

Church Safety Team



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Strategic Plan

- I. **Purpose:** This strategic plan outlines the efforts of First Baptist Church Morehead City (FBC-MHC) leadership to facilitate the safety and security of church members, staff and guests during regularly scheduled services.

- II. **Safety Team:** FBC-MHC leadership will recruit, train and maintain a volunteer safety team coordinator, individual team leaders and team members to assist the church leadership in implementing this Strategic Plan for Safety:
 - A. **Recruit:** The safety team will be comprised of volunteers from the church membership, obtained via referral from FBC-MHC leadership, current team members or following solicitation via the church bulletin. Specifically needed are members with maturity, knowledge of church operations /membership and those with experience planning, providing or overseeing safety and security services.

 - B. **Train:** Training for Safety Team members will be accomplished through an initial orientation session, quarterly safety team meetings and knowledge sharing among team members.

 - C. **Maintain:** The Safety Team Coordinator will facilitate discussions at least quarterly to identify and capture best practices, lessons learned and to address team member concerns.

- III. **Risk Assessment:** FBC-MHC leadership, in coordination with the Safety Team, will evaluate safety and security risks at least once annually to determine the areas and activities that present the highest risk. Risk should be re-assessed prior to all significant modifications of the facilities, internal/external security measures or operations. For the purposes of this section, risk is comprised of three components: 1) Safety/security threats, 2) Vulnerabilities and 3) Consequences.

- IV. **Safety Plan:** FBC-MHC will maintain a Safety Plan that identifies the following:
 - A. The roles and responsibilities of leadership, the safety team and the congregation in maximizing safety.

 - B. Safety and Security Risks

 - C. Protection measures to mitigate risks

- V. **Outreach:** FBC-MHC leadership will periodically disseminate pamphlets and may provide information sessions to the congregation to promote safety and security preparedness.

At a minimum, the Safety Team Coordinator will engage with the Morehead City Fire and Police Departments during the annual risk assessment and safety plan review to identify new threats, familiarize first responders with any new changes at FBC-MHC and to identify any real or perceived gaps in safety or security measures provided by the City.

Procedures for Safety Team

The Lord has called us to serve the members of First Baptist Church in a broken and fallen world with grace and humility. We accept and encourage broken people to come and hear the Gospel message. The Safety and Security Team is a ministry called to be servants first and to protect when called upon.

There are several levels of safety and security needed to protect those who come to our campus. They may be as minimal as asking someone to refrain from coming on campus to responding to someone meaning to do great harm to those on campus.

These procedures are a guideline to handle many of these incidents as possible, with the goal of continuing to enable open ministry that is effective.

The Safety Team will initially be responsible for Sunday morning services and Wednesday night activities. The team is asked to:

- Provide a first line of defense in all at-risk situations such as civil disobedience and disruptive behavior of individuals (including those with weapons).
- Assist with evacuation plans if necessary.
- Assist with medical emergencies if necessary.

Procedures for Sunday Morning

- Team members should arrive and be ready to serve at 7:45am.
 - One in the Welcome Area & Monitoring Cameras
 - One in the Family Life Center
 - One Walking Around Facilities (exterior & interior)
- Be sure to have your radio and ear phones.
- Lock doors in the FLC, Breezeway, and Nursery entrance at 11am.
- Remain on campus until everyone has left the building.

Duties include:

- Greeting all people as they arrive on campus.
- Monitoring the interior and exterior of buildings.
- Monitoring for people who appear to be distraught.
- Approaching and politely questioning needs/wants.
- Determine if there is a potential threat.
- Alerting Pastor / Associate Pastor if a suspected emergency arises and considering/recommending the action plan needed to correct the issue.
 - Lockdown of building
 - Evacuation of building
 - Contacting police / 911 Response

Safety Team Policy

Our role is to keep our people as safe as possible in the event of fire, bad weather, tornado, personal illness and yes, an active shooter. We are not asking anyone to bring a weapon, but at the same time we are not putting up signs that guns are prohibited. With that said, if you have concealed carry permit it is your right to carry as you feel necessary. Just remember to ensure that it is concealed.

Safety Team Members

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Safety Team Members on Standby		
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Ronald Stone	rstone@friendlymedicaltransport.com	252.422.2300
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Fire

- Call 911 immediately and send someone out to direct the responders.
- Notify the Pastor/Associate Pastor.
- If possible extinguish the fire with one of the fire extinguishers located throughout the facility.
- Instruct congregation to exit the building in an orderly manner at the closest and safest exit door.
- After you are out of the building move a safe distance from the buildings (Freeman Parking Lot, Methodist Parking Lot, Martha's Mission or Wells Fargo lot.



Safety Plan



Serious Injury or Illness

Check—Call—Care

- Check the scene and the person. Keep everyone calm and away from injured person.
- Call 911 if in doubt or if you think there is a life-threatening condition. Send someone out to direct the EMS.
- Care for the person and render aid if able.
- Defibrillators are located in the Gathering Area, 2nd Floor of Education Building and the in the serving area of the Family Life Center.



Weather

- In case of tornado go to the 1st floor halls and/or bathroom.



Why a Safety Plan

Over the years we have seen a number of violent incidents take place inside church buildings. Unfortunately, churches are no longer immune to violence and are susceptible to many acts of crime because we are open to the public. There are many types of violent acts that can be carried out, however, the most common violent act is a shooting.

In this brochure you will find some basic guidelines and procedures for the church to follow in the event an emergency situation would occur.



Active Shooter/Intruder

- Member of Safety Team will notify 911.
- Member of Safety Team will notify those who are in other parts of the building.
- Escape the danger area if possible.
- If not able to escape hide under pews, tables, desk, in rooms and secure doors.
- Move away from doors and windows.
- Keep everyone quiet.
- Turn off lights and sources of noise.
- Secure doors if possible in all class rooms.
- As a last resort and only if your life or lives around you are in imminent danger, fight. Use chairs, heavy objects or improvise a weapon to attack the shooter. Don't make it easy for the attacker.

