

APRIL 2020

# THE CHURCH GUARDIAN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM SHEEPDOG CHURCH SECURITY



## IN THIS ISSUE

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- Training Spotlight
  - Weekly Team Briefing
  - Director's Forum
  - Church Security Roll Call
  - (e) Mail Call/Monthly Freebie
  - Guest Article
  - Certified Instructors
  - Upcoming Seminars
  - Sheepdog Corner
- 

## TOP NEWS STORY

### Ex-youth Pastor Attempts to Hire Hitman to Kill Church Leader

A youth pastor imprisoned for impregnating a 16-year-old girl tried to hire a hitman to kill the leader of his mega-church as well as the judge who put him behind bars. He offered an inmate \$5000 to kill the pastor, who he blames for contacting the police about his abuse of the girl. He offered additional money for the murder of the judge who he was angry with for giving him a longer sentence than he bargained for. Police were notified after a cellmate came forward. Both the pastor and the judge are safe. [Click the link to read more]

Source: [CLICK HERE](#)

# TRAINING SPOTLIGHT

## Severe Weather and Natural Disasters Training Materials

To ensure your Safety Team is prepared to mitigate the threat posed by natural disasters, we offer the Severe Weather and Natural Disasters course. This downloadable bundle contains a fully customizable Powerpoint® Presentation, Microsoft Office® files and PDF files. Slide Presentation: The slides deliver vital information on understanding the wide range of severe weather threats that could affect your church structure, grounds and congregation. It is expertly designed to help ensure that you're able to accurately plan for hazardous incidents and severe weather, and to train church staff and congregation members on these threats. Instructor's Guide: The instructor guide is a key tool in understanding threats, such as hurricanes, winter storms, flooding, and even thunderstorms, as well as the potential impact of those threats on your church and congregation. The guide delivers not just basic information, but also includes full lessons to help make training the Church Safety Team simpler, while identifying key takeaways that should be included in policies and planning for natural disasters and severe weather. Streaming Video: In addition to the downloadable files, you get online access to our course videos for one year. They are a great way to prepare yourself to teach the material and they can even be used in a classroom setting until you are more comfortable teaching.

[CLICK THE IMAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



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**”TO ENSURE YOUR SAFETY TEAM IS PREPARED TO  
MITIGATE THE THREAT POSED BY NATURAL DISASTERS”**

# WEEKLY TEAM BRIEFING

## Severe Weather and Disasters

Based on the Sheepdog Church Security Training Course "Severe Weather and Natural Disasters."

He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening'" (Matthew 16:2-3a).

Jesus told the Scribes that they knew how to know what the weather would be for the day. Before satellites watched from space, weather ships radioed conditions and observations to the National Weather Service. NWS then issued advisories and warnings. Now we can get up-to-the-minute weather info on our mobile phones and weather radios.

One of the most important items our Safety Team can have in preparing for severe weather and disasters (natural and human-caused) is a SAME weather radio. We can be advised of threatening conditions and warned of immediate danger for our locality. After this are basic supplies for treating injuries and for sheltering people for days. The rest of our equipment and supplies depends on the most likely severe events in our location.

·Winter weather is from December to March. In northern states, it continues through March.

·Tornado season is year-round in the South, expands northward in Spring, and continues into Fall. Churches need safe places for tornadoes, then plan how to move everyone to shelter when needed.

·Thunderstorms, lightning, and hail cause extensive damage each year.

·Late Summer through Fall is hurricane season on the Gulf Coast and Atlantic Coast. Coastal areas may have to evacuate. Further away, people seek shelter in hurricane-resistant buildings. Some churches may be shelters for evacuees. There may be power outages and blocked roads.

·Some places have seasonal wildfires. These can be caused by lightning, electrical sparks, sparks from train wheels, burning buildings or vehicles, and more. Sometimes it is arson. A firestorm can quickly overtake an entire community.

·It is a rare year when there is not some level of drought somewhere in the nation.

·Extreme heat in Summer and extreme cold in Winter are both health and safety hazards.

·Human-caused disasters include hazardous spills, explosions, structural failure, and wrecks.

·Technological failures can result in loss of records and breakdown of vital systems.

·Epidemics and pandemics can endanger people and paralyze large communities.

·Tectonic disasters can be costly and life-threatening.

### Action Points

1. Learn what the most likely severe weather and tectonic events are for your area.
2. Learn what natural and human-caused disasters you may face in your location.
3. Learn how to respond to severe weather and disasters (natural and human-caused).
4. Equip and supply your church before these events happen.



# It Ain't Over 'til It's Over-Winter, That Is

BY WESLEY VAUGHN

## In the News

Central America, Gulf of Mexico, Eastern US and Canada, March 11-15, 1993 - The Superstorm of 1993: A low-pressure trough crossing Central America from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico developed into a low-pressure center which became a cyclone. It crossed West Florida, killing several persons in the storm surge, and rapidly moved north. On March 13, from the southern Appalachians to Ontario and Quebec it dumped record snowfalls, bringing an area with 40% of the population of the United States to a halt. Along Interstate Highways I-70, I-80, & I-90, the system stretched from Illinois to the Atlantic Ocean. Roofs collapsed in many places.[2]

Ohio Valley and northward, March 2020 - The long-range forecast in The



Old Farmer's Almanac predicts wintery temperatures with snow and ice from the Ohio Valley northward.[3]

North Central States to Northeast, March 1, 2019 - True to the old expression, March "came in like a lion" with an Arctic blast spreading very low temperatures from the Upper Plains to the Atlantic Coast.[4]

Northern States, March 2017 - A bomb cyclone from the Northwest crossed the northern states with high winds and light snow. In the east it merged with a Nor'easter on March 11, becoming a monster storm creating white-outs and leaving wind damage. It is commonly known as the Blizzard of 2017. [5]

## Special Resource for Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Our article series for March focuses on preparing for and responding to severe weather and natural and human-caused disasters. The topic of

*Prepared for Winter  
-She is not afraid of  
snow for her  
household, for all  
her household are  
clothed in scarlet*

PROVERBS 31;21

*The Peril of Winter -  
Pray that your flight  
may not be in winter*

...

MATTHEW 24;20

*A Winter Hazard - ...  
as the streams that  
overflow when  
darkened by thawing  
ice and swollen with  
melting snow*

JOB 6;15B-16

*The End of Winter -  
Behold, the winter is  
past; the rain is over  
and gone*

SONG OF SONGS 2;11



IT AIN'T OVER TIL IT'S OVER CONTINUED...

this article is Winter Weather. Winter occupies three quarters of the month of March, with Spring not coming until the 21st. In this article we discuss:

- Types of Winter Weather
- Winter Weather Hazards
- Dealing with Winter

First, you need to know about our download - "Emergency Supply List Recommendations (Essential supplies to have on hand in a disaster or emergency event)." To receive this free download, [click here](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

### **Types of Winter Weather**

The types of winter weather you experience depend in large part on where you are. In northern states, people commonly known as snowbirds move south during the Winter. For example, many residents of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho go to Phoenix, San Diego, or Pasadena, several residents of the Dakotas and Nebraska move to Houston or San Antonio, and numerous folks from Wisconsin to Ohio to Maine spend the winter in Florida. Even then, northern winter weather can stretch south, visiting Phoenix, the Gulf Coast, and Florida.

The hallmark of Winter is cooler, colder temperatures. There may be warm spells, but cold returns, reminding us that it is still Winter. Weather events include extreme cold, snow & ice, and freezing rain. Weather systems bring continental winter storms and Nor'easters. Strong winds when snow is on the ground produce blizzards. Rapid melting of heavy snow packs generates flooding. Across the South, Winter brings rain - in Phoenix, this is the time for flowers to bloom.

