is received, bring it to the attention of Church Leadership. It may not be in the church's best interest to let every member know about a threat immediately. If there is a specific threat, it is important to weigh the cost of canceling worship services or a meeting to protect the lives of members.
- Solicit wise counsel from Church Leadership and local authorities. If a threat comes by phone, either record the conversation (if possible) or write down as much as you can (Use Bomb Threat Checklist). Ask for clarity, and listen for common phrases, unusual words, accents, and background noise.

When the caller hangs up, call the Police immediately, especially when harm to an individual or property is threatened. If the threat seems immediate (such as "I'm on my way to your church."), notify authorities and either lock all doors and windows (Lockdown procedure) or evacuate everyone from the facility/property.

H. Missing or Kidnapped Person

1. MISSING PERSON

If the person is a child or Alzheimer's patient and has wandered off, an immediate search of the facility and grounds will be conducted. If the person is not located, authorities will be notified.

2. KIDNAPPED PERSON

If a definite kidnapping / abduction has occurred, the Police Department will be immediately notified via 911 and the issue delegated to them. The Security Team will provide all assistance required to the Police Department.

I. Bomb Threat

EVERY BOMB THREAT WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY!

In the event a bomb threat is received during services, all radio/cell phone use will cease (radio signals can cause detonation). Security team will immediately notify Police by landline telephone, and inform Church Leadership to determine if evacuation is to be initiated. If threat is received by telephone, the BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST should be completed and available for authorities. The BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST will be available at every telephone.

J. Suspicious Package Threat

Upon discovery of an unknown or suspicious package during service (includes backpacks, briefcases, etc.), the area will be cleared and authorities notified. Use radio/cell phone discipline as with a bomb threat. If package has been opened and contains an unknown substance, further exposure will be limited as much as possible. Individual and package will be isolated to avoid further contamination, and no attempt will be made to clean up the released substance.

Close doors, windows, turn off circulating fans and air handling units. Wash hands without leaving the area, and keep hands from face, eyes, nose and mouth. Church Leadership will be notified and determine if evacuation is to be initiated.

K. Medical Emergency

If an individual experiences a medical emergency:

- Call 911.
- Notify any designated persons at church trained to handle medical/first aid situations.

L. Calling 911

When calling 911, it is vitally important to provide as much information as possible. Provide as much information about the emergency situation as you know, including descriptions of suspects and number of people involved.

Let 911 know that people are in the main church building and other buildings. Let 911 know that we have Security Team members who may be armed and give a description of these individuals to 911. The more information you can provide, the better and more accurate the response will be once help arrives.

If you call 911 and you have no details to provide, let the 911 operator know that we have an unknown emergency that requires immediate response. Tell the operator that you heard the Church radio call for "emergency." Listen for and report any sounds. Provide whatever level of information you can, including that we have Security Team members on site who may be armed and their descriptions.

9. USE OF FORCE POLICY

Should a situation arise where the use of force becomes justified and necessary, the utmost restraint shall be exercised. Use of force should never be considered routine, reserved only for the most unique of circumstances. Deciding to use force when authorized in the conduct of official responsibilities is perhaps the most critical decision a Security Team member can make.

Sound judgment and discretion are the foundation of the Security Team. The decision to use force must be made quickly and under difficult, often unpredictable circumstances. The Security Team should defuse any situation whenever possible (see Verbal Judo) to eliminate or reduce the need to use physical force to subdue any unruly person.

Force will only be used to prevent serious injury or death to self or others. Use of force is limited to the minimum amount needed to stop the threat of physical danger to any person in or on the church facility or grounds.

Security Team members will never initiate physical contact first, except when removing a disrupter who refuses to leave or if the unruly person initiates contact with another in the church, Security Team members will take appropriate action to prevent further harm. This action is limited to subduing the person until he no longer poses a threat to anyone, including self. The person must not be restrained if they attempt to leave the facility. The Police should be called and an official report written.

In the event restraint becomes necessary to prevent further harm, be advised that the restrained individual is legally your responsibility and this is not to be taken lightly.

Use of Force is Never justified to prevent vandalism, theft of funds or property.

Security Team members should exhaust all other reasonable means before resorting to force. It is not possible to entirely replace judgment with policy. This policy is intended to provide direction when called upon to confront difficult situations. It is the policy of (Church Name Here) that only that force which is reasonable and necessary will be used. Security Team members whose actions are consistent with the law and this policy will be strongly supported by (Church Name Here) in any subsequent review of their conduct regarding use of force.

