

Protecting Your Church from Crime and Violence



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The tragedy that took place at the FirstBaptistChurch in Maryville, Ill on March 8, 2009 reminds us that gun violence, though infrequent, remains a reality churches must be prepared to face. While there is little that can be done to predict and prevent the actions of a determined gunman, there are some practical steps all churches can take to ensure that they know how to respond in the event of the unthinkable.

To help all of the churches around the country who are facing the fear and uncertainty of the possibility of violence in their ministries, Christianity Today International is providing a free copy of *Protecting Your Church from Crime and Violence* download from ChurchSafety.com. Follow this [link](#) to download your free copy.

For additional information, visit www.YourChurch.net for a free article, "Shooter in the Church." Also, the March/April edition of *Your Church* magazine focuses on "Drawing the Line on Danger: What to do When Someone Scary Enters Your Church." This pertinent content is available anytime in the free digital edition of *Your Church* magazine at www.YourChurch.net.

Further Steps That Be Taken To Provide Security

What can the church do to mitigate the risk of such attacks on any given Sunday? Following are steps every church can take immediately to lessen the likelihood of an attack.

1. Assess your church's areas of security vulnerability.

A simple and thorough assessment of risk can be conducted in a matter of a couple of days. We suggest churches use a third-party for this assessment. There are firms that provide these assessments to churches. If the expense of such an assessment is prohibitive, local law enforcement agencies can be a great resource to assist the church with identifying areas of security compromise.

2. Develop a volunteer safety and security team.

This can be as simple as two church members willing to walk the church premises with a cell phone who are prepared to call 911 if they see suspicious activity. In churches I work with, there are security teams approaching 100 volunteers. Many of these volunteers work in emergency services and some are law enforcement. Many of these law enforcement carry their weapons while off duty attending church. Designated team members may carry manual restraints, less lethal weapons and two-way radios. Security team members should be trained in threat assessment and pastoral protection (commonly referred to as dignitary protection). They should be CPR, first aide, and AED trained and ready to respond to any incident. Whatever your church's size or resources, a volunteer security team is a must.

3. Provide your key staff and volunteers with the knowledge of what to look for in a threat.

How do you know what to look for? Is every threat wearing a trench coat? Does a threat always convey its intentions? These are a few of the questions we answer in Threat Assessment training, along with, how to identify what are referred to as pre-incident indicators, or those little cues that ultimately when all put together, add up to a threat. The Secret Service has used threat assessment for years. The FBI is employing threat assessment in counter-terrorism, and in the last decade local law enforcement, schools, and corporations across America have begun using threat assessment actively. Church Security Solutions, LLC. (CSS) has nationally recognized threat assessment experts that train church staff and volunteers in how to identify a threat before it becomes a tragedy.

Our faith, our church and our nation's bedrock have been violated by the shooting in Maryville, Illinois this past Sunday. The church must take a proactive posture on security to prevent the evil we witnessed this last weekend.

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