Bomb Threat

- Ask appropriate questions while caller is on the phone.
 - Location of bomb?
 - When will it go off?
 - What kind of bomb is it?
 - What does it look like?
 - Why are you doing this?
 - What is your name?
- Do not hang up, even if the caller does.
- Note the exact time of call as well as which phone and line you received it on.
- Record all information given by caller.
- Call 911 from a different line.
- Advise everyone to not use cell phones in the building.
- Have everyone in the building to exit and leave all bags inside.



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.***

•**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, busy with greeting, conversing and handing out materials. In either case, you may not be able to contact every guest.

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. Your actions can have an impact on the reputation and welfare of the entire church. When in doubt, get another opinion and assistance, unless the matter is an emergency.

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. This protects you, may prevent a violent action, and provides a witness about anything that occurs. 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 you should 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.**

Ministry Evacuation Plan

DEFINITIONS

- Evacuation: The orderly movement of persons in a building to a different location, inside another building, or outside, if the destination is safer than the original location.
- Shelter in Place/Lockdown: Containing people in secure areas until released when a dangerous situation is occurring inside the building, outside the building, or at a nearby location.
- Triage: To pick and sort, the process by trained persons in sorting victims into groups based on injury and survivability given limited resources.
- Reunification: The orderly process of helping adult family and friends meet up following a disaster. An orderly and documented process of allowing parents and/or guardians (with identification) to sign for and pick up their minor child from a secured area.

ASSUMPTIONS

- An event that affects more than one building catastrophically is not likely to be accidental in origin.
- Evacuated people should not be directed to cross public roads or a train track.
- Evacuated people should not be moving through or congregating in areas downwind of a perceived hazard.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

IDENTIFICATION OF HAZARD

PUBLIC SAFETY NOTIFICATION

DECISION TO EVACUATE

While a worship service is in progress, the pastor will announce to the congregation the need to evacuate. A member of the Safety Team will convey the message to the nursery and other classrooms.

Convey the sense of urgency but keep people calm. The message should include the words: situation, walk, calmly, etc. Avoid words like: emergency, danger, and run.

EVACUATION RESPONSIBILITIES

Pastor/Associate Pastor

- Give the evacuation message
- Set the tone for calm, orderly, professional reactions
- Give the “all clear” after scene is released by fire department and building is checked.

Ushers/Greeters/Security Team

- Direct attendees to appropriate exits
- Portray calm professional behavior. Use words like “walk please” vs. “don’t run.” People will clue in on the word “run”.
- Determine if any people need assistance in moving to evacuation area and designate someone to help them.
- Identify people with medical needs.
- Check areas of responsibility after evacuation to find victims or stragglers.
- Do not allow anyone to enter after they have evacuated until the “all clear” is given.
- Report to fire/police, safety team, and pastor the report of any missing persons and their last known location.

Safety Team

- Activate or reset alarm as needed (if applicable).
- When safe, perform a preliminary damage assessment if necessary.