### **Winter Weather Hazards**

There are specific hazards that come with the cold, the ice, and the snow. Cold brings the risk of hypothermia, and freezing temperatures threaten those outside with frostbite. The cold also makes demands on heating systems, including those of churches.

While snow can be beautiful, it also has its hazards. The weight of snow on roofs can cause them to break and collapse. Snowfall from the 1993 Super-storm collapsed roofs in the South which were not designed for heavy snow.<sup>[2]</sup> Not only roofs, but tree limbs and utility lines can be brought down with the weight of accumulating snow or ice. Avalanches are a hazard in mountainous areas, endangering those engaged in recreational activities. Some churches are in avalanche risk areas.

Trees, tree limbs, and utility lines can also be brought down by the powerful winds of winter storms. The resulting power outages themselves are a winter hazard, which can be life-threatening when they bring life-sustaining systems to a halt. These include heating systems, well pumps, and medical devices.

This leads to other risks from trying to keep warm. Heating devices have started fires. A common hazard of combustion in enclosed spaces is carbon dioxide.

There are many personal risks of winter weather. Every Winter, a number of people experience heart attacks while shoveling snow or engaging in other strenuous activities. More common are slips and falls on slick walking surfaces and vehicular accidents on slick roads. Each year these account for many injuries and deaths.

### **Dealing with Winter**

Dealing with Winter begins with preparation. In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells about five young women who were prepared and five who were not. He called those who were prepared "wise" and those who were not "foolish."

Preparing for Winter - for any kind of weather, that is - is both what we do and what we get. We know it is

IT AINT'S OVER TIL IT'S OVER CONTINUED...

already Winter. You may have fared well so far, realizing you could have done better, or you may wish you had been prepared. When it comes to equipment and supplies, you can get what you don't have now. There are things to do which may have to wait until the season changes.

### **Things to Do**

Severe weather includes conditions which necessitate postponing or cancelling services, classes, or events. Your church may already have OneCall or another service. If you don't, or if you are considering changing services, Alert.Church[7] is geared specifically for churches and other places of worship. It is easy for members to sign up to receive alerts. Messages can be sent to specific groups, such as the pastoral team, teachers, ministry leaders, Safety Team members, those scheduled for a specific event, the entire congregation, etc. It sure beats Rolldexing - looking up and calling people one-by-one, especially if you have more than a dozen or two.

The heating system should be serviced when it is not needed, such as in the Summer or late Spring. There have been churches which had to close or use space heaters for a week or so while their furnaces were undergoing emergency servicing. There have also been church fires started by faulty heating systems.

If you live in an area which normally has heavy snow, you probably already know if your church roof can take it. This summer you can have it inspected to see whether it is ready for another Winter. However, if you are in an area where heavy snow is rare, could your church's roof hold up if it came? Many roofs down South collapsed under heavy snow in the 1993 Superstorm.[2] It wouldn't hurt to find out what your church roof can take and what can be done to make it snow-ready. Remember that when Winter weather pays the South a visit, it can mean more than closed roads and power outages.

Take note of problems with doors and windows and any leaks in walls and ceilings. Have them fixed to prevent water damage and clean up any leaks which have already happened. Having doors in good working order is important for safe evacuations.

Trees and power lines are not only at risk during a strong winter storm, heavy snow, or an ice storm, but they also pose hazards to nearby buildings, vehicles, and people. Have trees around the church trimmed to lessen the risk of storm damage and/or injuries. Trees that are dying, hollow, or have compromised root systems should be removed.

This may or may not be an option in your location, but it would be beneficial to route power lines so that they will not block the way between the church and the road if downed. Even better, have them go underground. That way people can get out and emergency vehicles can come in when the lines are down. Protect your water lines from freezing. If one of them freezes and breaks, the thaw can be worse than the freeze.

### **Things to Get**

The free download lists supplies to get and ways to prepare the church building for severe weather and disasters. Many of the supplies are for temporary disruptions and for sheltering in place. Also covered is being ready to use the church itself as a community shelter.[6] Besides those in the download, there are items specific to Winter, addressing different hazards.

A generator can serve in any situation when the power is out. It can power heat tape to keep water lines from freezing. It can also power heaters for water for cleaning wounds and warming persons with hypothermia or frostbite.

Portable devices for heating foods and liquids are needed if the power is out or gas is cut off and there

IT AIN'T OVER TIL IT'S OVER CONTINUED...

are persons to care for, whether stranded, ill, or injured.

Coats and thermal blankets are needed for helping people keep warm if all systems are down. Thermal blankets are especially needed when treating hypothermia or frostbite.

Salt and/or sand are needed for treating driveways, parking lots, and outdoor walking surfaces. You need shovels and/or snow blowers to clear them of snow. If you have not contracted someone to plow and sand the parking lot, you need the equipment for someone in the congregation to do it.

Inside, the church needs mops and buckets to clean up melted snow. Also helpful are web mats in the entryways to trap snow and water from boots and shoes as people come in.

The church also needs means of getting excess snow to safely slide off the roof. This can be a roof-heating system to melt the bottom surface of the snow. It could be tools to push or pull snow on the roof, taking enough off to lessen its weight on the roof.

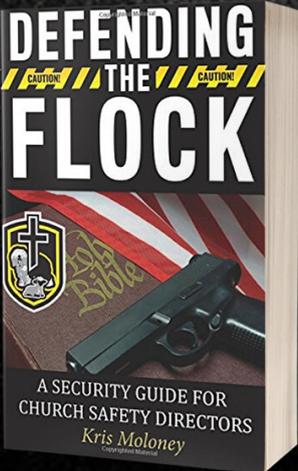
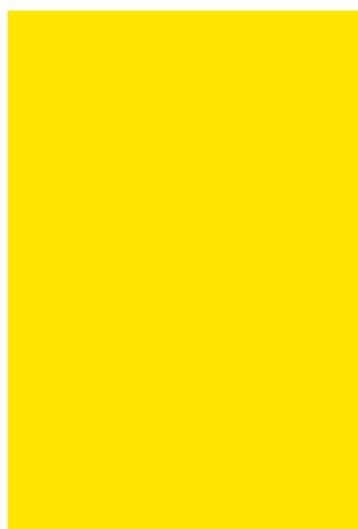
### **Conclusion**

While Winter lasts, we remain ready for the cold, snow, ice, and strong winds. Some parts of the country face rain, flooding, and tornadoes, with their own threats to the safety of the flock. It may be March, but it is still Winter. As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

### **There Is More**

This series on Severe Weather and Disasters has five articles. The other four are "Twisting in the Wind" (Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, and Lightning), "A Burning Problem" (Wildfires, Drought, Extreme Heat), "Human Error" (Disasters Caused by People), and "Tectonic Terror" (Earthquakes and Volcanic Activity)

See link for references: <https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/articles/it-aint-over-till-its-over/>



**“A must have book for your church safety ministry.”**

**GET IT ON AMAZON**

# Twisting in the Wind: Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, Hail, and Lightning

BY WESLEY VAUGHN

## In the News

Vernon Parish, Louisiana, December 16, 2019 - A church in Vernon Parish was one of many structures damaged or destroyed by tornadoes in a storm system sweeping across five states.[2]

Dallas, Texas, October 20, 2019 - An EF3 tornado tore through the north end of Dallas. The cross on top of a destroyed church was found stuck upright in the ground. This tornado was one of several spawned by a widespread storm system.[3]

Palm Beach, Florida, July and August 2019 - Lightning hit the same church twice, about a month apart, and the grounds were hit by a microburst. The lightning damaged electrical and electronic components



both times. The church is seeking a more effective system for lightning suppression.[4]

Allen, Texas, March 25, 2019 - A church's fellowship hall was severely damaged in a hailstorm. Some hailstones in the area measured 4.5 inches.[5]

## Special Resource for Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Preparing for and responding to severe weather and disasters (natural and human-caused) is the focus of our article series for March. The topics of this article, Twisting in the Wind, are weather hazards associated with thunderstorms.