NAME (Print)

Date Received:

(Church Name Here)

SAFETY INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date of Report

Incident Type:

.. Injury .. Theft .. Disruption .. Vandalism .. Suspicious Activity

.. Threat .. Other

Description of Incident:

Brief Description:

Members and Visitors Involved and Witnesses:

Comments / Outstanding Issues:

Outside Agencies Called / Involved:

FINAL OUTCOME:

Security Team Member's Signature:

Name:

Date:

A sample Report of a Suspicious Incident:

Instructions: Use this form as a general guide, completing as soon as you can following the suspicious incident you witnessed. Notify the Pastor as soon as possible; write all the details that you can remember. Use the back for any drawings, if applicable.

General Information	
YOUR NAME/CONTACT #	_____
Date and Time of Incident	_____
Location (Address or Street)	_____
Weather Conditions	_____
Details of Incident	

Suspicious Person #1 Physical Description	
Gender M / F Ethnicity _____ Height _____	
Weight _____	
Unique Physical Characteristics _____	
Clothing Type/Style/Color _____	

Vehicle, if any Year/Make/Model/ Color _____	
License Plate Information: State _____	
Lic. Plate # _____	
Suspicious Person #2 Physical Description	
Gender M / F Ethnicity _____ Height _____	
Weight _____	
Unique Physical Characteristics _____	
Clothing Type/Style/Color _____	

Vehicle, if any Year/Make/Model / Color _____	
License Plate Information: State _____	
Lic. Plate # _____	

Sample Bomb Threat Checklist Used By A Place of Worship
TELEPHONE BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

KEEP CALM: Do not get excited or excite others.

TIME: Call received _____ am/pm Terminated _____ am/pm

EXACT WORDS OF CALLER: _____

DELAY: ASK CALLER TO REPEAT.

Questions you should ask:

A. Time bomb is set to explode? _____

B. Where located? Floor _____ Area _____

C. Kind of bomb? _____

D. Description? _____

E. Why kill or injure innocent people? _____

Voice description:

___ Female ___ Calm ___ Young ___ Refined

___ Male ___ Nervous ___ Middle-Aged ___ Rough

___ Old

Other Descriptors:

Accent ___ Yes ___ No Describe _____

Speech Impediment ___ Yes ___ No Describe _____

Unusual Phrases _____

Recognize Voice? If so, who do you think it was? _____

BACKGROUND NOISE

___ Music ___ Running Motor (Type) _____

___ Traffic ___ Whistles ___ Bells

___ Horns ___ Aircraft ___ Tape Recorder

___ Machinery ___ Other _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Did caller indicate knowledge of the facility? If so, how? In what way?

B. What line did call come in on? _____

C. Is number listed? ___ Yes ___ No Private Number? Whose? _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Some Final Thoughts About This Document

I am well aware that this was a lot of material to read through—and that you may not have read through all of it. When you have the time, try to do so. Even the sections you think do not apply to your place of worship may be helpful sometime.

Share your helpful information and experiences: If you develop something you think would be useful to share, please send it to me. It may be something others could use, at least as a way to start thinking about their own work.

Best wishes to you!
Tina Rowe

About the Author

Tina Lewis Rowe had a thirty-three year law enforcement career, first with the Denver Police Department where she served in every division before retiring as the captain in charge of Patrol District Two, northeast Denver. She served for eight years as the Presidential-appointed United States Marshal for Colorado.

One of her challenges as the United States Marshal was to develop and provide oversight for security in the trials for Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who committed the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, April 19, 1995. The explosion took the lives of 168 people--including 19 children--and injured over 500 others.

Tina has been an inspirational and informative presenter and trainer for forty years, and is involved full-time in presenting, training, writing and consulting. Her focus is on professional and organizational development in government, criminal justice agencies, businesses and organizations. She also presents seminars on church safety and security to church leaders and staff, volunteers, police officers and others. These are most often hosted by law enforcement agencies and places of worship.

She is one of the Workplace Doctors at www.workplacedoctors.com, a site that answers workplace communication questions from around the world.

Tina is the author of a book on preparing for promotional processes, *A Preparation Guide for the Assessment Center Method* (Charles C. Thomas, publisher).

Her website is an online resource for personal and organizational development.
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