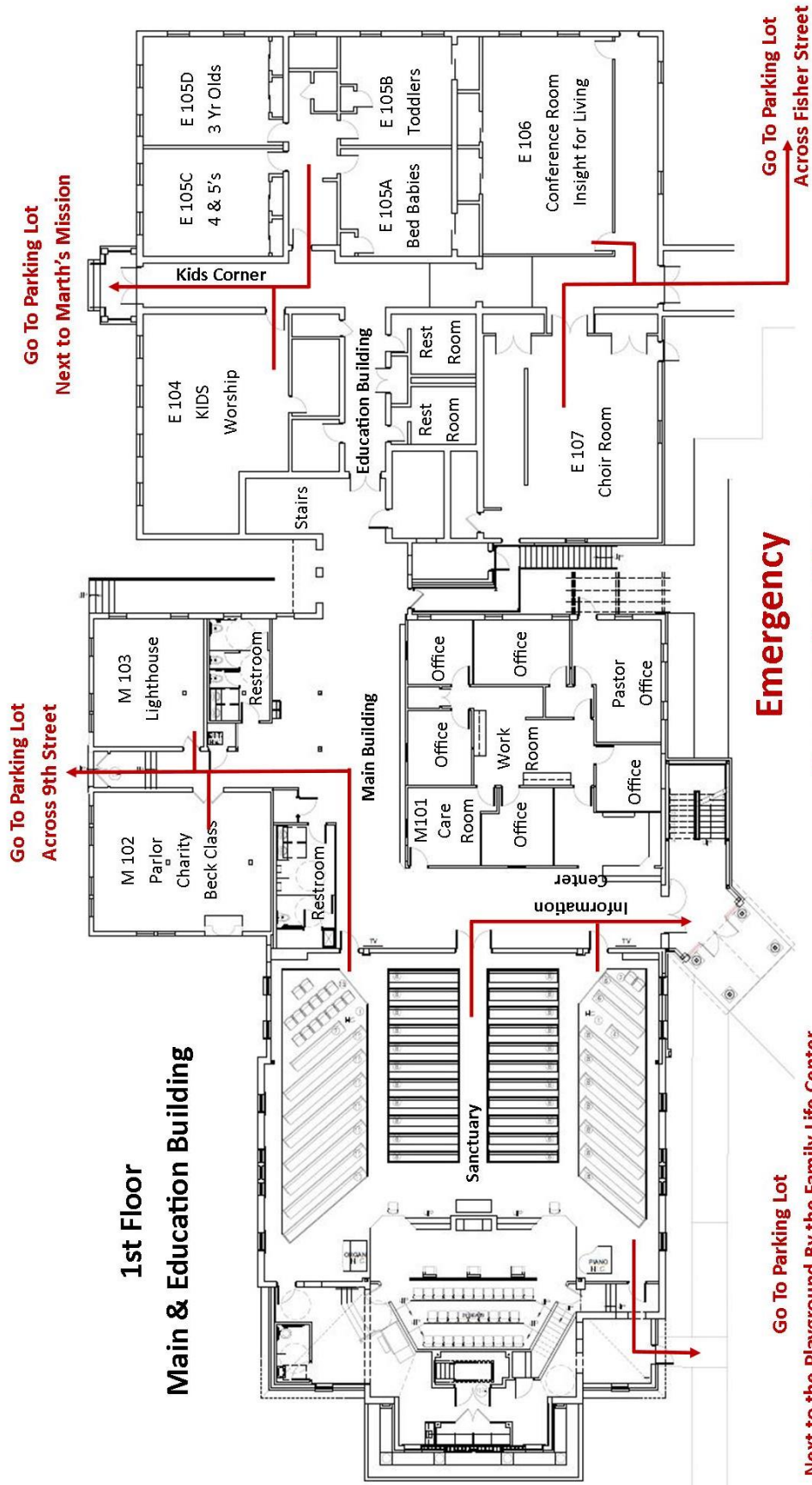
Sunday School Teachers / Volunteers

- Portray a sense of calm, smile, and encourage children.
- Have children hold hands and lead to evacuation area.
- Help those with special needs.
- Check room for hiding children.
- Turn off lights and close door when room is confirmed empty.
- Keep your children together.
- Document the time and person picking up a child. Turn documentation in to Associate Pastor.
- Consider having children to sing to keep them busy. Reassure them of the sights and sounds they may experience.
- At the evacuation zone, determine if anyone needs medical attention. Report to the Safety Team to send first aid until ambulances arrive.
- Stay with children until all are accounted for.

EVACUATION AREAS (refer to Evacuation map)

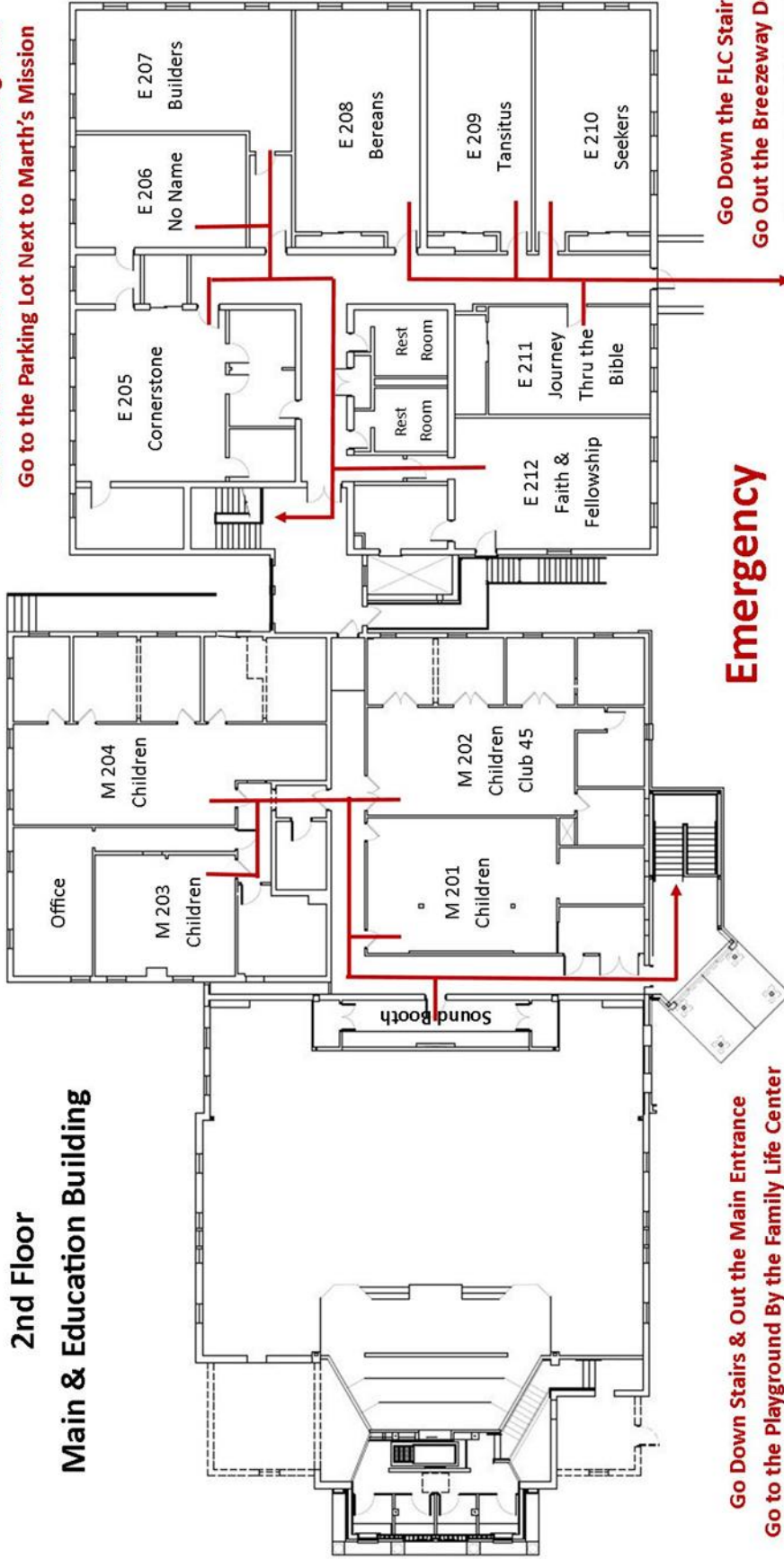
- Freeman Parking Lot Behind the Church Cross Fisher Street
- Martha’s Mission Parking Lot
- First United Methodist Church Parking Lot Cross 9th Street
- Playground Area by the Family Life Center

