



step-by-step

Practical strategies to protect your ministry

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OVERVIEW

A Smart Way to Minister

Protect your congregation while opening your church to those who need it most.

There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land (Deuteronomy 15:11).

A church should be a place of peace, a safe haven where we can worship and experience God's love and grace away from the conflicts of the world. We expect a church to be the safest place in our community, but what happens when crime and violence breach the church doors? As we seek to minister to the desperate and hurting, are there ways to protect our congregations from those with sinister motives?

The articles in this pack are designed to inform and equip church leaders to be prepared should the unthinkable occur. A good place to start is with the assessment, "How Secure Is Your Church?" From there you can explore articles on installing security equipment, responding safely to transients, educating your congregation on taking safety precautions, and preventing a church shooting.

By taking the initiative to address these issues before a destructive or even tragic event occurs, you're well on your way to ensuring peace within your church doors. May all who enter continue to find God's life-saving grace and security within the sanctuary of your ministry.

Lori Quicke

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ASSESSMENT

Is Your Church Secure?

Use this review to see if it's as safe as you think.

by Peary Perry

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you (Psalm 5:11).

You want to welcome the poor and needy. Yet some people approach churches with criminal intent, such as theft, fraud, or violence. Since churches want inviting facilities, resorting to a walled in, siege-like mentality is rarely a good answer. The key is conveying the impression that the church is secure, so that criminals will consider the facility too difficult to enter or the possibility of being caught too great to proceed. Review your church security using the following chart:

ITEM	YES	NO	ACTION STEPS
Seek Professional Help			
Ask the local police community-relations department to look over your buildings and make recommendations.			
Ask the police for an analysis of the crimes committed in the past three years.			
Consider seriously any trend toward increasing assaults and take action before it is necessary.			
Use Technology			
Put switches on doors and windows to trigger an alarm if a door or window opens.			
Install motion or heat sensors in trap areas (hallways or other places thieves have to walk through) to detect either movement or body heat.			
Place a panic button in the church office so personnel can summon police without having to pick up a telephone.			
Use video security and a remote lock on the front door to screen who is allowed in the building.			

Protecting Your Church from Crime and Violence | Is Your Church Secure?

ITEM	YES	NO	ACTION STEPS
Install a Security System			
Ask police for recommendations.			
Determine a company's specialties.			
Invite a sales rep to do a free security survey.			
Ask for references.			
Be sure that the alarm company is licensed and insured.			
Lease your system and service agreements rather than buy, as technology changes quickly.			
COMPLETED BY:			DATE:

Peary Perry is president of Peary Perry and Associates Investigative/Research Services in Houston, which specializes in corporate and insurance-related investigations.

HOW TO

Responding to Transients

Protect the safety of your church staff.

by James F. Cobble, Jr.

May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you (Psalm 20:1).

Compassion, anxiety, bewilderment...these are just a few of the words that describe how church secretaries and other staff members feel about working with transients and others who come to the church seeking personal help. Often, church secretaries work alone at the church office and when confronted by a street person seeking money, they are caught between a desire to help and personal fear for their own safety.

Develop a Safe Response Plan

Helping the poor is central to the church's mission. But that does not mean that such help should be done thoughtlessly or without concern for the welfare and safety of those who work with the needy. To avoid problems, church staff members need training and guidance in responding to transients and to other individuals seeking help. Church leaders should take the initiative to see that their church has developed an adequate set of policies and procedures to respond to those who come to the church seeking assistance. Often, the secretary is at the church alone when these situations occur. Clearly, such scenarios require advanced planning.

1. Define each staff member's role with respect to the church's ministry of caring for the needy. Clarify tasks such as interviewing, making referrals, giving vouchers, and following up.
2. Establish procedures to enhance personal safety in responding to the needs of transients. As churches become an increasing target for theft, and the number of people seeking financial assistance increases, church staff members are becoming more concerned about safety issues.
3. Provide training to church secretaries and other staff members on how to respond to transients. For many church secretaries, their introduction to working with transients occurs when the first needy person arrives at the church office. Have staff members engage in role-playing to practice how they would respond in a true-life situation. Here are some training tips:
 - Staff members should know what information to collect and how to verify it from those requesting help.

- Staff members should be able to make referrals. Create a brochure that lists the type of assistance programs available in your community. Provide one to each person who requests help.
- Tell people what you can do rather than what you cannot do. Keep coming back to “Let me tell you what we can do.” This may be only making a referral.