- Lightning
- Hail
- Tornadoes

*The crash of your  
thunder was in the  
whirlwind; your  
lightnings lighted up  
the world; the earth  
trembled and shook*

PSALM 77:18

*Behold, the storm of  
the Lord! Wrath has  
gone forth, a  
whirling tempest; it  
will burst upon the  
head of the wicked*

JEREMIAH 23:19 & 30:23

*The clouds poured  
out water; the skies  
gave forth thunder;  
your arrows flashed  
on every side*

PSALM 77:17

He gave them hail  
for rain, and fiery  
lightning bolts  
through their land  
[referring to the 7th  
plague in Egypt].

PSALM 105:32

## TWISTING IN THE WIND CONTINUED...

First, you need to know about our download - "Emergency Supply List Recommendations (Essential supplies to have on hand in a disaster or emergency event)." To receive this free download, [click here](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

### Thunderstorms

All the windows light up at once. A few seconds later "BOOM! "BOOOOM!" shakes the house, followed by a long "Rum-um-um-umble!" Some of the children run to hiding places, while others head for windows to see the show.

A thunderstorm can be both frightening and fascinating:

- Photos of rolling clouds and flashes of lightning have a beauty all their own in a display of raw power.
- The lengthening funnel of a descending tornado is both transfixing and terrifying.
- The "rat-a-tat-tat" of hail on the roof makes you thankful you're inside, while kids can't wait to run outside and collect hailstones - I know of at least one boy who kept his hailstone collection in the freezer.

The thunder of thunderstorms starts with friction between turbulent bodies of air moving in different directions. This friction creates static electric charges. When the static is discharged, it does so explosively with a bang - literally. The discharging of static can continue for miles, creating a long, rolling rumble. Thunderstorms can also cause torrential rain and flooding.

### Lightning

Lightning is a spark, the discharge of static electricity that is usually between clouds. It is beneficial when it creates nitric acid which comes down in rain to enrich the soil.

Sometimes, however, the discharge is between the clouds and the ground. With up to a billion volts in one lightning bolt, the potential damage is enormous.<sup>[7]</sup> The heat of lightning can start fires. The rapid rise in temperature can become an explosion. And the sudden massive electric current can damage or destroy electric and electronic devices.

From our own experience, lightning set a house on fire a mile away, fried the computers in a local business, and exploded a dead tree across the street during one storm. That was a year after lightning knocked out our well pump.

In the third story above, lightning did strike the same place twice, contrary to popular lore, and with only a month between strikes.<sup>[4]</sup> No, churches are not immune to lightning. In fact, a tall spire or steeple can act like a lightning rod. Every church needs to have lightning arrestors (aka lightning rods) to prevent damage from a lightning strike. A well-designed and constructed lightning arrestor carries the charge to the ground, bypassing the building itself.

As the news story points out, there can be more than structural damage. The electric surge generated by a lightning strike can damage electronics, as it did to those controlling the church's organ. The strike doesn't have to be a direct hit to create a surge, just in the neighborhood. When the story was published, the double-struck church was looking for a more robust surge suppression system. Our churches need surge protectors for electronics, especially the computers, the media complex, and security systems.

### Hail

The turbulence of a thunderstorm lifts raindrops to very high altitudes to freeze, lets them down to collect more water, up again for more freezing - the cycle keeps repeating - until the swollen frozen rain drops drop as sleet or hail. The difference between sleet and hail is the size of the hailstones. Sleet is more like icy sand, while hailstones are larger. The stones can cause damage proportionate to their size. Damage can be to roofs and windows on buildings, but vehicle damage is more common. Sometimes, as

## TWISTING IN THE WIND CONTINUED...

in the seventh plague on Egypt (Ex. 9:13-35), hail can be deadly.

If someone at the church can get church vehicles under cover when a hailstorm is expected, it can prevent some damage. Having a covered entry or drop-off can provide people a safe place to go if a hailstorm hits while they are outside.

### **Tornadoes**

The most threatening accompaniment to a thunderstorm is a tornado. Some tornadoes form outside of thunderstorms. These are the whirlwinds frequently referred to in the Bible. A small EF0 twister can overturn sheds, cause minor damage to roofs, break off tree branches, and knock down a power line or two. EF5 tornadoes are monster storms with incredible damage.

### **Going to Shelter**

Most industrial, commercial, and governmental buildings in tornado-prone area have tornado shelters. Many areas in the nation have tornado sirens to warn entire neighborhoods of twisters.

Churches should have places which can be used as tornado shelters. Your church should also have a weather radio to warn of severe weather. If a tornado warning is received for your area, all persons in the church should go to a safe area (there may be more than one for a large church).

### **Tornado Drills**

Sheltering-in will be a smoother operation if the congregation has had a tornado drill. If not for the whole church, at least the leaders should have drilled in directing people to the safe places when a tornado warning is received or a tornado is sighted. There have been several instances when lives in a church were saved because everyone was in a safe area when the tornado hit the church building.

### **What areas in a church are safe?**

If the church has a basement, the corridor there can serve as a tornado shelter. This is even better if there are windowless classrooms extending into a hill. This means that more people can be sheltered safely. Other considerations are doors opening inward. This means that the door can be opened after a tornado strike, even if there is debris on the other side. Pry bars kept in the shelter area can be used to pry loose anything blocking the exit.

**Conclusion:** Protecting the Church in Thunderstorms When dark clouds roll in and the sky rumbles, beware. There is danger ahead. Know what's coming and be prepared. Here's a summary of how to protect the flock:

**Protecting people, buildings, and systems from lightning:** Have lightning rods/arrestors properly installed. Check grounding for integrity. Install surge suppressors for all electronics in the church as well as for the entire electrical wiring. Urge people to stay inside and away from electrical equipment during a severe thunderstorm

**Protecting people and vehicles from hail:** Provide covered areas for church vehicles. Provide a covered entry or drop-off area, maybe also a pavilion or gazebo.

**Protecting from tornadoes:** Identify or build tornado shelters in the church. Have shelter door(s) open inward. Have pry bars in shelters. Have and monitor a weather radio with S.A.M.E. (Specific Area Message Encoding). Plan and conduct tornado drills. Have supplies for treating injuries.

### **There Is More**

This article is one of five in a series on Severe Weather and Disasters. The other four are "It Ain't Over 'til It's Over" (Winter, That Is), "A Burning Problem" (Wildfires, Drought, Extreme Heat), "Human Error" (Disasters Caused by People), and "Tectonic Terror" (Earthquakes and Volcanic Activity),

See link for references: <https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/articles/twisting-in-the-wind/>

# A Burning Problem: Wildfires, Drought, Extreme Heat

BY WESLEY VAUGHN

## In the News

Heat-related severe weather events such as wildfires, droughts, and extreme heat affect churches in the impacted areas. Churches also minister to those suffering from these events.

## Wildfires

Magalia, California, November 9, 2018 - A church building survived a firestorm with 30 people inside whose route out of town was blocked. Several features of the structure and its setting spared it while surrounding businesses and homes were incinerated.[2]



Paradise, California, November 9, 2018 - The same wildfire which swept over Magalia, destroyed most church buildings in nearby Paradise. Even though their buildings were destroyed by the Camp Fire in 2018, the congregations held together.[3] Since then, many have rebuilt or are rebuilding using more fire-resistant designs and materials. However, some of the fire-resistant measures may be too expensive for many.[4]

Petaluma, California, October and November 2019 - A church in Petaluma responded to a request for help by providing shelter to people displaced by wildfires north of the city. Their care of the temporary homeless led to effective evangelism.[5]

California, Australia, and other places suffering wildfires, 2018, 2019 - Many churches in North America and Australia are helping those who

*Like heat in a dry place*

ISAIAH 25:5A

*Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine*

LAMENTATIONS 5:10

*Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters*

JOB 24:19A

*As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane!*

PSALM 83:14-15

*The Lord will strike you with ... fiery heat, and with drought ...*

DEUTERONOMY 28:22

A BURNING PROBLEM CONTINUED...

have been displaced or otherwise hurt by wildfires. Besides Lutherans[6] and Catholics[7], there are many other church groups helping.

