

YOU WERE CALLED TO BE AMBASSADORS OF PEACE & SAFETY.

7 CRITICAL ESSENTIALS FOR CHURCH SECURITY

September 6, 2011 – A shooting at the IHOP in Carson City, Nevada left 4 dead and 3 wounded.

As many churches do in such cases, the Lifepoint Church in nearby Minden, Nevada held special services for the community to address the grief and tragedy. Minden is a small, close-knit community, but during this special service, while a teacher conducted an outdoor class for children, a man approached and grabbed a 10-year old boy, fleeing with him around the building. Children's Ministry Security Team members were alerted and gave chase. The man was preparing to sexually assault the boy but they were able to wrestle him free. The suspect ran to a car and fled the scene. The security team followed and, using cell phones, were able to apprise the police of the suspect's location. He was apprehended and charged with several crimes.

Later, while interviewing the Children's Pastor, the local news filmed the church's check-in stations, and was impressed with the steps the church takes to keep its children safe and secure. "Fellowship One is a wonderful, effective product that makes security highly visible but still user friendly," says Tammy Thayer, Lifepoint's Communications Director.

"Creating a safe and secure culture here is part of what led to the heroic efforts on the part of our Children's Ministry team. While our team is well-trained on security procedures—which clearly work—Check-In is a big part of that culture. This incident goes to show that a predator will look for every opportunity, but by using Check-In, we've closed the door to most of the opportunities a predator would look for."

The Rise of Violent Crime = A Church Problem

Once upon a time, the lack of peace and safety church leaders worried about mostly happened somewhere else; occasionally in homes, often on the street, and mostly on the other side of the world. Now, the rise in deadly shootings and other crimes has disproportionately visited churches, driving the leaders of many houses of God to increase their preparedness for the unthinkable. Thankfully, the ranks of those who say "It couldn't happen here" have begun to shrink. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 declares that it is when "peace and safety" are being proclaimed that sudden calamity brings destruction. In the wake of the recent shooting spree at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut on December 16, 2012, we hope that all churches, schools and even corporate entities are entering into the conversation about proactive, preventative protection of those in their care. In the 21st century, peace and safety have evolved from a normal state of affairs to a call to action.

So Much More Than a Gun Issue

While the likelihood of a deadly shooting at a church has increased dramatically in the last ten years, there are many other types of threats to church-goers, and especially children, that are more likely and, often, more preventable, including physical or sexual abuse, kidnapping, and theft of property or private information. Churches cannot afford to ignore this reality.

We understand why this is a difficult topic for churches:

- + Leaders want to preserve a peaceful atmosphere, and overt security measures would threaten this goal
- + The gap between faith and action can be infused with fear, and the balancing act between the two is often a source of great personal and corporate tension
- + An undesired and uncomfortable debate on the use of deadly force in the protection of church-goers is likely to occur

Please do not let these challenges keep you from examining the risks, solutions and true stories of churches confronted with crimes of all types. Each church must decide for itself what steps to take, but we want to empower those decisions with vital information.

"We prayed to our God and posted a guard." – Nehemiah 4:9

WHAT'S YOUR ACTIVE?

"If you knew or should have known that a person had the potential and/or history of harming children, you may be liable. Beyond that man-made legal mandate is the far more important God-given order to look after those little ones with sincerity."

Carl Chinn, *Curator of the largest database of church-related crime*

We recommend five basic steps for every children's program:

- + Sexual abuse awareness training
- + Screening training for early identification
- + Complete background checks
- + Tailored policies and procedures for each ministry of the church
- + Effective monitoring and oversight of all ministry programs

Kim Norris, *Norris & Love Attorneys at Law*

Establishing Partnerships

Churches don't have to figure out a successful church security strategy by themselves! There is a network of reputable companies that specializes in such products and services as secure background checks, well-designed database and identification technology, courses in intruder awareness and response, and security team training and best practices. Partnerships with these companies can allow churches to maintain their "open-door" policies!

ACTIVE Network, Fellowship One has been passionate about security for adults and children, financial transactions, and data and information privacy since 2004. We've lead the industry in innovation, surpassing minimum compliance standards, and education of safety policies and procedures.

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Committed to Resourcing the Church with Excellence

Created by the Dynamic Church Team:

Gina Calvert & Katie Moon – Dallas, Texas

We have interviewed a variety of experts on church security in order to better equip church leaders with the information, statistics and action plans necessary to protect their congregants. As a result, we have identified seven critical areas for security in today's churches:

1. Background Checks

Chris Wilson, president of Clear Investigative Advantage (CIA) says most churches limit searches to specific departments and often use free, online searches, which are not thorough enough. Not all background checks are created equally! Less than 40% of churches run complete background checks through experienced firms.

2. Check-in System

A secure check-in system for children & events heads off many issues, especially with policies that ensure child-pick up occurs only with a matching tag. Fellowship One Church Management Software increases security by embedding into its tags randomly generated codes that cannot be duplicated. A good check-in system allows administrators to know exactly where every child is at any given time.

3. Aggressive Friendliness

Chuck Chadwick, president of Gatekeepers Security Services and founder of the National Organization of Church Security and Safety Management, advocates training key people—often members of a security team—in de-escalation techniques aimed at gently confronting suspicious or hostile individuals in a non-threatening way.

4. Emergency Action Plan

There are many types of emergencies: medical issues, power outage, bomb threat, fire, or intruders. "Most churches wait for something to happen," says Jeff Kowell, Director of Life Safety at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where a shooting claimed the life of two teenagers in 2007. It is critical to have a plan for different scenarios before something tragic happens.

5. Triage Teams

By creating small volunteer teams of doctors, nurses and paramedics, every church can help with minor incidents and provide critical triage care prior to the arrival of paramedics, fire or police. Kowell warns that churches can be liable if something goes wrong, so it's important to have clearly defined policies in place.

6. Emergency Response Team (ERT) Kits

ERT kits should include large, reflective vests, powerful flashlights, additional emergency radios, and building maps. By placing emergency response team kits at strategic locations around the campus, distribution is made easier in the midst of an emergency. New Life Church also keeps a stash of "Go Bags" for children (water, space blankets, snacks) in the event of an evacuation.

7. Communications

"Simple two-way radios are the most effective way to share information and coordinate people during emergencies," says Chadwick. "They're better than cell phones that depend on coverage and up-to-date numbers." The emergency response teams should have a clear command structure, knowing who will be responsible for communicating with teams throughout the facility. In large churches, it is important to have specific "zones" identified so that each team knows the specific evacuation plans or, in certain situations, lock-down protocols to keep people safe.

ACTIVE Network, Fellowship One wants to make the church world safer. How can we help you join the church security conversation?

SHARE:     

WHAT'S YOUR ACTIVE?