Security Issues

Consider the following points:

1. When a secretary is working alone at the church, the building should be locked. An electronic lock can be installed in the door, which allows the secretary to unlock the entrance without leaving the office. Even if an electronic security system is not possible, the doors should remain locked and a doorbell should be used. Some churches maintain an open-door policy. In this case, control access to the office. Do not let strangers into the work area.
2. In high-crime areas, access to the building should be controlled during office hours even if the secretary is not alone in the building.
3. An intercom system should be installed between the secretary’s office and the pastor’s office. While that has value far beyond security concerns, it also allows the secretary to contact the pastor if a problem is developing. A code word can be used indicating that immediate assistance is required in the church office. Also install a panic button in the church office. The button should activate an alarm in other parts of the building that summons help. If the phone system permits, program speed dial numbers for emergency phone numbers such as the police.
4. If a church employee is working at the church alone, he or she should not indicate that to someone over the phone, or to a stranger who drops in.
5. Employees who work alone should let others know their schedule. Church secretaries, for example, can call someone to let them know they are leaving work before they walk out into a dark parking lot and drive home. The church should maintain adequate lighting in all areas around the church and in the parking lot. Employees should have parking spaces as close to the door as possible.
6. Do not allow strangers to enter the church office. If the only access to the office is through the door (as opposed to a business window) and a counter does not separate the workspace from the reception area, consider installing a Dutch door. The top half can be left open while the bottom remains locked. Sometimes a person will ask to use the office phone. Some churches provide access to a pay phone, or to a phone in the

reception area that can be used for local calls only. Some secretaries make the call on the other person's behalf. The point is to be safety conscious.

7. Do not keep large amounts of cash at the church.
8. If a staff member feels that an unsafe situation is developing, he or she should not hesitate to contact the police. If your phone system has speed dialing, program the local police number into it for quick access.
9. Some people have serious emotional problems or needs that go far beyond the secretary's ability to help. Staff members should know their limits and be prepared to make referrals when necessary.

Responding to the Con Artist

Any organization that provides resources to those in need will also attract those who attempt to abuse the system. This is especially true of churches. The Christian emphasis upon caring and compassion can be viewed by the con artist as an invitation for easy pickings.

Often, those who try to con church staff members are in as much need as are others who seek help. The difference, however, is that the con artist uses lying and deception to swindle staff members. When the con artist succeeds in securing financial assistance, it perpetuates dishonesty and takes away limited resources from others who deserve help.

1. Do not give cash. Use a voucher system.
2. To the extent possible, provide food assistance to all who request it based on reasonable frequency guidelines. Food is a basic human need and often the person requesting help has children. The local church can maintain a food pantry, know where to make referrals, or provide vouchers that explicitly state what can and cannot be purchased with them.
3. Ask for identification (driver's license, etc.) and references. Don't be afraid to make a few phone calls to gain more information.
4. Verify the need. Ask for names, addresses, phone numbers, statements, and other relevant information. If the person is evasive, take note of it and raise your level of caution.
5. Inquire concerning the person's religious background. Do they have a minister you can contact? Why did they come to your church? Have other churches helped them?
6. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated by guilt (e.g., "If you were really a Christian...").

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7. The con artist often stresses the urgency of the need and presents it in a life-or-death context. Legitimate requests may also contain an element of urgency. Look for other factors such as manipulation and evasiveness if you believe it may be a con.
8. The con artist often has no local ties. He or she is from out of town and has been waylaid by a series of unfortunate circumstances. When you ask for names and references they have none. However, they have plenty of excuses.
9. Unless you have discussed it with a lawyer, do not hire transients for part-time work. Some churches operate with the assumption that work will separate the truly needy who have the right attitude and commitments from the freeloaders. However, once the church begins to pay a transient to do work for the church, a number of legal concerns arise related to liability, workers compensation insurance, social security, and withholding taxes. Make sure you understand the legal implications before hiring a transient.
10. Develop a community-wide program with a centralized referral system. Often this is done through the local ministerial association in cooperation with the police and other social service agencies.

James F. Cobble is former executive director of Christian Ministry Resources.

Thought Provokers

- How do we currently respond to requests for help at the church office?
- How does our current method need to be improved for better security?
- What training and support can we give to our church receptionist to insure his or her safety?

HOW TO

A Shooter in the House

A police officer's advice on how to prevent and react to a gunman at church.

by Andrew G. Mills

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance (Psalm 32:7).