1st Floor Main & Education Building



Emergency Evacuation Route

Go To Parking Lot
Next to the Playground By the Family Life Center



**2nd Floor
Main & Education Building**

**Emergency
Evacuation Route**

Go Down Stairs

Go Out the Closest Door in the Gathering Place
Go to the Parking Lot Next to Marth's Mission

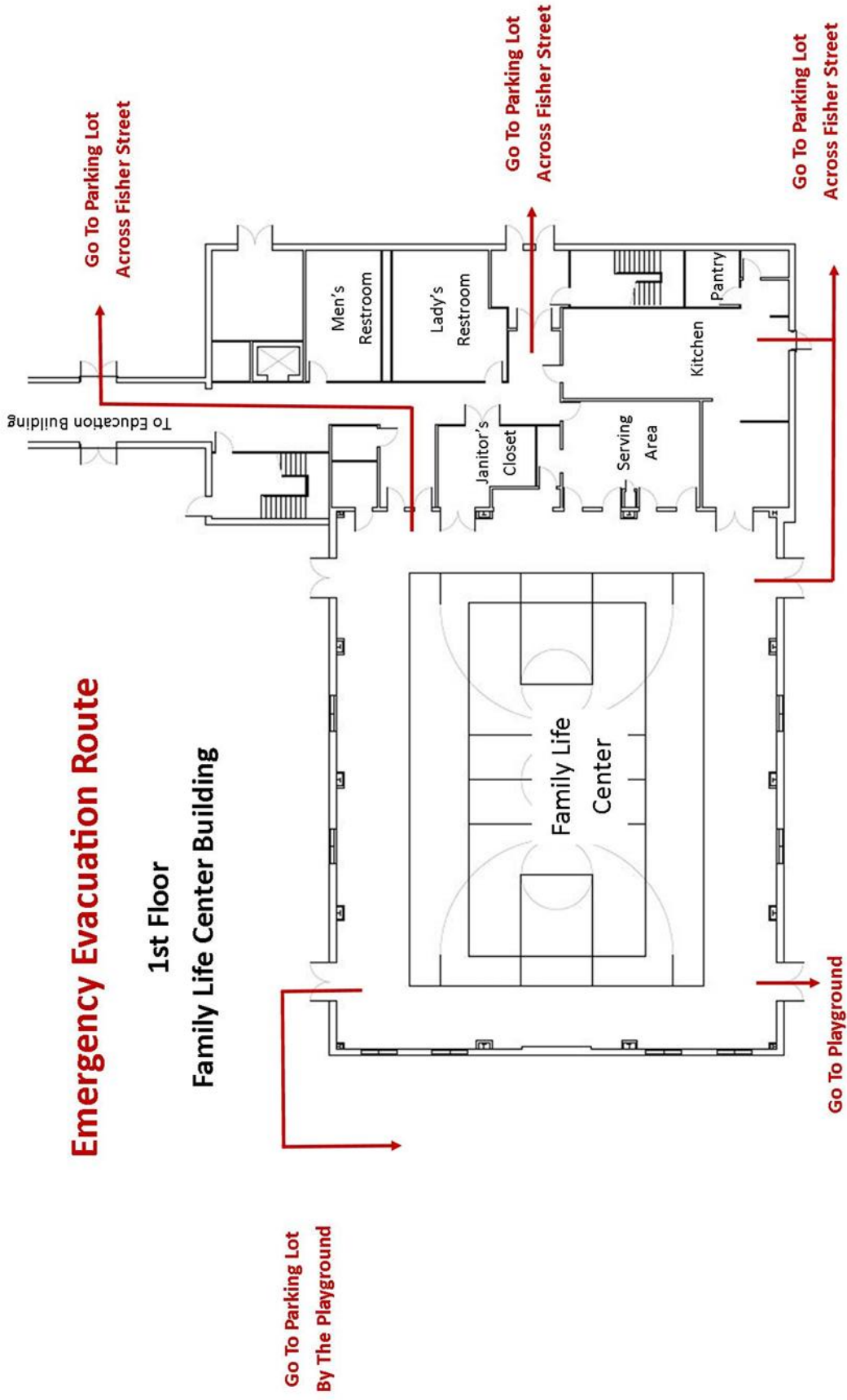
Go Down the FLC Stairs
Go Out the Breezeway Door
Go to the Parking Lot
Across Fisher Street

Go Down Stairs & Out the Main Entrance
Go to the Playground By the Family Life Center