### **Drought**

United States, February 11, 2020 - The "United States Drought Monitor Map" by the National Drought Mitigation Center shows areas with severe drought and extreme drought.[8] The Texas severe drought area includes Austin, where dry conditions persist even after five days of light rain.[9]

Western States and Plains States, 2015 - After three or four years of drought in states from the Great Plains to the West Coast, reservoirs and water tables were low and vegetation was drying up. This affected agriculture, wildlife, forestry, and urban water supplies.

Churches had to deal with the situation along with everyone else. After all, God sends sunshine and rain to believers and unbelievers alike. A common response was prayer. As David Hart said in the Union Sportsman, "Food prices are up, water tables are down, and churches throughout the west are filled with voices praying for rain." [10]

Across the country, Megan Sweas writes in The Yale ISM Review about how different religious traditions respond to drought. Some are fatalistic, some plead for help, and Christians and Jews trust God for the outcome, seek forgiveness for any sins committed, and help their neighbors.[11]

### **Extreme Heat**

Painter, Virginia, July 20, 2019 - Among many closures and canceled events due to extreme heat on the East Shore was a church's Community Picnic.[12]

U.S. Farmlands, Summer 2019 - Farmers faced extreme heat following flooding. One person was quoted as saying, "We've never seen a year like this. It's been so hard... But we see people coming together, churches offering prayer services for farmers and coming together to support each other." [13]

### **Special Resource for Severe Weather and Natural Disasters**

We need to be prepared to respond to severe weather and disasters (natural and human-caused). This is the focus of March's article series. The topics of this article on heat-related weather hazards are:

- Wildfires
- Drought
- Extreme Heat

First, you need to know about our download - "Emergency Supply List Recommendations (Essential supplies to have on hand in a disaster or emergency event)." To receive this free download, [click here](#). [14]

### **Heat-Related Weather Hazards**

Wildfires, drought, and extreme heat are weather hazards related to heat. Each has to be addressed in its own way, according to how they affect us and our communities. Churches and congregants are both targets of the hazards and agents of mercy during duress, as is shown in the news stories.

### **Wildfires**

Several churches in Sevier County, Tennessee, were destroyed or damaged by the Smokey Mountains wildfire of 2017. A year later, more than twice as many churches in Butte County, California, most of them in Paradise, were burned down by the Camp Fire, which became a firestorm in which at least 89 persons perished.

These events raised awareness of making buildings fire-resistant. There were churches in both Tennessee and California which survived firestorms. The key to this was both construction and

## A BURNING PROBLEM CONTINUED...

landscaping. The choices made when the churches were built were probably more about cost than fire safety. One Tennessee church was built of cement blocks, and one in California had fire-resistant siding. Both had metal roofs and no vents open to the outside. Both have open areas around the buildings, mainly for parking. Neither one had outer wood structures, such as a deck or steps.

Some homes were saved by owners who used garden hoses to keep the exteriors of the structures wet. In California, the non-combustible siding and metal roof cost less than the more fashionable cedar shake shingles and wood siding. In Tennessee, the cement blocks did not need siding. We could consider fire-resistant construction as a matter of good stewardship. However, as happened in Magalia, CA, these choices literally protected the flock, making it a matter of safety.

A year after the Camp Fire, a church further south served as a shelter for many people displaced by another fire. Several churches in Tennessee in 2017 served as shelters - some of these had to be closed as the fire approached. The kindness shown by the church in Petaluma, CA, was an in-kind testimony, with many responding to the Gospel. This shows us the opportunities for evangelism inherent in showing genuine love and mercy to those in need because of a severe weather event.

Someone may come to the church with burns or injuries incurred while escaping from or fighting the fire. Do you have the supplies and knowledge to treat these?

### **Drought**

Drought is not something we normally consider unless we are in a drought-prone area. But if we do see a drought coming, what can we do besides praying? For one thing, the church could have bottled water on hand. This can be used to prevent or treat dehydration. It could also be used to provide an emergency supply of water to someone whose water supply has stopped (of course this is a temporary solution unless the church can afford to do it long-term).

Drought brings community water-use restrictions. The local church ought to be a good citizen of the community by using water wisely. Letting the flowers outside wither instead of using precious water can be a good witness during a drought. Also, an unwatered lawn usually perks up after rain has returned.

### **Extreme Heat**

Common health problems during extreme heat are heat exhaustion and heatstroke. As a church, we need to both prevent heat exhaustion and be ready to treat it. Outside, the best protection is shade. This depends on the size and layout of the church and its setting on the property.

Some churches have outside pavilions for picnics and other events. Shades on the sunward side can reduce the heat hazard to a large degree. Shades can be hung on the sunny sides of covered porches and drop-off areas. However, when the temperature and humidity are too high, this may not be enough.

Keep posted as to forecast temperatures. An outdoor event may have to be canceled or postponed. We do not want to endanger people, especially those more vulnerable. Unless your church's cooling system can handle the projected temperatures, a class or service may have to be canceled or rescheduled for another day or the evening. It's OK to pull down shades during extreme heat to keep the building cooler.

Be alert to signs of heat exhaustion. We do not want it to progress to heatstroke. Be ready to respond. The first response is to remove the person from the heat by bringing them inside or into the shade. Loosen tight clothing. Use moving air and wet cloths or ice packs to cool them down.

## A BURNING PROBLEM CONTINUED...

Give them water for rehydration. Don't force it down on them. Start them sipping water or sucking on ice cubes. After a while, they can drink more. Use electrolyte drinks (or mixes) to prevent electrolyte loss. This is in addition to the water.

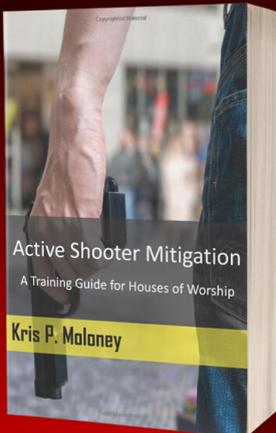
### **Conclusion**

Know which heat-related weather hazards are more prevalent in your area and be ready to protect the church and the people, whether wildfires, drought, or extreme heat threatens. Also, be ready to minister to others in the community.

### **There Is More**

There are five articles in this series on Severe Weather and Disasters. Besides this one are "It Ain't Over 'til It's Over" (Winter, That Is), "Twisting in the Wind" (Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, and Lightning), "Human Error" (Disasters Caused by People), and "Tectonic Terror" (Earthquakes and Volcanic Activity),

See link for references: <https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/articles/a-burning-problem/>



**SAFEGUARD YOUR CHURCH  
FROM VIOLENCE**

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON



# Human Error: Disasters Caused by People

BY WESLEY VAUGHN

## In the News

Taft, California, January 21, 2020 - A leak of acrolein (propenal) in a factory prompted authorities to order persons within a six-mile radius to evacuate or shelter in place. An evacuation center was established by the Red Cross at a local church.[2]

Lawrence County, Ohio, October 13, 2019 - Gas leaking from a propane tank caused an explosion in the fellowship hall of a country church while members were in a Sunday evening service. The fellowship hall is in a separate building, and no one was hurt.[3]

Orange County, California, September 21, 1992 - A church van carrying 18



passengers was hit by a pickup truck. As the van spun, the rear door flew open and several passengers were ejected. Two bench seats in the rear were not bolted down and there were no belts in place. Eleven persons, mostly youth, were killed and eight injured. Other churches in the county started examining their vans for safety.[4]