Churches are notorious for minimal security. And while acts of violence at church are rare, recent shootings at churches and schools beg the question: What can leaders do to protect their people? Based on experience in the pulpit and on the police force, here are four steps you can take to reduce risk—and possibly save lives—at your church.

Step 1: Work with local police

Learn their plans and capabilities. Most police agencies have adopted an “active shooter” philosophy. This involves forming up quickly, moving in, and removing a threat with lethal force, all before an organized evacuation, or the arrival of a SWAT team or negotiators. What does this mean for your church if an “active shooter” crisis occurs?

- Designate one of your church leaders to meet with the police and review their strategy for responding to a shooting in your building.
- Educate your congregation on your church's policies for responding to an emergency, perhaps through a brochure or a segment of your new member's class.

Step 2: Create a survey of your facility for police

Include in your overview:

- Blueprints and photos (digital and hard-copy) of every room in the church, which police at a command center can use to guide officers as they secure the church building
- Emergency contact information for the church pastor, property manager, medical personnel, and members of the church's crisis-response team
- Keys to outside and classroom doors
- Shut off points for gas, water, and electricity

- Designated rally points for families and medical triage
- Any knowledge of existing threats, including anyone against whom the church or a member has a restraining order

Step 3: Create a lockdown policy

If your local police department has an active shooter policy, a lockdown may be the best way to protect the segment of your congregation that is in the building during a shooting but outside the immediate vicinity of the shooter. During a lockdown, certain areas of the church are required to shut, lock, and barricade their doors until police arrive. Those inside during a lockdown should stay away from windows and leave room lights on to ease the police team's search. A lockdown removes the chaos and confusion of an unplanned evacuation. Before instituting such a policy:

- Determine which church leaders can order a lockdown and under what circumstances.
- Identify who can enter protected areas (such as the nursery), and how or if parents can retrieve children during a lockdown.
- Provide telephones or intercoms that allow each lockdown area to communicate outside the building.

Step 4: Prevent an incident

Situational crime expert Ronald Clarke suggests these steps for avoiding an active shooter incident:

- Increase effort. If a shooter plans an attack on your church, he will likely arrive after the service begins. Make it difficult for an intruder to enter your church unnoticed and take a seat wherever he wants. A simple step forward in this area involves closing sanctuary doors once a service begins and training ushers to meet latecomers and guide them to designated seating areas.
- Increase early identification. A person approaching your building with a gun drawn is an obvious threat. But other signs, such as a person's appearance or body language, represent danger too. Ushers, greeters, or church staff can identify a threat by monitoring entrances via surveillance cameras, well-placed windows, or simply by extending a personal greeting to any person who looks suspicious.

- Reduce risk. Create visual or lighting obstructions, isolating threats from the body of believers. This is where a lockdown policy is most effective, because it separates and protects the congregation from the gunman.
- Plan in advance. Every church should be prepared by appointing a crisis response team consisting of several people with police, military, or medical training. Choose people for this group who will avoid sensationalizing or trivializing your church's potential for attack. Allow this group to provide ongoing training to the staff and congregation.
- Reduce provocation. Set guidelines for denying access to people who are unstable, agitated, angry, or intoxicated. Train ushers to identify the warning signs of such a person, and coach them to deny access firmly, but respectfully. These warning signs include people who are talking to themselves or are otherwise belligerent. If a pastor has a counselee who is particularly troubled, a head usher can be recruited to show extra attention to that person if he arrives at the church.

If a Shooter Gets In...

It is critical for leaders to be decisive. If the gunman targets a pastor or some other leader, those most visible should draw attention away from the congregation. If the shooter targets the congregation, direct confrontation is essential. This is dangerous, but you can improve your chances by distracting the shooter. Weaken his shooting ability by throwing hymnals, yelling from multiple directions, and tackling him from behind.

If the shooter does not penetrate deep into the sanctuary and is shooting randomly, take cover behind a pew, pillar, or balcony. Most shooters will be well armed and intend to inflict maximum damage. Recognizing the grave danger, church leaders and members of a crisis team can save lives by closing the gap between themselves and the shooter and overwhelming him.

Once a shooting begins, establish communication with the police as soon as possible. Avoid chaos by assigning only people on your crisis response team to call 911. Police will want to know the number of shooters, location of suspects, types of weapons, possible traps or explosives, immediacy of threat, and location of sensitive areas such as Sunday schools or nurseries. The emergency dispatcher will instruct the caller to stay on the line in order to provide real-time information to police on the scene.

