

November 2022

THE CHURCH GUARDIAN

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM SHEEPDOG CHURCH SECURITY



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Training Spotlight
 - Weekly Team Briefing
 - Lessons Learned
 - Monthly Articles
 - Church Security Roll Call
 - Mail Call
 - Guest Article
 - Certified Instructors
 - Upcoming Seminars
 - Sheepdog Corner
-

TOP NEWS STORY

POLICE PRAISE CHURCH MEMBERS FOR KEEPING THE PEACE AFTER ARMED WOMAN ARRIVES

Outside two church members confronted Espigh, and - though she immediately pointed a handgun at one of them - they ultimately got her to put her weapon away and prevented her from carrying out any threats until police arrived.

Source: [CLICK HERE](#)

TRAINING SPOTLIGHT

Arson and Fire Safety v4

Fire remains one of the single greatest threats to churches and their congregations today. Each year, fires ravage tens of thousands of homes, businesses and organizations across the United States, leaving devastation and loss in their wake. If you are prepared, evacuating the congregation is possible. In fact, with the right planning and preparation, you can decrease the chances that your church will be threatened by fire in the first place.

Our Arson and Fire Safety module includes a broad range of training materials and other information, and is designed to ensure that you are well armed to protect your congregation, safeguard the physical structure where possible, and, above all, reduce the chances that a fire in your facility will lead to a loss of life.



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WEEKLY TEAM BRIEFING

Rescue from the Flames

And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire (Jude1:23a).

The Articles

October is Fire Prevention Month. The second article, “Do I Smell Smoke?” (In Case of Fire), is based on the training module “Arson and Fire Safety.” We need to save lives if there is a fire in the church. How do the other articles relate to the theme of fire? In those cases, it is another kind of fire, Hell.

In “1999 Temple Grounds Church Shooting (Lesson Learned), based on the course “Active Shooter Response,” the active shooter killed two people, and then was killed in a shootout with police. The killer went to the Eternal Fire.

“The Critical Choice (To Shoot or Not Shoot)” considers the use of deadly force, which may send someone else there, too. This relates to the training modules “Basic Use of Force Laws” and “Deescalating Disruptive Persons.”

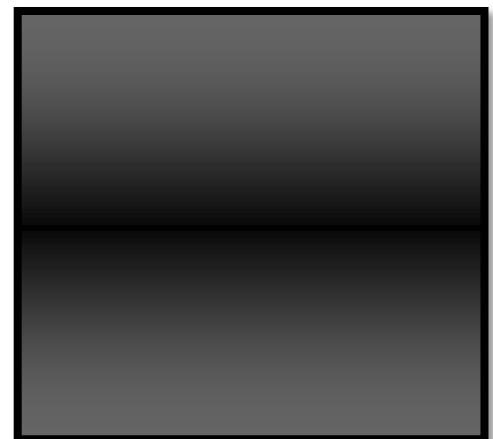
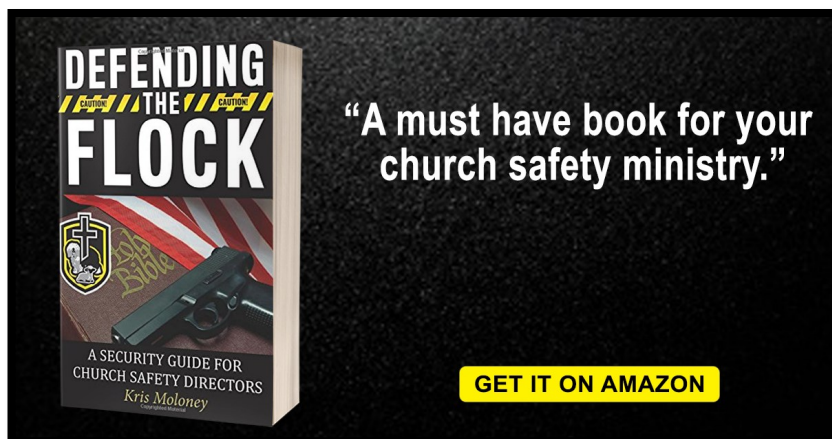
The focus of “A Safe Distance” (Isolating Offenders) is protecting children from sexual abuse as well as ministering to offenders, hopefully saving them from Hell (Jude 1:23). It is based on the course “Protecting Children from Abuse.”