Amber, Pennsylvania, July 17, 1856 - An excursion train with over a thousand passengers collided head-on with another train. There were 59 to 67 persons killed and over 100 seriously injured. Most of the dead were Sunday School children from a Philadelphia church on their way to a picnic.[5]

Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, December 10, 2016 - At least 160 persons died when a church roof collapsed. Faulty construction practices and corruption are blamed for this disaster.[6]

Church Rock, New Mexico, July 16, 1979 - A uranium mine's tailings

*Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?*

LUKE 13:4

*“The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place”*

ISAIAH 9:10

*“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed”*

LUKE 5:37

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## HUMAN ERROR CONTINUED...

pond dam split, dumping toxic, acidic, and radioactive materials into a river flowing into Navajo territory in Arizona. Slow response and a language barrier hampered communication of warnings to endangered Navajos. Contributing factors included the pond not being lined and a weakened dam not being repaired.[7]

Brunswick, Ohio and Stratford, Ontario, 2019 - A church in Brunswick and another in Stratford became cyber-crime victims. Someone posing as the building contractor stole \$1.75 million from the building fund of the Brunswick church. In Stratford, a criminal pretending to be the pastor of the church, sent an email to parishioners asking them to buy gift cards for a charity and send him the serial numbers.[8]

United States and the World, 1918-2020 - There have been several pandemics (world-wide epidemics) since the middle of World War I. Notable is the 1918 Influenza Pandemic (1918-1920), which killed about 50 million persons around the world and 675,000 in the U.S.[9] A variation of this virus (Swine Flu) caused the 2009-H1N1 Pandemic ninety years later.[10]

In 2003, the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) Epidemic broke out in China. The virus, a Coronavirus variety, was labeled SARS-CoV. Quick work by many national health agencies kept it from becoming a pandemic.[11]

Currently, there is worldwide concern over the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Epidemic in China, which has paralyzed an entire province. Many cases have been identified in other countries. Agencies, such as the CDC, are working on developing treatments and a vaccine.[12]

### **Special Resource for Severe Weather and Natural Disasters**

Disasters can be both natural and the result of human activity. Those in the latter category are largely preventable, and therefore regrettable. Some are more likely to impact our church because of its location. We need to be ready for those.

To help you be prepared, we have a free download - "Emergency Supply List Recommendations (Essential supplies to have on hand in a disaster or emergency event)." To receive this free download, [click here](#).[13]

### **Human-Caused Disasters**

Some disasters are just not natural. They are caused by human activity. There are several kinds of human-caused disasters. Here are a few:

- Spills
- Explosions
- Wrecks: Auto Trucks and Trains
- Structural Failures: Buildings and Dams
- Technological Failure and Cyber Crimes
- Epidemics and Pandemics

These disasters can affect churches in one way or another. We'll cover a few of these as examples of what can happen and how we can prepare for them.

#### **Spills**

Spills are common. They can range from simply wasteful to damaging to dangerous. Here we are primarily concerned with hazardous spills. Most spilled materials are flammable, corrosive, or toxic. Other materials can cause hazardous walking or driving conditions by making surfaces slick or sticky. Some spills are from leaking or toppled tanks. Open or faulty valves cause many spills. Sometimes a container overflows.

## HUMAN ERROR CONTINUED...

A flammable spill makes immediate evacuation necessary. Toxic spills may require sheltering in place. The Kern County Fire Department explained how to shelter in place:

- Take everyone, pets included, to an inside room, preferably one without windows.
- Turn off all fans, AC units, and forced-air heating-cooling systems.
- Close all doors and windows in the building.
- Seal, as best you can, the door and any windows in the shelter room.
- If your church is far enough from the spill, it may be asked to shelter evacuees.

You can prevent spills on church property by ensuring that all containers are properly closed and stored and are in good condition. This includes fuels, paints, solvents, and cleaning products. Also prevent water leaks, since these may cause slippery surfaces and damage property.

### **Explosions**

Natural gas and propane are the most common causes of explosions in homes, businesses, and churches. Another cause is closed containers close to heat sources, followed by steam explosions when the safety valves on water heaters and boilers won't work.

If you are aware of an explosion close to the church, warn members of danger if an activity, class, meeting, or service is scheduled. Check the church property for damage or debris. If you find any, leave it alone and report it to the authorities: it is evidence they will use in an investigation.

For prevention, have all gas appliances checked regularly and adjusted or repaired if needed. Check safety valves on water heaters and boilers annually or biennially.

### **Wrecks**

There are all kinds of wrecks on highways, streets, and railways. Some of these wrecks may affect churches.

#### **Autos & Trucks**

Roadway accidents are the most common wrecks. Since churches are by or close to public roads and streets, these are the wrecks most likely to involve a church. Vehicles have gone off the road and into church buildings or into a playground. Some involve church vehicles. Also, wrecks can cause hazardous spills.

What is the liability a church may have in a wreck? Vehicles used by a church can be involved in wrecks. Liability may include church members taking persons not in their families to a church event if they were acting for the church, such as if they were asked to provide transportation. Check with your insurance provider about your state's laws on this. Keep all church vehicles in safe condition.

An iffy issue is whether the church is contributing to collisions on their street. Low corner signs could hamper visibility of drivers at the intersection. So could overgrown shrubbery. You never know when a driver in an accident will claim blocked visibility in a lawsuit.

### **Trains**

Not every church is close to a rail line, but some are. However, the danger for most churches from a train wreck is a hazardous material spill. There may be an explosion. Some train wrecks have started wildfires. There's not much the church can do but evacuate if needed and be prepared to treat injuries.

### **Structural Failures**

Many people throughout history have been killed by structural failures. Thousands died when Samson literally brought down the house (Judges 16:29-30). Hundreds of years later, about 20,000 died when a hastily-built stadium near Rome collapsed.

HUMAN ERROR CONTINUED...

### **Buildings**

In Europe, churches and cathedrals have collapsed. They learned the hard way how to build big and make it last.

In some countries with poor building inspection (often involving bribery), structural failures are common. Such was the case in Nigeria in the news story.

Bribery by contractors also happens in some places in the United States. Some contractors cheat on materials. If your church has a building project, do what you can to ensure that it is done right. That is one way to protect the flock.

### **Dams**

Dams can be a blessing. They can store water for irrigation or city water, make lakes for recreation, generate hydroelectric power, and provide flood control. But if a dam fails, it can destroy property and lives downstream. If a waste-impoundment dam breaks, as the one in Church Rock, it can contaminate a large area.

We cannot prevent a dam from failing, but we can heed advisories and warnings and get our people out of the way as a dam is about to fail, such as the Oroville Dam in California.[14]

### **Technological Failure and Cyber Crime**

Face it. We do not have perfect technologies. Otherwise, why are they always being improved and upgraded? Computers can and do fail. It is wise to back up all the church's records on remote devices, especially off-site. That way, if for some reason the records in the church are destroyed, they can be replaced from the back-up devices.

We also need to guard against cybercrime. Thieves try to break into churches' computers. Scammers try to defraud the church or its members. Guard your system by using strong passwords. Limit access to system administration. Use added-factor authentication. Install self-updating anti-virus and anti-malware applications. Monitor activity on the church's computer system.

Ransomware viruses can encrypt all or most of the church's data and demand payment before letting you have your data back. If all your data is safely backed up, you can just reformat and clean up the system, then download your data from back-up. The computer system should be in contact with back-up only when you are backing up or restoring data.

### **Epidemics and Pandemics**

Does the thought of an epidemic or pandemic make you sick? We do not want them to literally make us sick. There are precautions a church can take to protect its members and guests.

Knowledge - Know what is going on (and going around). Practice preventing transmission. Wash hands, Sanitize surfaces, especially those many people touch. Use hand sanitizers. Remind people to cover mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing. Encourage members to stay away if they may be contagious. Urge them to seek medical attention if they become ill. Sometimes it may be prudent to cancel services to block the spread of infections. Listen to the advice of medical authorities.