Emergency Evacuation Route

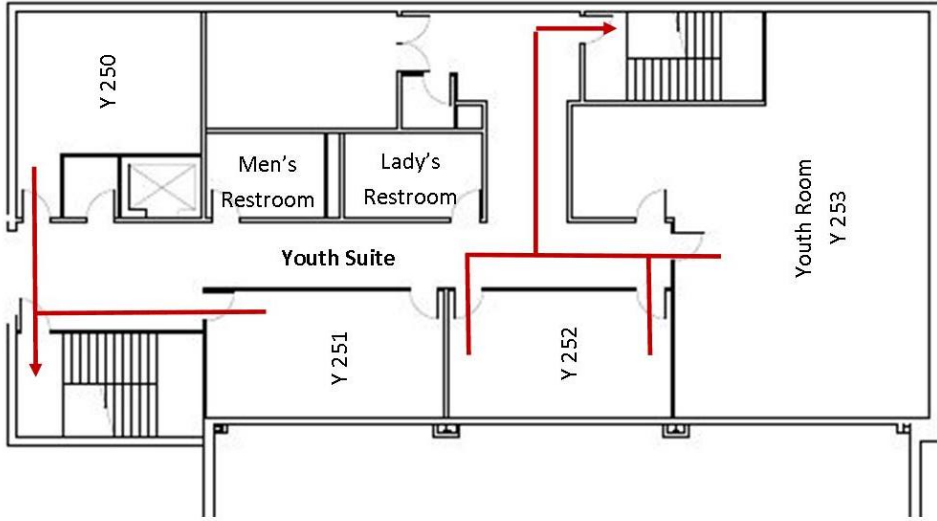
1st Floor

Family Life Center Building



**1st Floor
Family Life Center Building**

**Emergency
Evacuation Route**



- Go Down the FLC Stairs & Out the Back Door
- Go to the Parking Lot Across Fisher Street

BOMB THREAT CALL PROCEDURES

Most bomb threats are received by phone. Bomb threats are serious until proven otherwise. Act quickly, but remain calm and obtain information with the checklist on the reverse of this card.

If a bomb threat is received by phone:

1. Remain calm. Keep the caller on the line for as long as possible. DO NOT HANG UP, even if the caller does.
2. Listen carefully. Be polite and show interest.
3. Try to keep the caller talking to learn more information.
4. If possible, write a note to a colleague to call the authorities or, as soon as the caller hangs up, immediately notify them yourself.
5. If your phone has a display, copy the number and/or letters on the window display.
6. Complete the Bomb Threat Checklist (reverse side) immediately. Write down as much detail as you can remember. Try to get exact words.
7. Immediately upon termination of the call, do not hang up, but from a different phone, contact FPS immediately with information and await instructions.

If a bomb threat is received by handwritten note:

- Call _____
- Handle note as minimally as possible.

If a bomb threat is received by e-mail:

- Call _____
- Do not delete the message.

Signs of a suspicious package:

- No return address
- Excessive postage
- Stains
- Strange odor
- Strange sounds
- Unexpected Delivery
- Poorly handwritten
- Misspelled Words
- Incorrect Titles
- Foreign Postage
- Restrictive Notes

DO NOT:

- Use two-way radios or cellular phone; radio signals have the potential to detonate a bomb.
- Evacuate the building until police arrive and evaluate the threat.
- Activate the fire alarm.
- Touch or move a suspicious package.

WHO TO CONTACT (select one)

- Follow your local guidelines
- Federal Protective Service (FPS) Police
1-877-4-FPS-411 (1-877-437-7411)
- 911

BOMB THREAT CHECKLIST

Date: Time:

Time Caller Hung Up: Phone Number where Call Received:

Ask Caller:

- Where is the bomb located?
(Building, Floor, Room, etc.) _____
- When will it go off? _____
- What does it look like? _____
- What kind of bomb is it? _____
- What will make it explode? _____
- Did you place the bomb? Yes No _____
- Why? _____
- What is your name? _____

Exact Words of Threat:

Information About Caller:

- Where is the caller located? (Background and level of noise) _____
- Estimated age: _____
- Is voice familiar? If so, who does it sound like? _____
- Other points: _____

Caller's Voice Background Sounds: Threat Language:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accent | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> House Noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Message rec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen Noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Taped |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clearing throat | <input type="checkbox"/> Street Noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coughing | <input type="checkbox"/> Booth | <input type="checkbox"/> Profane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking voice | <input type="checkbox"/> PA system | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-spoken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying | <input type="checkbox"/> Conversation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinct | <input type="checkbox"/> Static | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excited | <input type="checkbox"/> Office machinery | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Factory machinery | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Local | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lisp | <input type="checkbox"/> Long distance | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nasal | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Normal | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ragged | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Raspy | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slow | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shifter | | |



Homeland Security

Protect Your Congregation From a Gunman

A police officer's advice on how leaders can reduce risk—and possibly save lives.

By: Andrew G. Mills

What can leaders do to protect their people from an active shooter? No precaution is guaranteed to prevent tragedy, but based on my 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, but 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 coined 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.
- **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.

How to 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, and to be the spiritual leaders who pray regularly for the safety of your church and its members.

Andrew G. Mills is chief of police at Santa Cruz Police Department (California).

Carteret County Sheriff's Office

**Security and Safety Planning Guide for
Businesses and Places of Worship**

Sheriff Asa Buck



Compiled by:
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These materials were prepared in part by referencing suggestions contained in the Place of Worship Security and Safety Guide, produced by the North Carolina Sheriff's Association.

INTRODUCTION

Place of worship and workplace violence can happen anywhere and at any time. No one or place is immune from the devastating effects of these violence acts. A person stands a much better chance of surviving an attack if they have an understanding of what's happening and make advanced plans for when it happens. It is hoped that this informational and training outline will better equip your place of Worship or business to survive these acts of violence if they ever occurs.

The information presented in this handout is laid out in three broad planning steps of:

- **PREVENTION**
- **DURING THE INCIDENT**
- **THE INCIDENT AFTERMATH**

This material is designed to be used as part of the community outreach of the Carteret County Sheriff's Office in regards to planning for an active shooter and workplace violence incident that may occur at your place of worship or business. In addition, this security outline can be used to identify and mitigate other security issues you may have.

Each planning step will contain several modules. When you finish working through the modules of that planning step you can set it aside and start on the next one. When you have completed all of the planning steps, and when you combine them, you will have written your basic security plan for you church or business.

The Carteret County Sheriff's Office stands ready and willing to assist you, and your team in planning for incidents such as these. At your request we can work with you and advise you while you're completing your security plan. However you must also consult experts knowledgeable about your particular security needs, such as insurance companies and professional security trainers before implementing your security plan. These materials are a basic guideline for security planning and you should expand on these materials as necessary to develop a security plan tailored to your particular needs.