A serious concern in “Blue Life Support” (The Cornelius Project) is suicide by police officers. Founder Jimmy Meeks is concerned with more than the physical lives of officers. He cares about their spiritual life, “pulling them out of the fire.”

Weekly Team Briefing Continued

Action Points

1. Be alert to unusual behaviors and violations of social norms. Warn others if a likely threat is coming their way.
2. Plan and practice fire evacuation. Hold a fire drill at church.
3. Find, think through, and practice resolving violent and potentially violent situations and conduct drills with situations involving the choice of whether or not to use deadly force.
4. First, work to keep sex offenders separate from children and youth. Then find ways to minister to the offenders, even if it is referring them to another church which has that ministry.
5. Support law enforcement officers in your area. Pray for them and tell them about [Blue Life Support](#).



1999 Temple Grounds Church Shooting

A MONTHLY FEATURE LOOKING AT CHURCH SHOOTING INCIDENTS

From the Bible

As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death (Proverbs 26:18).

* David pretended to be insane, because he knew the Philistines were afraid of armed madmen:

“Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?” (1 Samuel 21:15).

* Insanity is a product of fallen human nature:

This is an evil ... the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

Introduction

A conversation about church shootings should include not only those in church buildings and schools, but also those in other facilities that are operated by the church. The incident covered in this article happened in a library which served as an integral part of the parent church's ministry. Such an entity should receive the same security considerations as the church's places of worship and education. Not only that, the lesson learned from this shooting should be applied in our churches.

Videocast and Lessons Learned Download

The church shooting in this article is covered by Kris Moloney in a videocast on the [YouTube](#) channel [Sheepdog Church Security Academy](#) (the audio is in a [Church Security Roll Call](#) podcast on Sound Cloud).[2][3]

Beneath the video window is a link to the [Church Shooting Lesson Learned Download](#). This PDF (an article summary) can be printed or attached to email messages to share for discussion, teaching, and persuasion. The link for this lesson will be active for about a month, until the next Lesson Learned article and videocast is posted.

Madness in the Library

It was 10:30 Thursday morning, April 15, 1999, at the Latter Day Saints (LDS) Family History Library on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah. Since many had come from afar to attend an international genealogical convention this week, the library was full of people researching their relatives, and some adding new records.

An older man carrying an umbrella came in. He walked up to the front desk, pulled a .22 pistol out from the umbrella, and shot the library receptionist in the head. Following this, he fired wildly, wounding five more. Two of the six wounded died. One was a security guard. News stories did not reveal whether the guards were armed, but church security personnel were probably unarmed in 1999.

About thirty people on the second floor locked themselves in a room when they heard gunfire. This was before lockdowns were commonly recommended for active killer situations. Responding police did not expect to find a lockdown, so they thought another shooter was active.


The bomb squad was called in to search the yellow truck the shooter drove, and they also searched the library for any hidden bombs. As a result, the nearby denominational office building was evacuated, as well as the Triad Center where KSL studios are located. Ironically, there had recently been another shooting at KSL by a different suspect.

The total time of gunfire lasted for about an hour and 45 minutes. Responding police had the shooter cornered, but he neither surrendered nor committed suicide. Instead, he threatened the officers from cover. They held their fire to avoid injuring innocent persons until the shooter popped out from around a corner and fired at them. Simultaneously, one officer who had kept his gun pointed at the corner shot and neutralized him. The shooter was the seventh wounded person and the third fatality.

Fighting the War Again

The 70-year-old killer and his wife had migrated to the United States from Russia not long after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union when he was 13. What he saw, heard, and experienced, like PTSD, left a lifelong imprint.

In 1999, they were living in an apartment in Salt Lake City. No news articles mention their religious affiliation, but we do know that he was a schizophrenic under a doctor's care. Sometime before the shooting, he had gone off his medication and refused to take it anymore, a replication of several other tragedies. His son tried to get him committed, but under Utah law at that time, involuntary commitment of the mentally ill was not likely.



The shooter was paranoid. He saw Nazi spies almost everywhere. Many times he would give someone a Nazi salute with a "Heil Hitler!" In context, this appears to have been mocking the other person as a Nazi spy. The gesture seems to reflect a memory of Nazi occupiers insisting on a show of loyalty by citizens of occupied territories.