Keep yourself healthy - Use good nutrition and hygiene. Use care in food handling. Dogs and cats may be cute and loving, but they can also contaminate food if we are not careful. Not everyone will be as careful. In the case of a local highly-contagious disease outbreak, avoid carry-in dinners. I know this will be unpopular with some persons.

### **Conclusion**

We can prevent some human-caused disasters. We can protect ourselves and the church from others

## HUMAN ERROR CONTINUED...

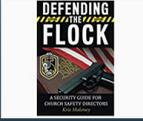
when they do happen. We can be prepared to help people when they are hurt or displaced.

### **There Is More**

In this series on Severe Weather and Disasters are five articles. The other four are "It Ain't Over 'til It's Over" (Winter, That Is), "Twisting in the Wind" (Tornadoes, Thunderstorms, and Lightning), "A Burning Problem" (Wildfires, Drought, Extreme Heat), and "Tectonic Terror" (Earthquakes and Volcanic Activity)

See link for references: <https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/articles/human-error/>



		<h1>RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT FOR SAFETY MINISTRIES</h1>
		
		

VISIT THE SDCS ONLINE STORE 

# Tectonic Terror: Earthquakes and Volcanic Activity

BY WESLEY VAUGHN

## In the News

Louisa County, Virginia, August 23, 2011 - A magnitude 5.8 quake hit Louisa County, Virginia, on August 23, 2011. Among damaged buildings was a church built in the 1800s, which was made unusable. It was repaired and is in service again.[2]

Hutchinson, Kansas, January 19, 2020 - A magnitude 4.5 earthquake struck during a church's Sunday morning service. There was no damage to the church building, but it knocked items off shelves and pictures off walls. There was some damage to chimneys and sidewalks in town.[3]



Puerto Rico, December 28, 2019 to present - Beginning on December 28 with a Magnitude 4.7 tremblor, Puerto Rico is being shaken by a continuing series of earthquakes. As of February 21, 2020, there have been eleven quakes Mag. 5 or stronger. The biggest one so far was 6.4 on Jan. 7. Many church buildings have been heavily damaged, including historic ones. Several denominations, missionary agencies, and Christian relief organizations are helping congregations on the island.[4][5][6]

Savai'i, Samoa, 1905-1911 - Ruins of churches can be seen near Saleaula on Savai'i Island in the nation of Samoa. They were buried by lava during eruptions of Mount Matavanu from 1905 to 1911.[7]

Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro, Mexico, 1943 - In 1943, a steam vent opened up in a cornfield near the village of Paricutin in southern Mexico. This grew into a volcano. Lava buried that village and another one nearby, San Juan Parangaricutiro. The facade, bell tower, and altar of the

O The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake

AMOS 1:1

*... And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah*

ZECHARIAH 14:5

*The Lord ... looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke (Psalm 104:32)!*

PSALM 104:32

*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places*

MATTHEW 24:7

*But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:7).*

2 PETER 3:7

*The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram*

PSALM 106:17

*Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly (Exodus 19:18).*

EXODUS 19:18

## TECTONIC TERROR CONTINUED...

village church still stand above the lava rock.[8]

Kalapana, Hawaii, 1990 - When lava from a Kilauea eruption was overrunning the village of Kalapana, the little Star of the Sea Church was moved out on a flatbed truck trailer to a high place in nearby Kaimu where it is now a tourist attraction. Services are occasionally held there.[9]

### **Special Resource for Severe Weather and Natural Disasters**

Tectonic disasters can be extremely terrifying events. It is as though the earth itself has turned against you, moving the ground out from under you and throwing hot rocks, ash, and molten lava at you. Churches are not exempt from their threats:

- Earthquakes, which come without warning, and
- Volcanic eruptions, which can burn and bury entire communities.

We have a free download for severe weather and natural disasters - "Emergency Supply List Recommendations (Essential supplies to have on hand in a disaster or emergency event)." To receive this free download, [click here](#). [10].

### **When the Earth Trembles and Belches Fire**

The writers of the Bible were familiar with volcanoes and earthquakes. During the Exodus the Israelites experienced both in their 40-year journey from Egypt to Canaan. Archaeological seismologists have identified the general area of the epicenter of the earthquake during King Uzziah's reign (Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5) as north of the Sea of Galilee. Noting the damage done in Israel and Judah as well as in other nations, they rated it about Magnitude 8.[11] In Psalm 104:32, the psalmist uses quakes and volcanoes as examples of the Lord's power and glory. Jesus said that earthquakes would continue until he returned - we still have them today.

### **Earthquakes**

Earthquakes start in faults (cracks in Earth's crust). Their strength is measured by Magnitude (Mw). A whole number higher in magnitude is ten times as strong. For instance, Mw 5.3 is 10x Mw 4.3.

The Mw 8 Uzziah earthquake in 760 BC was the strongest quake in that area in 300 years. In recent years, scientists were able to measure the damage, which was major. We have no descriptive record of the quake from that time, but it is evident there would have been many casualties.

The news stories show only a few of the many instances of church buildings damaged by earthquakes in the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Add to these those damaged elsewhere in North America and the Caribbean, and it shows a significant overall risk of earthquake damage. Some areas have a higher risk than others. More than half the states in the U.S. have a reasonable risk of a moderate to strong earthquake. This includes the part of the Mississippi River bordering the State of Missouri, where the three Mw 7+ New Madrid quakes were centered in 1811-1812.

There is only a 1/168 chance that any one quake will hit during any one Sunday or Sabbath Day morning service (one hour out of the week), as the one in Hutchinson did, but a strong quake in another hour could make the sanctuary unusable, as happened in Louisa County, Virginia.

In preparing for an earthquake, our primary goal is saving lives and preventing injuries. This applies to both the building and its contents.

**Building** - A building can be made safe from earthquakes up to a certain strength. Part of this depends on the underlying soil. A sedimentary basin will amplify and resonate with the shaking. Part depends on the type of construction.

## TECTONIC TERROR CONTINUED...

There are codes for each type, whether wood-framed, steel-framed, or masonry. For example, in 1984, a Seattle congregation bought a surplus elementary school from the city school district. They had to retrofit it to the 1975 state earthquake building code for brick buildings[12] before they could get an occupancy certificate and move in.

Find out what the risk of a major earthquake is for your location, then find out what the recommended building standards are for your type of building.

**Contents** - Here is the real hazard for the level of earthquake your church is most likely to face: falling objects. It does not take much of a jolt to knock books and other things off a shelf or the wall, knock off objects hanging on short straight pegs, or topple free-standing bookcases and cabinets. Just look at photos of quake damage in stores! A heavier jolt can bring down hanging lights (especially heavy chandeliers).

**Remedy?** Secure cabinets and bookcases to studs in the wall. Hang objects from hooks anchored in studs. Put lighter objects on the upper shelves, heavier things on the lower shelves. Don't seat people beneath clocks or framed pictures on the wall. Don't stack books, boxes, etc. too high. Don't leave tall, heavy objects leaning against the wall.

There are a few things you can do when an earthquake strikes. If you can, get outside and go far enough from the building that a wall can't fall on you. If you can't get out right away, head for a corner of the room or get under a table or desk. Stay away from things that can fall on you.

## Volcanic Eruptions

Unlike with earthquakes, volcanic vulnerability in this country is limited to certain areas. These are the Pacific Coast and the Aleutians, Hawaii, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. There is a lesser vulnerability in the Rockies[13], the Intermountain Region, and the Appalachians[14] (any place with hot springs or steam vents).

We tend to think that the dangers from a volcanic eruption are ash and gasses, flying rocks, pyroclastic flows, lava, and accompanying earthquakes (including landslides). However, most North American volcanoes have glaciers and snowpacks. Most of the property damage in the May 18, 1980 Mt. St. Helens eruption was caused by mudflows from melted snow and ice clogging rivers, breaking bridges, and covering fields and roads.