When police arrive, stay on the ground until you are told to move. People have a built-in urge to run for safety. But movement creates confusion and complicates the situation for

police. When you do get up, avoid sudden movements or any object in your hand that could be construed as a threat.

Assaults on houses of worship are rare. But with planning, preparation, and prayer, your church will be better able to protect the safety of your church and its members.

Andrew G. Mills is a lieutenant in the San Diego (California) Police Department.

Thought Provokers

- What steps do you currently have in place for a possible shooting at your church? If you haven't considered this issue before, what are the most important steps you should take for prevention and protection?
- How could your church be locked down to protect as many people as possible in the occurrence of a shooting?
- With your church leaders and ushers, role play how you would react if a shooter entered your sanctuary. Note weaknesses in your reaction and make a plan to train your leaders.

HOW TO

Choose the Right Security System

Ways to make the church safe without turning it into a fortress.

by John R. Throop and Jeff Hanna

He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe (Proverbs 28:26).

Some security measures may seem extreme in a church environment, but they may be a factor in determining whether people feel safe enough to keep coming to your church. Some families, especially those with young children, will not come to a church that is not serious about safety issues. Furthermore, as churches expand their programs throughout the week, protection becomes increasingly important. No one wants to attend a church in which they feel uneasy about safety.

1. Consider your needs

Every church should think through its approach to accessibility and protection, says Ron Aguiar of Integrity Security Consultants. In smaller churches, the church secretary in the church office is usually the first to greet visitors. If people enter the church from a door leading directly to the office, that's okay. But if other church doors are open and people can wander unhindered throughout the church before coming to the office, church workers as well as assets could be at risk.

In larger churches, people often are allowed into a lobby where they are stopped by a barrier, such as a locked door or a receptionist, who will call someone to escort them to a specific office or room.

Church leaders should consider what it takes to move beyond an initial barrier in a church, whether it's a locked door, receptionist, or office worker, and how much freedom a visitor should have moving unescorted through the building.

2. Consider security options

Welcome center. A welcome center in the narthex of the church can double as a soft security barrier. It can be equipped with security monitors, two-way communication devices, telephones, and an intercom system. People who work in the center can be trained in how to respond to a crisis.

Two-way communication devices. People with these devices can be stationed throughout the church building. Motorola provides radios starting at \$200 each (check a local dealer for product information). If a crisis situation develops, people with radios can quickly call for help.

Well-placed telephones. Every church should provide at least one telephone with an outside line close to its worship area. If an emergency occurs, access to outside help can be critical.

Intercom or paging system. A good intercom or paging system is important for linking childcare workers with parents or health professionals in the congregation, or to keep church leaders informed about what's going on in the church complex. Aiphone offers an intercom and door-release system that begins at about \$200, or comes with videoviewing capabilities, beginning at about \$900. For more information, contact The Keyless Lock Store (877-665- 3926; www.nokey.com).

Call-box system. Another option for connecting security people is an instant call-box system manufactured by Connectivity (877-776-9542; www.connectivityinc.com). These boxes can be installed inside or outside the church complex to provide outside access in an emergency. Each box and portable monitoring unit begins at about \$3,200.

Access cards. For a church office, keycards or magnetic stripe readers can be activated and deactivated at will, and a log or history can be kept of the use of each card. Another option is a proximity system, which requires a person with a special card to pass near a pad that reads the card and unlatches the door for authorized entry.

CCTV. Some criminals have been known to pass up facilities that have closed circuit television (CCTV) systems before choosing to attack one that does not. CCTV cameras can be positioned discreetly throughout the church complex, both inside and out. The Pelco Company (800-289-9100; www.pelco.com), an international manufacturer, provides CCTV systems that begin at \$2,000, depending on the number of cameras and monitors, and whether they are fixed or movable. So does FiberOptions International (800-342-3748).

A unique option in CCTV is also offered by North American Video (877-628-2283; www.cctvsupplies.com). The cameras can be installed in daycare and nursery rooms of a church. Parents can then get online and dial up a camera to check on their children. This company also installs traditional security systems and monitoring devices.

3. Choose wisely

Get bids before you buy any system, Aguiar says. He suggests getting at least three bids from providers such as ADT, Brinks, National Guardian, or other nationally recognized firms. Those providers will link you to a local firm that will tie your system into a larger security system. Ask for multiple references before proceeding with any security company.