The genealogical convention that week brought crowds into Salt Lake City. To the man's schizophrenic paranoid mind, this may have been seen as an invasion by Nazis. He had a gun, so he was going to resist. That mindset could easily translate city police officers into enemy soldiers.

The killer also had a police record in Salt Lake City. Years before, in a store, he had gotten into an altercation with another shopper. At this time, he had the .22 in his pocket, but was not charged with it. In another incident, he poked the tip of his umbrella into the spokes of a bicycle while someone was riding it.

Also near Temple Square are the offices and studios of KSL, a church-owned broadcasting station. The suspect stopped there earlier that morning to ask directions to the library. He expressed anger with the LDS church and also he said he wanted to be on the news. Who knows why the genealogical library, unless he thought it held Nazi dossiers on local residents, including him.

What Followed

The death toll of the shooting was three, including the shooter. Four others were also taken to the hospital with wounds, some critical. Over a dozen others suffered injuries from hastily getting out of the way or diving under tables.

The Utah legislature has repeatedly struggled with the issue of involuntary commitment of severely mentally ill persons. At issue has been whether someone severely mentally ill, especially if it has already resulted in some level of violence, could be committed for refusing to take prescribed psychiatric medications. Incidents like this one drive the debate.

As to safety and security measures at the Family History Library, they are not publicly available. We do know from the news stories that it had guards, but there was no mention of whether the guards were armed, how they were trained, or about current training and arming.

However, FamilySearch has an available document on security: "How do we keep our FamilySearch center safe and secure?" This is a guide for each FamilySearch Center (FCS) operated by a local stake or ward. There is no mention of special safety & security training for FCS staff and/or volunteers.

Lesson Learned

First, let's acknowledge what was right. For one thing, persons on the second floor executed a lockdown when they knew there was shooting. Also, there were guards on duty, and they tried to get people out of the way when shooting began. However, they did not spot the shooter until he started firing.

The lesson: Be alert to unusual behavior and violations of social norms. This was discussed by Kris Moloney and Simon Osamoh in their interview (see the videocast [here](#)). There were a few things about the shooter which should have aroused suspicion:

- ◆ The suspect expressed his anger as well as a desire to be on the news to the receptionist at KSL when he asked for directions to the Family History Library. That should have not only been suspicious, but should have raised concern for the library as a target.

With the church having so many entities within a few blocks, greeters, doorkeepers, and receptionists at those entities should be trained to warn the others of suspicious persons, objects, and activities.

- ◆ The umbrella should have seemed out of place that day. According to the weather history for Salt Lake City, April 15, 1999 was in the middle of a long rainless spell (see [image](#)). Maybe they would take notice now since it is known an umbrella can hide a pistol.

If suspicious and untimely behavior is noticed, a safety team member can greet the person(s) and engage them in conversation while evaluating them and what they are carrying (like the umbrella with no rain). Perhaps the guard can disarm them if there is a weapon.

Conclusion

If a person violates social norms or is out of synch with a current situation (such as the weather), pay attention, notify others, and take appropriate measures, just to be safe.

Also This Month

This is the first of five articles for October. The other four are "Do I Smell Smoke?" (In Case of Fire), "The Critical Choice" (To Shoot or Not Shoot), "A Safe Distance" (Isolating Offenders), and "Blue Life Support" (The Cornelius Project).

[Article References](#)



DO I SMELL SMOKE?

In Case of Fire

Introduction

An old saying is, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." Before fire detectors and alarms, smoke was the primary warning of a fire. Even today, it is an important indicator. October is Fire Prevention Month. Besides knowing how to prevent fires, we also need to know how to respond in case there is a fire, with keeping people safe as the first priority.