An eruption dumping mudflows into rivers going to large population areas could cause a lot of damage and threaten lives, even at a considerable distance[15] - hopefully there's enough warning for a mass evacuation. Many churches would be in these areas. Could you warn your congregation to stay away from the area if your church was in the way? If your church was in a safe area, are you ready to shelter refugees? If a sister congregation is in the affected area, could you take them in?

If your church is where it could be threatened by volcanic activity, are the records duplicated in a safe site?

## Conclusion

Not every church has an equal chance of a strong earthquake. Most have a reasonable chance of a light tremblor, which could knock books off shelves and clocks off walls, or a moderate quake, which could cause some damage. Even less equal is the chance of volcanic activity threatening a church. We should find out what the chances are for our location and prepare accordingly.

See link for references: <https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.net/articles/tectonic-terror/>

# CHURCH SECURITY ROLL CALL

WEEKLY TIPS AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHURCH SECURITY TEAMS BASED ON THE RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE OF KRIS MOLONEY AND THE SHEEPDOG CHURCH SECURITY TEAM. HOSTED BY KRIS MOLONEY.



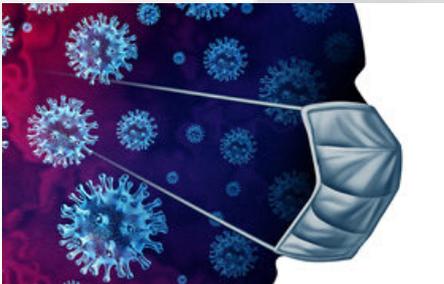
## **CSRC196: It AIN'T OVER TIL IT'S OVER**

While Winter lasts, we remain ready for the cold, snow, ice, and strong winds. Some parts of the country face rain, flooding, and tornadoes, with their own threats to the safety of the flock. It may be March, but it is still Winter. As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over 'til it's over." [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)



## **CSRC197: TWISTING IN THE WIND**

When dark clouds roll in and the sky rumbles, beware. There is danger ahead. Know what's coming and be prepared. [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)



## **CSRC198: SPECIAL CORONAVIRUS EPISODE**

Sheepdog Church Security's founder, Kris Moloney, hosts a special podcast where he discusses the coronavirus pandemic and what we can be doing to keep our churches safe. [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)



## **CSRC199: HUMAN ERROR**

Disasters can be both natural and the result of human activity. Those in the latter category are largely preventable, and therefore regrettable. Some are more likely to impact our church because of its location. We need to be ready for those. [CLICK TO LISTEN](#)



## **CSRC200: TECTONIC TERROR**

Tectonic disasters can be extremely terrifying events. It is as though the earth itself has turned against you, moving the ground out from under you and throwing hot rocks, ash, and molten lava at you. Churches are not exempt from their threats. [CLICK TO LISTEN](#)

# MAIL CALL

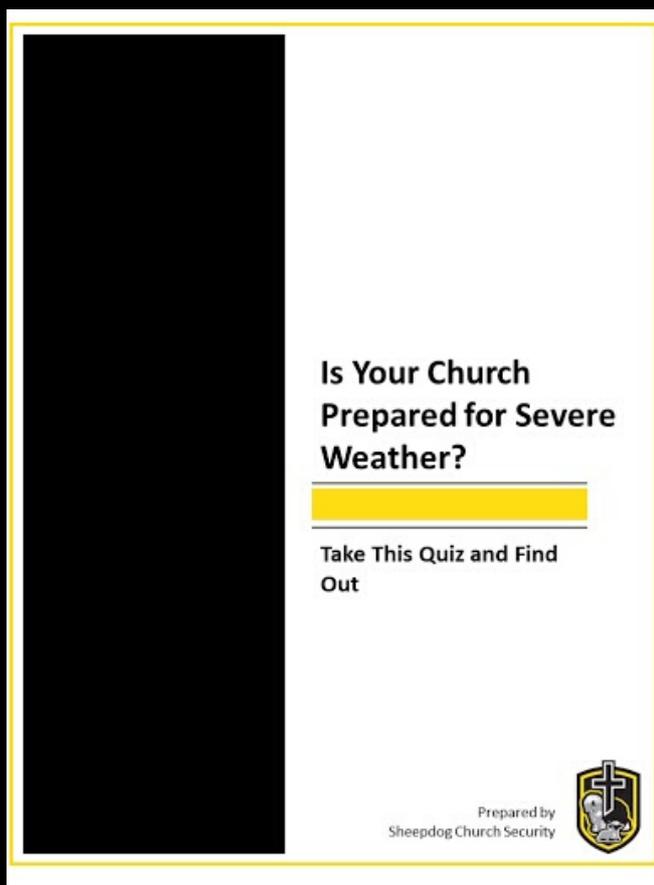
Messages from Sheepdogs across the country

## BOBBI B.

I found this very helpful as a place to start. When beginning this ministry you want to get it right the first time. This material gives consistent on point direction to train with, Bless you for what you do and THANK YOU!

## KELLEY M.

Sheepdog gives info about the activities in churches and on church property nationwide. This allows security teams to adjust security protocols and assignments to be better prepared to ensure our churches are safe.



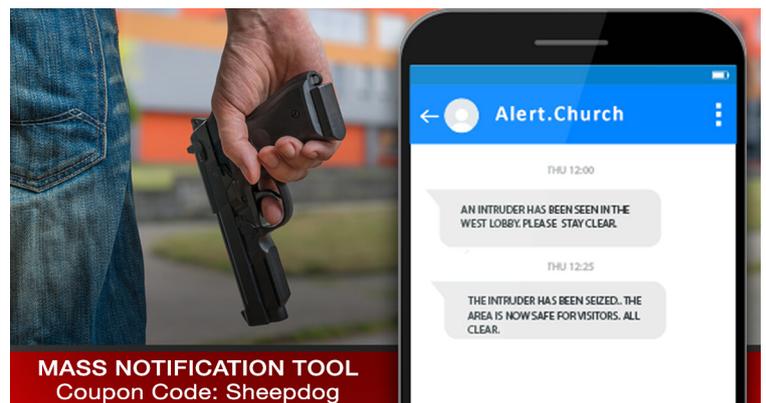
## FREE MONTHLY DOWNLOAD

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# SHEEPDOG'S MONTHLY GUEST ARTICLE

## NO, WE CANNOT JUST “START CHURCH” AGAIN

BY ROBERT E. DOWNING, ED.D.

Earlier this week, I attended to meeting with several Virginia pastors to discuss the impact of the coronavirus on their ministries. I was asked to attend because I had been providing advice to my minister about the coronavirus well before it made the national news. Over the last two weeks, all of the ministers in attendance had done online streaming of their Sunday services (as opposed to a face-to-face meeting with the congregation). I should mention I think these ministers should be commended for coming together and working on solutions to the problems caused by the coronavirus.

I asked the ministers if they were familiar with the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control websites. All the ministers indicated they were aware of these websites.

However, prior to this meeting, I don't think any of us really fully understood the impact that coronavirus will have on our churches. Some of the questions and ideas that we talked about are presented here in the hopes that other ministers or churches will find the information useful.

Perhaps the most startling thing that I realized was that the “returned to normal” (church activities as we've always had them) is highly unlikely. Below, is a discussion of why the church cannot simple start again.

One of the duties of a shepherd (Minister) is to protect the flock. Even if Gov. Northam should lift the ban (on how many people can gather together), there are

*“the most startling thing that I realized was that the  
“returned to normal” (church activities as we've always  
had them) is highly unlikely.”*

still health concerns associated with the coronavirus.