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Be sure the company is licensed and insured. And finally, never buy a security system. Since technology changes so rapidly, lease a system so you can update easily when necessary.

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Thought Provokers

- What particular security needs does our church have, considering the size of our congregation and the weekly activities within our building?
- Which of the security options listed sound most useful for our needs? Why?
- What steps do we need to take to further investigate and implement security systems for our church?

FOR THE PASTOR

Educate Your Congregation on Church Security

Sensible ways to welcome strangers without being harmed by them.

by Jeff Hanna

Be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).

As a pastor, I want to provide safe sanctuary for everyone who comes into my church to worship or to participate in its programs.

Start the Process

Getting started may be the hardest part of implementing a security plan. I recommend this approach.

- Assess your situation. Assemble a group of respected, progressive-minded people from your congregation. Ask them how serious they are about helping people feel safe in the church. Encourage them as well as church staff and volunteers to express their thoughts on church security. After gathering this data, honestly evaluate how vulnerable your church and its ministries are to potential attack.
- Appoint a security officer or team. Keep the team small (3-5 members), and train them well. There are several good books and a growing list of resources that can help educate people on church safety. *Safe and Secure: The Alban Guide to Protecting Your Congregation* includes more than 250 suggestions on how to bolster church security. For more information, call the Alban Institute (800-486-1318).

Once your security team is trained, ask its members to come up with a comprehensive plan to protect the congregation. Realize that it may take several years to implement the full plan, but start now.

- Train others. The security team should train church leaders, ushers, volunteers, and members about their role in making church a safe place. Remind people that you are doing this not out of fear, but because you care about them and want to do what it takes to help them feel safe in every part of church. Every church should be a haven from—not invitation to—violence.

Train Church Leaders

Church staff, ushers, and greeters should receive awareness training in security. Though it's important for everyone to focus on worship during a church service, leaders should have a heightened awareness of potential problems.

For example, as greeters reach out to people and shake their hands, they should also be watchful for individuals who seem out of place. Strangers can be greeted, engaged in conversation, and asked if they need help. People with suspicious behavior should be allowed to enter the sanctuary to worship, but they should also be closely watched. Other ushers and leaders should be alerted to the situation so they'll be ready to react if a crisis develops.

These leaders should receive special training in how to respond to a potentially dangerous situation. In addition, the church might appoint a church security team and/or safety officers to stand ready in case of emergency. Security people could be police officers, retired military personnel, or others who have the ability and stamina to respond to an emergency situation.

Train Church Members

Church members should be educated about what they can do to stay safe at church. Have your congregation participate in an occasional emergency drill to show people how to quickly and efficiently exit the building. Distribute leaflets with the following suggestions:

- Lock car doors before coming into church. Store valuables out of sight.
- Keep an eye on purses or other valuables, no matter where you are in church. If you have to leave something in a room, make sure it's locked in a safe place.
- Hold onto car keys. Don't leave them in the pocket of a coat that you hang up in the hallway. If your coat gets taken, you'll still have your keys.
- Identify the exit closest to where you are sitting so you can find it quickly in an emergency.
- Enter and exit the church in groups, especially at night. Yes, there is safety in numbers.

Each congregation must decide what it will do to protect people in its facilities, acknowledging and appreciating that no matter how complete and thoughtful our plans are regarding security and safety, God is in control. Difficulties will arise. Tragedies will happen. That doesn't mean God is any less in control. But if we have done our job and are prepared to respond quickly and faithfully to crisis situations, lives may be saved, people will be less apprehensive, and ministry can proceed with a minimum of interruption.

Jeff Hanna, a former detective, is pastor of a United Methodist church in Gallon, Ohio. He is the founder of Safe Church Resources (www.jeffhanna.org). This article first appeared in the March/April 2000 issue of YOUR CHURCH magazine.

Thought Provokers

- What is the first step you can take toward confronting security issues at your church?
- Who might be helpful on a team to consider your church's security needs?
- How can you begin the process of educating your church leaders and congregation about security issues?

FOR THE PASTOR

The Risk of the Pastorate

Being a visible source of charity and goodwill can make a pastor vulnerable.

O Lord, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people forever (Psalm 12:7).