In the News

Phoenix, Arizona, May 17, 2022 - A fire started on a Tuesday morning at Grace Pointe Church in downtown Phoenix. It was severe enough to cause part of the roof to collapse. A dozen persons staying in a homeless shelter in the church were evacuated. They lost all their possessions, but escaped without injury.[2]

Southport, North Carolina, September 22, 2019 - Fire started in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Southport on a Sunday morning. The priest and staff safely evacuated everyone from the building and helped put out the fire. The damage was minor.[3]

* Even if there is no fire, smoke itself is a health hazard, so evacuation was still needed:

West Nashville, Tennessee, March 28, 2022 - It was a Monday morning. Firefighters responded to a report of smoke in the West Nashville Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Everyone in a day care in the church was evacuated. There was no fire, and the source of the smoke was not found.[4]

Shenango Township, Pennsylvania, August 6, 2022 - It was Saturday night at the campground of the National Association of the Church of God in Shenango Township. Everything was ready for the annual conference to begin on Sunday. Then a fire broke out in the dining hall and spread to an adjoining dormitory. Fire departments in Pennsylvania and Ohio responded. Two people in a building got out safely.

The conference started as scheduled. Other arrangements had to be made for providing meals, for part of the housing, and for the locations of some of the meetings.
[5]

Beecher, Illinois, September 19, 2021 - The historic rural church building of Saint Paul's Lutheran Church burned to the ground on a Sunday afternoon. Oktoberfest was in progress in the parking lot when the fire began in the church. All the people in and around the church were safely evacuated.[6]

Peace River, Alberta, Canada, July 3, 2021 - Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic church in Peace River was hit during the string of attacks targeting Catholic churches in Canada in protest of abuse more than a century before. A bishop and the local priest were there on a Saturday night when someone threw two Molotov cocktails through windows. The two clerics limited damage by fighting the ensuing fire until firefighters arrived.

They were able to hold services the next day. In his sermon, the priest likened forgiveness of haters to putting out the fire instead of fanning the flames.[7]

Videocast and Show Notes

The subject of this article is covered by Kris in a videocast on the [Sheepdog Church Security Academy](#) channel on YouTube.[8] His perspective comes from his experience in the military, law enforcement, and church security.

Beneath the video screen is a link to the Show Notes (an article summary). This is available for one week (until the next article is posted). This is a downloadable PDF. It can be printed to share with others.

Smelling Smoke: Detecting a Fire

What if you're in the church building and you smell smoke? Maybe someone in the neighborhood is cooking on an outdoor grill, or burning leaves, or using a fireplace. For the past few years in many parts of the country, the smoke came from wildfires. You know something is burning or has burned.

What if the smoke (or the sound of an alarm) comes from a fire in the church? What do you do? That depends on where you are, where the fire is, what kind of fire, and who is in the building.

From the Bible

And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? (Zechariah 3:2).

And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire (Jude1:23a).

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out (Proverbs 26:20).

And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died (1 Kings 16:18).

Ready for a Fire - Just in Case

Fire prevention is another entire subject, but if there is a fire we need to be ready, not just us, but also the building. Briefly, this means:

- ◆ Enough properly placed exits for the maximum number of people who may be in the building.
- ◆ Lighted fire exit signs.
- ◆ Fire alarms
- ◆ Emergency lights.
- ◆ Unobstructed exit routes and doors.
- ◆ Fire doors to stop or slow down the spread of a fire.
- ◆ Properly placed fire extinguishers of the right kinds.
- ◆ Fire suppression systems (such as sprinklers).
- ◆ Safety Team members and other persons in the church trained to respond to a fire emergency.
- ◆ Housekeeping measures to remove fire hazards and hinder arson.

When It Is a Fire

The quick answer for "What do we do when there is a fire?" is "Get people out and fight the fire." The how of these actions is very important. This is outlined in the section "What to Do During Fire Evacuations" in Arson Prevention and Fire Drills for Churches v3[9]:

- ◆ Rescue
- ◆ Alert
- ◆ Confine
- ◆ Evacuate
 - ◆ Elevators
 - ◆ Trapped in Building
 - ◆ Evacuating Children
 - ◆ Planning for Evacuations of the Disabled and Elderly
- ◆ Extinguish

Rescue

Get people in the area of the fire out to a safe place. If any are injured, first assist them in getting to safety. Burns and injuries can then be treated in a safe place.

Alert

Alert the Safety Team ("Code Red" and location). Let them know where the fire is and whether total evacuation is needed. A team member will call the Fire Department or 911. If there is to be an evacuation, sound the fire alarm. If a service or other event is in session, notify the leader who will notify the group or the congregation when the alarm sounds.