Planning Steps

Planning Step One: **PREVENTION**

Planning Step Two: **DURING THE INCIDENT**

Planning Step Three: **INCIDENT AFTERMATH**

PREVENTION

Before you can effectively attempt to prevent something you have to know what it is you're trying to prevent. In this case it is an active shooter or other workplace violence within your place of worship or business.

A few statistics are in order to better understand how to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents such as these.

The FBI identifies an active shooter as an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area with a firearm.

Between 2000 and 2013 the FBI identified 160 active shooter incidents. They found that on average 11.4 incidents occurred annually, and incidents occurred in 40 of the 50 states. 70% happened in commerce (businesses), 46% happened on educational property, 3.8% happened at places of worship. In 69% of the incidents they ended in five minutes or less.

In Addition, the FBI reports that between 2014 and 2015 40 incidents in occurred in 26 states, there were 231 casualties: 92 killed, 139 wounded (excluding the shooter).

- 4 law enforcement officers were killed and 10 wounded in 6 incidents.
- 3 unarmed security guards were wounded.
- 6 incidents ended when citizens acted to end the threat.
- 26 incidents ended with law enforcement at the scene.
- 14 incidents ended with an exchange of gunfire between the 16 shooters and law enforcement.
- Of the 44 shooters 39 were male and 3 were female, 2 were husband and wife teams.
- 16 shooters committed suicide and 14 were killed by law enforcement.
- 12 shooters were apprehended.

Active shooters and work place violence can happen anywhere and at any time. The better you understand what they are and how to prepare for them the greater chance you have to prepare for, respond to, and recover from these types of events.

The first planning step is **PLANNING & PREVENTION**.

A complete plan must start with looking at how to prevent or mitigate an incident and this starts with planning and organizing a response the event.

PLANNING AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MODULE

A Planning and Oversight Committee should be formed to provide a forum and vehicle for developing and implementing a plan for preventing and mitigating an incident. This committee should continually refine the plan, and planning process to keep it up to-date. This committee should provide on-going oversight to address all of the unique safety needs of your place of worship or business before, during, and after a critical event.

Who should be on the Planning and Oversight Committee?

The committee should be comprised of the key personnel and other stakeholders in your place of worship or business, who in turn should consult with appropriate stakeholders.

Who:

- Appropriate Managers or Department Heads
- Pastoral Staff for places of worship
- Other key members of your organization

Other Stakeholders:

- Law Enforcement
- Fire and EMS personnel
- Counselors
- Any others deemed appropriate

The objectives of this committee are to:

- Complete a security risk assessment to include the facility, policies and procedures, business practices, and operations.
- Develop and adopt a security plan.
- Assemble a security team and appoint a security team leader to implement the plan.
- Coordinate training and education for all employees and or members of the organization.

CONDUCTING A SECURITY RISK ASSESSMENT MODULE

Your local law enforcement agencies, along with the fire and EMS agencies that serves your area should be involved in conducting the initial security assessment. Another option is to use a private security consultant. The goal of the security assessment is to locate and identify existing risks, threats, and vulnerabilities of your place of business or place of worship. These vulnerabilities would include external threats such as active shooters and other workplace violence, and internal risks such as business practices, failing to vet volunteers, weak handling money policies, etc..

Some of the specific items and issues to be surveyed would be:

The Facility

Security of all buildings

- Door and window locks.
- Lighting both inside and outside to include parking lots.
- Are all doors exterior and interior lockable?
- Security systems, such as alarms and their effectiveness.
- Current need for and use of security cameras.

Distance from Help

- What is the response time for law enforcement to arrive if called?
- What is the response time for fire or EMS if they are called?
- What are you equipped or trained to do until they get there?

Employees, Staff and Volunteers

- Audit your hiring and application practices for thoroughness.
- Ascertain if key personnel and people handling money need to be bonded.
- Background investigation should be conducted on volunteers.
- Is there training regarding active shooter and workplace violence, along with other emergency issues that may occur. When was it last updated?

The demographics (age, etc.) of the area you're serving along with any surrounding community threats.

- Do you know the situations and issues the people in the area you serve face daily in their lives?
- Are you in a high crime area?

Child Protection Protocol

If you deal with children in your operations do you have protections in place concerning them?

- Background checks for everyone dealing with children, and what the scope of the background check will cover.
- Do the rooms where children may be have windows or other means to be seen into at all times?
- Current policies and procedures in place that direct your actions regarding dealing with children within your settings.
- Is there a current procedure in place to report any incidents regarding children?
- Are there procedures to check a child into and out of your facility? Who are authorized to check a child out?
- Evacuation and care plans for children if they are involved in an emergency situation.
- Emergency contact number(s) for each child's legal caretaker.

Communications

Internal Communications

How are you accomplishing your communications between people who are out of sight or in other buildings within your facility?

- Between the parking lot and your building?
- Within different parts of the building?
- If you're using hand held radios (walkie-talkies) what is their range?
- Does everyone know how to use them? What is your back up plan if these fail?
- Do you use cell phones as your communications?
- Better than nothing but a poor option.

External Communications

How do you communicate with outside agencies?

- Land Lines?
- Cell Phones?
- Do you have emergency and important numbers posted where they can be found quickly?
- Along with 911 do you have direct numbers to Law enforcement and fire and EMS Departments?

The site risk assessment should include anything that may affect your employees, staff, and anyone else that may be affected by an active shooter or employee violence incident.

IMPLEMENT A FIREARMS POLICY FOR YOUR PLACE OF BUSINESS OR PLACE OF WORSHIP MODULE.