The Rev. Nancy Jo Copin, pastor of Snow Creek Christian Church in Martinsville, Virginia, was found dead in the church parsonage in April 2007. Police filed a first-degree murder charge against a man who said he entered the house to rob her and then struck her in the face several times when an altercation broke out. The man had visited Copin's church the Sunday before, when the congregation had raised more than \$800 in a church drive.

The Dangers of Doing God's Work

Bonnie Witt, director of church and community ministry with the Henry County Baptist Association and an ordained minister, says that seminaries train pastors to be aware of security issues, but that "doesn't guarantee that we are 100 percent protected. We encounter people from all different walks of life and different situations. Some situations might have a higher percent of risk than others. At the same time, we need to rely on our training, our wisdom, and our common sense. Depending on the situation, we need to structure the situation to set boundaries to provide security."

Since biblical times, ministers have faced risks. The Rev. Lynn Bechdolt, pastor of the 80-member Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Martinsville, Virginia, for more than four years, says the risks can be higher for a minister living in a parsonage. "Everybody in the community knows that's where the pastor lives. When the parsonage is near the church, everybody knows it. When somebody's looking for a spare \$20 or \$30, they're knocking on the door. If you say you can't help, then you're stuck with how angry they are. Often you let them in before you realize that's the case," she said.

Safety Measures

To protect you and your family against an altercation at your home, consider these suggestions:

- If someone comes to your home asking for money, refer the person to your church's goodwill fund or to a local Christian charity. These entities are likely to have an application process to determine legitimate need.
- Install a security system in your home.

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- Do not announce in church how much money is collected in the offering each Sunday. Be careful how you announce your regular offering. You never know who may have questionable motives.

Thought Provokers

- Do you feel that your position as a pastor makes you more vulnerable to physical attack? Why or why not?
- Have suspicious visitors ever come to your home? How did you handle the situation?
- What safety measures could you take to make your home more secure?

IT'S TRUE

An Intruder in the Church

Letting volunteers in; keeping vagrants out.

Protect my life from the threat of the enemy (Psalm 64:1).

Becky, a Christian educator from a small town in the Midwest, went to the church to prepare for an evening meeting. With the church door locked, she began her work. On her second trip to the basement church kitchen for supplies, a large, shadowy figure confronted her. Becky flipped on the light switch and was shocked to see a barefoot man standing before her.

“What are you doing here?” she asked, trying to hide her growing panic.

Instead of answering, the intruder started walking toward her. Becky tried one more time to talk to him and, when he continued his silent advance, she reached for the phone, which was just inches from where she stood.

Not knowing how he would react if she called the police, Becky called the minister's home across the street (no answer) and then called her home. She asked her family to find the pastor—there was an emergency at the church. Her family, sensing the tension in her voice, called the police station instead.

While Becky stood waiting, she prayed. The man turned quietly and slipped into the darker areas of the basement. She fled to the upper level and locked herself in the church office until the police arrived. Her unwelcome visitor—a mental patient from an institution a few miles away—was found shortly thereafter.

Becky learned several valuable lessons from her experience. Apparently, the intruder had explored the church earlier that day. Exiting through a rarely used basement exit, he left the door ajar to regain access. What Becky learned that day serves to remind us that all churches must be proactive if they want to keep their members and property safe.

Security Checklist

Here are some standard methods used successfully to increase church security:

- Keep entries and parking areas well lit.
- Install locks on windows as well as doors.
- Install locks on entry gates.
- Limit the number of church keys.

- Check out keys through the main office.
- Perform government background checks on new volunteers and employees.

Trends in Security

Several new solutions are gaining use in churches around the country. These include:

Installing doorbells or buzzers. With a doorbell at the most common entrance for volunteers entering the building after office hours, the door can remain locked but church members without keys can still gain access. Of course, someone must open the door to see who is waiting outside. Recommended: Install peep holes or small windows in the door so a visual check can be made before opening the door.

Installing mirrors. A simple mirror can be a useful tool if it's strategically placed to reveal hidden areas of the building. Example: A mirror located near the ceiling can permit a person in a corner office to see around a corner and down a hall. The mirror can minimize surprises by an intruder and possibly buy time to summon help. In some cases, a mirror—like security lighting—may discourage intruders from entering the area.

Equipping staff with electronic pagers. Pagers are often used by churches to communicate with parents if they are needed in the nursery. But pagers are also a good way for a staff member or volunteer to call for help when away from the church office. This assumes that there will be others in the building who can respond to the call and come to the aid of the person needing help.