Confine

Do what you can to contain the fire. Move flammables away from the fire if you can safely do so. Close doors and windows to the area of the fire. If the fire is in a metal container and a lid is available, put the lid on it.

Evacuate

Get everyone in the building to safety. This means outside. Have an assembly area where they can meet. See if anyone is missing. Teachers take roll of their classes.

Elevators

Older elevators should not be used to escape a fire. First, the elevator can stop if the power or hydraulics is cut off, trapping occupants in the shaft. Second, smoke can get into the shaft, suffocating those using it. Third, the elevator shaft can become a channel for the fire itself.

There are newer, fire-safe elevators which can be used during a fire, They are in fire-proof shafts with emergency power for operation. These will be marked as safe for fire evacuation. If not so marked, use stairs or an outside fire escape. By the way, consider fire-safe elevators if the church is building new, expanding, or remodeling.

Trapped in Building

Some people may be trapped in the building. Teach them beforehand to

- ◆ Close the doors and vents,
- ◆ Call 911 and stay on the line,
- ◆ Use a window for escape if available.

Evacuating Children

Young children can be led out with a safety walking rope (like the ones used for taking preschoolers on a walk outside).

For the nursery, have evacuation cribs. One person can roll 4, 5 or 6 babies to the door in one crib. Have enough of them to evacuate all when the nursery is full.

School-age children can file out with the teacher leading and the assistant following.

Evacuating Injured, Ill, Disabled and Elderly

Some persons cannot make it out on their own. Some will have to go in wheelchairs; some will have to be carried. Others may walk with help - some of these may need a transfer & walking gait belt.

Extinguish

If you are where the fire is, and it is not too large, you might be able to extinguish it.

Let's start in the kitchen. Cooking ranges, open flame grills, and deep fryers are common sources of kitchen fires, especially grease fires. Fixed (installed) cooking appliances should have installed kitchen fire suppressors. These usually have nozzles mounted in the ventilation hoods. Class K fire extinguishers are made for kitchens. If there are no extinguishers, a grease fire may be smothered with salt or baking soda.

Fire extinguishers are the best-known devices for putting out fires. Learn what kinds to use and how to use them.

Kinds of Extinguishers. There are five basic types of fire extinguishers:

- ◆ Class A—an ordinary combustibles including wood, paper, rubber, or plastic
- ◆ Class B—flammable liquids such as oil, alcohol, and gasoline
- ◆ Class C—electrical equipment
- ◆ Class D—reactive metals (rare for churches)
- ◆ Class K—mostly for kitchen fires, especially cooking oils and fats

Fire Extinguisher Placement. Fire extinguishers should be placed where they are close enough to be used for a fire anywhere in the building. No more than 75 feet away for Class A fires, 50 feet for Class B fires, and 30 feet for Class K. The larger the area of the building, the more extinguishers you'll need.

Using a Fire Extinguisher. Learn the right way to use a fire extinguisher. A helpful acronym from the National Fire Protection Association is PASS:

- ◆ Pull the pin—pointing the nozzle away from yourself—and release the locking mechanism
- ◆ Aim low at the base of the fire
- ◆ Squeeze the handle
- ◆ Sweep the hose from side to side

By the way, have Safety Team members on patrol inside the church buildings check the fire extinguishers. Look for signs of use or tampering and check the pressure.

Fire Drills

Almost all of us remember fire drills in school. These became more commonplace after the Our Lady of the Angels School fire in 1958.[10] Some of us have had fire drills where we work. A church should have a fire drill each year.

Using a floor plan of the church, plan for fire evacuation, including the location of the re-assembly area.

Have the Safety Team, ushers, and teachers participate in a pre-drill. They will lead in the full fire drill as well as in a real evacuation if there is one. A special drill can be held just for Sunday School classes.

After the drill, evaluate how it went. Were there any problems? Should any evacuation routes be changed? Are there too many people for one door? If fire department personnel are present, they can provide their evaluations.

Conclusion

If there is a fire in the church, be ready to evacuate. Also, know how to put it out.

Also this Month

October has five articles. The other four are "1999 Temple Grounds Church Shooting" (Lesson Learned), "The Critical Choice" (To Shoot or Not Shoot), "A Safe Distance" (Isolating Offenders), and "Blue Life Support" (The Cornelius Project).