The CDC recommends that individual 60 and older, and individuals with underlying health conditions stay home. Additionally, to reduce the spread of the coronavirus all individuals are encouraged wash their hands and maintain adequate distancing (6 feet or more). Remember that there are individuals that have the coronavirus and may be asymptomatic (they can spread the disease even though they don't appear to have any symptoms).

Unfortunately, until a vaccine or effective treatment is developed, churches may have to live with the following limitations.

If a church were to "restart" all ministries should take into account the CDC and state health organization guidelines. To put the parishioners at risk would be a failure to protect the flock. It is likely that a church's liability would increase if it does not adequately protect both their flock or any visitors to their church.

Let's first focus on appropriate social distancing:

One minister talked about wanting to hear the choir

singing again. Unfortunately, most choirs typically are grouped together, side-by-side, several rows deep. To maintain 6 feet of distancing would require changes their normal spacing or location - and there may or may not be room to do this. And, at many churches it would also be necessary to change the microphone systems which are suspended from the ceilings.

Let's also discuss how you might seat the parishioners. If you are trying to maintain 6 feet of distancing it might be necessary to use only every second row or possibly even every third row. And, while it might be appropriate to allow households to sit together, it would be inappropriate to allow non-household members to sit close to each other. With these limitations, many churches would find they would have to turn away individuals because their sanctuary wouldn't hold the normal number of parishioners.

Additionally, the spacing for children has to change. Often, children are often put in some sort of children's program and are not in the main sanctuary. However, all children's programs should probably be stopped. This is because children cannot typically be expected to maintain proper social distancing. If one child has the disease it is likely that many or all of the children are likely to come down with it. And of course, these children will spread that disease within their families. Until a vaccine is developed it is probably appropriate the children stay with their families, in the main sanctuary, and that the families enforce proper social distancing.

There was also discussion about how to handle communion. No one was currently providing communion and I think the general consensus was that they would not be providing it in the near future. Quite frankly, my concern is an asymptomatic individual might handle either the plates with the communion wafers or the plates with the communion cups.

Further, a large part of most churches has to do with their Bible study or Sunday school programs. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on your perspective, this presents a lot of problems for the church. Typically, the Sunday school programs have a great deal of social interaction, close proximity (hugging, hand shaking, etc.), often

with food/beverages. Many of the Sunday school attendees, that have the best intentions, could be infecting or spreading the disease. Who in the church is going to be responsible to see that none of this happens? Who is going to be responsible to ensure that people stay 6 feet apart, don't touch each other, don't share food, etc.? All church members have to learn new behaviors.

And, of course many of parishioners want to talk with the minister either before or after the service. Many of the discussions are personal and almost private nature and the parishioners move in to share their conversation with the minister. Again, someone has to train the ministers and the parishioners that this is inappropriate - they need to be 6 feet apart.

And, all of the greeters that are trying to make people feel welcome in the church face a similar issue. It just "feels wrong" to be 6 feet away when you're welcoming someone into your church.

Now, let's focus on the CDC recommendation that individuals 60 and older should stay home or self-quarantine:

If the church attempts to restart and older individuals come to the church, the church would be violating the CDC guidelines. My church is made up primarily of older individuals. I would guess that more than half of the parishioners are over 60. This means that less than half of the current parishioners should be in attendance.

In my Sunday school class (which normally tops 40) there only four people that are under 60 - and I believe two of those individuals have underlying health problems. In other words, if my Sunday school class were to restart only two or three members out of the normal 40 should be there.

So? If churches are to restart who is responsible for encouraging the older parishioners to stay home/self-isolate?

And, what about the CDC recommendations if someone is sick and not feeling well - that they should stay home:

The CDC is encouraging employers to allow employees to stay home if they're not feeling well. This is of course to prevent the spread of the virus to other employees. How does that affect the church?

What happens if a parent has a child that is sick at church? Or, if one of the parents is sick? Have you ever asked anyone to leave church because they were coughing? Who's responsible for telling parishioners that they have to leave the church because



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they are displaying potential signs of the coronavirus?

### Recommendations

I look forward to seeing my friends at church. However, it may be some period of time before things return to any semblance of normalcy. Before that period of time, there has to be a transition.

During this transmission period, all of the church staff and all the congregation have to learn new behaviors. We should be acting as her brother's keeper's - looking out for our brothers' well-being. To do that, we have to learn new behaviors, new ways of treating those that we love in a more formal and distant manner.

This paper is obviously not complete in presenting information about potential problems nor does it provide a complete set of recommendations to address those topics. The intention of the author is to encourage church leaders, staff and parishioners to begin to think about the issues surrounding restarting their Houses of Worship.



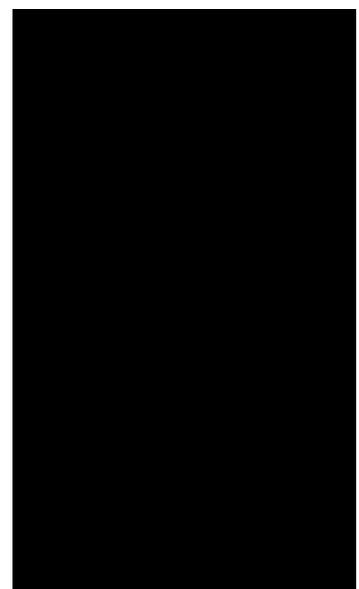
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## JEFFREY TOEPPE

My name is Jeffrey Toeppe, Chief Instructor and Owner of Personal Defense Training, LLC in Wisconsin. I'm a Certified NRA Instructor (Basics of Pistol Shooting, Personal Protection In the Home, Personal Protection Outside the Home), NRA Range Safety Officer, a Certified USCCA Instructor (Concealed Carry and Home Defense Fundamentals, Defensive Shooting Fundamentals Levels 1 & 2, Countering the Mass Shooter Threat, and Emergency First Aid Fundamentals), and a SABRE Certified Civilian Safety Awareness Academy and College Safety Awareness Instructor for OC (pepper) defensive spray. I've also had extensive training in Church safety and security from Sheepdog Church Security, Strategos, FEMA, Brotherhood Mutual Insurance, and other organizations. I'm a member and trainer of the Grace Church Safety Ministry Team and Racine Area Church Security Network (RACSN). I'm blessed to serve individuals, families, groups and Houses of Worship to equip them to protect what they love.

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## Sheepdog Seminars

The Sheepdog Seminar is a response to the violence that reeks havoc in our world. It calls upon the defenders to take their stand. In a one day seminar it is impossible to impart all of the information that churches - and society as a whole - need in order to create a safe atmosphere for their communities. However, when you leave the Sheepdog Seminar, you will know exactly what you need to start doing.

# SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

Church Safety and Security Events

- **LITTLE ROCK, AK - MAY 2**
- **LONGVIEW, TX - MAY 9**

*We are building a community of leaders who are called to protect the flock.*



# SHEEPDOG CORNER

*Hi Sheepdog,*

While most of us are stuck at home, I thought it might be nice to give you an opportunity to ask me questions about safety and security for houses of worship. Ask your question and I'll create a short video with the answer. Here is how this will work:

Ask your Question using this webpage:

<https://sheepdogchurchsecurity.lpages.co/sheepdog-ga/>

(You may have to copy and paste this URL into your web browser.)

1. Click the "Submit a Question" button.
2. Put in your information and question.
3. Click the "Send" button.

To watch Answer videos go to our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTrrcSlOn6zG1ySOHYzQkdQ>

We will also be posting them on our Facebook page.

Until the "Shelter in Place" guidance is lifted, stay safe and prayful.

*Your Loyal Companion in Christ,  
Kris*



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A Police Officer with over 15 years of experience and a retired Army Captain and Company Commander. He has certifications in Crime Prevention, Security Assessments, and the Crime Free Program. He also has a Bachelor's degree in Ministry and a Master's degree in Organizational Leadership.  
Kris P. Moloney