Establishing building zones. By mapping out each area of the church for a particular purpose, you can reduce the possibility of entrance by unauthorized individuals. Zones for office personnel or daycare activities, for example, would be off-limits to most people in the building. If someone enters an area restricted to him or her, it's the signal of a potential problem. If those in charge of the area or the church staff cannot correct the situation, the police may have to be summoned.

Educating staff and volunteers. Your church members may already be familiar with a neighborhood watch program. If so, they'll be receptive to the idea of members keeping other members safe through new church policies. Suggestion: Ask a local police officer to visit a church board meeting to offer advice. Once you've developed a plan for safety and security measures, instruct your staff and key leaders on how to handle emergency situations. This may cause anxiety for some church members at first, but it's worth the risk to insure their safety.

Installing a closed-circuit surveillance camera. Reasonably priced closed-circuit television can be designed to monitor all entrances into the building around the clock. Such a system makes it possible for the church staff to tend to their daily routine while

at the same time keeping an eye on monitors that show other parts of the building. Closed-circuit TV is also helpful at night when no staff personnel are around. Just the threat of recording an incident on tape can discourage break-ins or vandalism.

Installing an electronic security system. Numerous options and levels of security systems are available—alarms can signal break-ins, vandalism, and fire. Some devices limit access to the building except by entering code numbers. If the alarm is tripped accidentally, security companies may first call rather than respond immediately. Be sure the security company you choose will work with you and take the actions you ask for—including responding immediately without a preliminary call if you want.

There are thousands of security firms in the United States offering unlimited electronic security options. How do you choose an electronic security system? A good place to start is the Security Network of America (800-786-3260) or the American Society for Industrial Security (703-519-6200). The SNA can provide information about top regional alarm companies. The ASIS has a list of approximately 26,000 security companies across the nation.

Tip: Look for security companies that follow the UL (Underwriter's Laboratories) safety guidelines.

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Thought Provokers

- Review the security checklist above. Does your church have all of these security measures in place? If not, make a plan to implement them.
- Which of the security trends do you think would be most effective? Why?
- Where is your church most vulnerable in terms of security? What actions can you take to deal with any weak areas?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Resource Center

Quick tips and recommended resources.

Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Tips for Using Articles

Consider these options for the use of articles and information in this download:

- Pass the “Is Your Church Secure?” assessment around at your next board meeting and have a 15-minute discussion.
- After reading through an article, choose questions to pose at a scheduled meeting and discuss them together.
- Determine what areas your church will need to pay extra attention to in the area of church security and discuss your plans to do this.
- Using the Bible verses found at the beginning of the articles, lead a devotional discussion at a staff meeting on the topic of church safety.
- Using the “Thought Provoker” questions, lead a discussion for church leaders.

Web Resources

- ReducingtheRisk.com
- BuildingChurchLeaders.com, “Church Safety 101”
- [Church Law Today](http://www.churchlawtoday.com): www.churchlawtoday.com, “Protecting Church Property Against Theft, Vandalism, and Arson”
- [Church Law Today Store](http://store.churchlawtodaystore.com): http://store.churchlawtodaystore.com
- [Microframe Corp. paging systems](http://www.microframecorp.com): www.microframecorp.com
- [Security Pro safety and security resources](http://www.securitypro.com): www.securitypro.com
- [Vector Security](http://www.vectorsecurity.com): www.vectorsecurity.com
- [The Keyless Lock Store](http://www.nokey.com): www.nokey.com
- [The Pelco Company video security](http://www.pelco.com): www.pelco.com

Protecting Your Church from Crime and Violence

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- **Security Network of America:** www.securitynetworkofamerica.com
- **American Society for Industrial Security:** www.asisonline.org Books, Kits, and Other Resources
- **Church Law Special Reports:** Quick and easy updates on the critical issues that continually concern the church.
- **Inspection and Safety Checklists:** 12 modules for assessing and improving facilities, and safeguarding activities.
- **Risk Management Assessment Pack** from Christianity Today International.
- **Risk Management Handbook for Churches and Schools** by James F. Cobble, Jr., and Richard R. Hammar.
- **Pastor, Church & Law** by Richard Hammar. The most comprehensive and practical legal reference book ever published for churches and clergy.
- **Reducing the Risk 3 Resource Kit:** This completely revised Resource Kit includes the Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church reference book, training manual, and DVD set with six video presentations.
- **Additional Risk Management and Safety resources** from Christianity Today International.

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