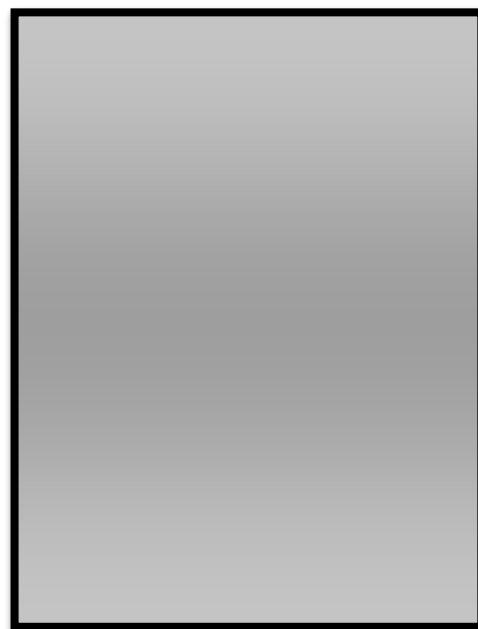
[Article References](#)



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THE CRITICAL CHOICE

To Shoot or Not Shoot

In the News

In these news stories, was the use of a weapon justified?

Tarrant County, Texas, September 29, 2020 - A grand jury decided to not charge a church security guard with murder. On December 29, 2019, Jack Wilson shot and killed a gunman at his church in White Settlement. The assailant had already killed two church members during the Sunday morning service. Under Texas law, a homicide of any kind is investigated by a grand jury.[2]

Montgomeryville, Pennsylvania, April 24, 2016 - A young man visiting a church sat in an already claimed seat. He responded loudly when told that the place on the pew belonged to someone else. The pastor and an usher came, spoke with him, and he calmed down.

A middle-aged man, who was a self-appointed guard, then came to the young man with a drawn gun, displayed a concealed carry permit card, and demanded that he leave the service. The young man said the "badge" and the gun were fake, then threw a punch. The "guard" fired his gun and the young man died.

The "guard" was arrested and charged with murder.[3]

Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 2020, and April 27, 2021 - A security guard and the owner of a security services company responded to a disturbance at an apartment complex his company covered. A woman in a car had been in a loud argument with someone in the complex. The guard fatally shot the woman after yelling "gun!"

The guard was arrested and charged with murder. He claimed self-defense. A handgun was found on the front passenger seat of the woman's car, and he said that she tried to run over him and his employees with her car. The trial jury acquitted him.[4][5]

When David had the chance to kill Saul, he decided to not do it:

"The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: ..."

(1 Samuel 26:11).

Jesus advised Peter to not be so quick to resort to deadly violence:

Then said Jesus unto [Peter], "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"

(Matthew 26:52).

Chicago, Illinois, March 28, 2018 - An armed man, who was already a convicted felon, entered a church during a Wednesday night meeting. Brandishing a firearm, he said, "This is a robbery." A security guard intervened. The robber shot and wounded the guard, who returned fire, wounding the robber. The robber fled, but was shortly arrested by police. He was still in the hospital when his arraignment was held.[6]

Observing and participating in simulation training gives journalists and others insight into split-second police decisions:

Miami, Florida, November 2016 - A reporter for NBC Miami used a situation simulator in the Miami-Dade police training center. These scenarios were shoot/don't shoot situations. Once he failed to shoot when he should. In a traffic stop scenario, he "shot" the simulated drunk driver several times. He said this gave him better appreciation of what police officers face in deciding whether to shoot.[7]

Houston, Texas, and Phoenix, Arizona, January 2017 - In Houston, a Black Panther leader took part in a training scenario for police. In one situation, he squeezed the Taser trigger, not knowing what was in the hand of a "suspect." The Panther said he was so tensed up he would have shot no matter what was in the hand.

In Arizona, an activist pastor who'd led protests after a police shooting went through simulations in the Maricopa County police training center. In one scenario he fired when a man he tried to help rushed him.