Every church or business should have a firearms policy covering at least the philosophical stance of the organization regarding firearms. Remember this policy will have no effect on the active shooter. It will only impact the employees and guests in your facility. Different entities may go about this in very different ways regarding the possession of and possible use of firearms on their properties. The policy should specify who, if anyone, can or cannot carry a firearm onto and in a place of worship or business. There are basically five options to choose from.

- Allow all concealed carry permitted persons to carry concealed handguns on the premise, if not otherwise in violation of the law. (ie. If the church or business is a school)
- Restrict the concealed carry of handguns to only **DESIGNATED** personnel who are lawfully able to possess a firearm on the premise
- Restrict the concealed carry of handguns to only designated personnel who are lawfully able to possess a firearm on the premise **AND** have received advanced training in the use of the firearm in critical situations
- Prohibit all persons from carrying firearms, either open carry or concealed carry on the premise.
- Allow any person who can lawfully possess firearms to carry them openly on the premise.

Some of the factors that need to be considered when deciding to allow someone to possess or carry a firearm at your organization are.

- How will the appointments be made? Based on what criteria?
- What level of training will be required of the people appointed?
- How will it be insured that the required level of training has been met and continually updated
- How will it be insured that the appointed persons can legally carry a firearm?
- How will you document the needed information and training?
- What type of weapons will be allowed and how will they be secured?

Any church or business considering allowing or appointing persons to be armed with a firearm, or any other weapon on the premises, should have met and discussed these issues with the leaders of that organization. Whatever the decision is, it should be written into your policy in very clear terms. Before any decision is made, the organizations insurance carrier should be consulted. .

An organization cannot take this decision lightly. They must carry out that decision responsibly by assuring that the people allowed to possess and carry weapons receive the training they need and the ability to maintain their skills over time.

NOTE: The North Carolina General Statutes covering the carrying and possessing of firearms on school grounds are appended at the end of this document.)

SELECTING A SECURITY TEAM AND APPOINTING A LEADER

When selecting personnel for your security team you must be very careful to select the right people. You want people on your team that have some life experiences and who are even tempered. Someone that can think on their feet under pressure. The team members need to be people who understand and will comply with all of the rules and policies enacted by the organization regarding security issues. They must understand the responsibilities and liabilities of the security team actions. The team members must understand that their time and effort, along with the need to train, will be required. .

Some items to consider when selecting team members are:

- Conducting background checks
- Personality of person
- Ability to do the job
- If going to be armed with a firearm make sure they are carrying it legally.
- Willing to give the time needed for education and training for the position.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION MODULE

Once you have the preliminary planning issues completed you must then educate and train your employees or congregation regarding their part in carrying the plan out. The training can be conducted several ways with a mass meeting of all involved; or within each department or section; or in a one-on-one setting. In reality you will probably use all three methods, plus any other method you may identify.

Your audience could be:

- Employees and volunteers.
- Church congregation.
- Community leaders/members that may be affected.
- Collaborative partners such as law enforcement, Fire and EMS, or any other stake holders.

Determine.

- Who will present the training?
- How will it be presented?
- Have any handouts or other materials needed.

Note: Always protect the confidentiality of sensitive information. Share sensitive information only on a “need to know” basis.

Training and education regarding your security plan is a must, without it people will not know how they are expected to react if an incident occurs. When people know you have a plan in place and what their parts in it are, they will be far more at ease when they are presented with an emergency situation.

DURING THE INCIDENT

Despite all of your preparation and planning you still might experience an incident whether it be an active shooter, workplace violence or a natural disaster. Hopefully your planning and preparation will put you in a better place to deal with incidents like this. The first planning step of PREVENTION should lead you right into the next planning step which covers actions during the incident. It is during an incident all of your prior planning pays off.

The second planning step is **DURING THE INCIDENT**

If an incident happens it will likely be fast, violent, loud, and somewhat chaotic, especially if it is an active shooter incident. Expect panic! Some people will freeze in place; some will jump up and move about trying to escape; and others may seek to hide where they are at. A few may try and rush the attacker(s). Your security team must be alert and ready for any and all of these reactions. At the earliest point your security team should be in action attempting to mitigate the incident.

Some of the first actions accomplished should be:

- The people designated to call 911 should be making the call as quick as possible.
- If the threat is on the outside of the building, start lock down procedures for the buildings. The goal is to keep the threat on the outside if possible.
- If the threat is inside the building instigate your planned lock down procedures.
- If applicable lock down and or evacuate any building with children in them.
- Security team should start directing people to the rally points.

NOTE: Rally points are pre-planned locations where everyone can be directed so they can be accounted for after an incident. There should be a security team member designated for each area.

FBI Active Shooter Protocol Plan

Everyone in your organization should be made aware of the FBI Active Shooter Protocol Plan.

- **RUN**
- **HIDE**
- **FIGHT**

RUN

The first action is to try and run to escape the danger area if possible. Run to a designated rally point if it is safe to do so. If the rally point is not a safe area run to any area of safety you can get to as quick as you can.

HIDE

If you are not able to run then try and HIDE. Hide anyway you can behind desks, doors, in rooms, wherever you can find a spot to hide. In some situations hiding may not be a good options because of the area you find yourself in. Remember, that with some exceptions, hiding behind desks, cabinets, doors, and other items may conceal you but they won't protect you from bullets.

FIGHT

If you can't Run or Hide then you must FIGHT. Do not make it easy for the attacker to harm you. If there is no other choice fight back by any means you can using any items you can get your hands on (i.e. Fire extinguishers, letter openers, hard books, etc.). You will be fighting for your life.

Remember the decision either to run, hide, or fight will be made most likely in seconds of the event starting. The better trained and informed a person is up front, the better decision they will make if the time comes.

Interacting with First Responders

All North Carolina law enforcement officers receives basically the same training across the state as to how to respond to and mitigate an "Active Shooter" incident. They will come with their weapons at the ready to eliminate the threat as quick as possible. In an active shooter incident law enforcement's first priority is to locate and stop the person(s) posing the threat. They may not be able to stop to help any wounded persons. Their one immediate goal is to stop the threat.

Medical personal will be following up behind law enforcement to tend to any wounded as soon as they safely can.

The following points should be stressed to your staff, employees, or congregation.

- Follow all orders from law enforcement without argument or hesitation. They will not stop and argue with you... do as told.
- Have and keep your up with nothing in them and your fingers spread wide.
- No matter what has happened never approach law enforcement with a firearm, or any other weapon in your hand. **NEVER.**
- Law enforcement may not be able to distinguish the “good guys” from the “bad guys.” They may and will treat everyone as a “bad guy” until identification can be made.
- Unless asked by a law enforcement officer do not intervene. Stay back and stay out of the way.
- Though you may know all of the police officers in your area, there will most likely be officers responding from different areas and you will not know them. Do not rely on any officer knowing who you are by sight.
- It will be a chaotic fast moving situation, stay in a safe place and follow orders as they are given.
- After the threat has been neutralized first responders will begin directing and advising everyone on what to do and what will be needed from them.

The security team should have a specified person(s) located in a safe area to meet first arriving law enforcement to give them the basic information regarding the incident. It must be readily visible to first arriving responders that this person is unarmed.

After the threat has been neutralized the security team should stand ready to help in any way they can on direction from all enforcement, and by implementing their policy and procedures for such a situation.

The third planning step is **DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH**

Immediately after an incident emotions will be running high and there will a lot of uncertainty surrounding the situation. There will be a lot of different actions going on at the same time from law enforcement functions to rescue functions.

During this time it is important that the security team coordinate all activities with the first responders and follow their directions. Some things the security team would consider will be the following.

- Continue to manage the rally points and assist first responders as directed.
- If not already done identify a spokesman to address the media, family members, and public along with the first responder’s media spokesperson.
- Continue to circulate reassuring people and listen and obey the directions of the first responders.

In the immediate aftermath First Responders will:

- Assume command of the incident.
- The area will be treated as a crime scene and the investigation will be conducted as such.
- Treat and transport injured individuals from the scene to medical facilities.
- They will initiate an investigation. (This could take hours, days, or weeks depending on the scope of the incident.)
- Interview witnesses.
- Set and preserve the crime scene.
- Coordinate continuing activities of the security team.
- At the proper time, conduct a debrief with the security team on all actions taken.

Continuity of Operation Plan. (COOP)

After an incident your place of business or worship may or may not be accessible to be used for some period of time. Your written plan should spell out what your “Continuity of Operation Plan will be.”

Some things to consider would be:

- Do you have an alternate place to conduct business or worship if needed?
- Do you have a method to access records and other documents if they are destroyed or unobtainable for a period of time?
- Consider how to obtain any temporary equipment or computers if needed?
- Analyze the impact of the incident on all that were involved or exposed to it to assess their ability to continue their duties.

The above are not the only considerations depending on the size of your business or congregation. There may be many more things you need to consider for long term continuity of operation plans.

Planning and Oversight Committee Review of the Critical Incident

As soon as possible after the event has been handled the planning and oversight committee should review all reports filed by the security team.

- They should make adjustment to the emergency plan as needed based on lessons learned.
- Update security plan and conduct new training as needed.
- Provide copies of the updated plans to all concerned including first responders.

To sum it up.

An active shooter incident will be a very chaotic and emotional event and affect people and the community for a long time. The community will never be the same as it was before the incident. The better you are trained and prepared the greater chance you will have to hopefully mitigate and lessen the impact the event may have otherwise had on the community.

If you follow the suggestions presented in this booklet you will be better prepared to produce a workable emergency plan to mitigate these incidents and other security issues. But, to be effective the plan must be written, distributed and understood by all. It must be exercised and revised at least several times a year. If you write a plan and put it on a shelf and never review and update it don't expect it to be of much use when it is needed.

Though we hope it will never be needed the Carteret County Sheriff's Office stands ready to assist you in your emergency planning efforts. It is our goal to make the community we all live in safer by partnering with each other in dealing with incidents as covered in this booklet.

From an FBI article: "Addressing the Problem of the Active Shooter" by Katherine W Schweit JD May 7, 2013.

98% of active shooter incidents involve state or local crimes only.

98% are carried out by a single shooter, who is usually male (97%)

Active Shooter Statistics

- Active shooter incidents often occur in small and medium sized communities.
- The average Active shooter incident lasts 12 minutes. 37% of the time it lasts less than 5 minutes.
- 40 % of the time the shooter kills himself.
- 2% of Active shooters bring a IED as an addition weapon.
- 10% of Active shooters just stop and walk away. 20% of the time they go mobile, moving to another location.
- 43% of the time, the crime is over before police arrive. In 57% of the shootings the officer arrives while the shooting is still underway.
- The shooter often stops as soon as he hears or sees law enforcement, sometimes turning his anger and aggression on law enforcement.
- Patrol officers are most likely to arrive alone or with a partner.
- When responding 75% had to take action.
- One third of those officers who entered alone were shot by the intruder.

If you have any question, or want more information about this please feel free to contact me.

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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.

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.
- 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:

- Locks and key systems
- Lighting
- Alarms
- Cameras
- Access methods
- Visitor screening
- Security teams, either professionals or volunteers
- Security audits
- Other systems and programs

Safety and security plans may include:

- Fire safety
- Burglary and theft prevention
- Computer security
- Child care and classroom safety
- Vehicle and parking lot safety
- Protection for other vulnerable or high-risk issues.

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.

INCLUDING 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.