Both activists came away with an appreciation for law enforcement officers' split-second decisions. They advised young people to be respectful and watch their moves when dealing with police and security.[8]

A person with law enforcement experience shared his evaluation of a news story of someone who fired a warning shot when he felt threatened:

Wheeling, West Virginia, October 2014 - A man and his fiancé were walking down the street after a Saturday evening "Sunday School" class. A group of adolescent males followed them. The couple alleged that the young men made them feel unsafe, especially when one moved toward them in what seemed a threatening manner. This individual expressed a desire to rape the woman and cut the man.

The woman called 911. The man took the woman's concealed carry handgun because she was too shaky to aim. He fired a warning shot into the air just as police were where they could see the scene. The man was arrested and charged with wanton endangerment. Police did not follow the nine young men, who fled when the shot was fired.

Jeffrey Denning evaluated the incident looking for how the "totality of circumstances" might bear on the case, depending on what the facts are. As far as he could see, there likely was not an imminent jeopardy which would justify displaying a weapon, let alone firing a warning shot, especially in an urban setting.[9][10][11]

Introduction

There are choices to be made in every situation. When there is disruptive behavior, the choice is how to respond. If the disruption is violent and a Church Safety Team member is armed with a firearm, the choice may be whether or not to pull out the gun, then if the gun is drawn, whether or not to shoot. These decisions, made under stress, are most often second-guessed by persons not there.



Even investigators may come to wrong or questionable conclusions, and a jury may have to decide whether a case is "beyond a reasonable doubt." Actually, the use of any weapon, even pepper spray or a Taser, may bring legal actions, civil or criminal.

Videocast and Show Notes

The content of this article is discussed by Kris Moloney in a videocast on Sheepdog Church Security Academy (a YouTube channel) - the audio can be heard on a Church Security Roll Call podcast on SoundCloud.[12]

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Considerations in Use of Deadly Force

There are a few things to consider in deciding whether to use deadly force, such as the threat level, the avoidability of violence, sparing innocent persons, and the chance of success.

Threat Level

Our response to a crisis depends on several factors, one of which is the threat level.

Take for instance the news story in Montgomeryville. The threat level of the visitor's disturbance was low. It was a noisy objection to being told that someone else had the spot where he was sitting. The pastor and an usher responded reasonably, de-escalating the situation and restoring peace. If that was the furthest it went, there would have been an opportunity to win that young man.

The man who considered himself "security" for the church should not have had his gun drawn. There was no violence. The person had already been calmed down by the pastor and the usher. Showing the gun and the "badge" only escalated the situation and resulted in a death and a criminal charge.[3]

For us, we should not even draw deadly weapons unless facing a threat of deadly force. As Denning concluded his article, "[J]ust knowing how to shoot doesn't mean you should." [9]

Avoidability of Violence

Ideally, we should be able to avoid violence if we can. Even if threatened, we should try to avoid the use of deadly force. At least this is the logic of Duty to Retreat laws. Some of these laws are illogically rigid, such as one jurisdiction holding that if your home is invaded by armed persons, you should hide and not fire until fired upon (I do not know if that ordinance is still in effect). Nevertheless, avoiding deadly force is an ideal goal, especially in the church. However, it is not always possible.

How do we avoid the use of deadly force? Members of Church Safety Teams have an obligation to protect the people in the church, even at the risk of their own lives. If an attacker is already shooting, it's too late to avoid deadly force.

How can we avoid deadly force?

- ♦ **Verbal De-escalation:** When we know that trouble is brewing, the first option should be verbal de-escalation. If that works, then violence itself has been avoided, or at least walked back. There are cases when a person holding a weapon has been talked into laying it down.
- ♦ **Stalling:** Sometimes verbal de-escalation is only partially successful, holding off deadly violence until police arrive and take over. Stalling gives others more time to evacuate or shelter (lock down).
- ♦ **Less-than lethal force:** Sometimes we can stop or disarm a violent person with non-deadly force. If we are close enough to the person, unarmed control and self-defense moves may be enough. For example, in 2017 an usher at Burnette Chapel Church of Christ engaged the shooter physically and wrestled him for the gun.[13] Almost four years later, the pastor of a church in Nashville tackled a gunman, disarming him.[14]

Sparing Innocent Persons

What was notable about the shooting at the West Freeway Church of Christ is the steadiness of Jack Wilson holding his gun. He waited for a clear shot, so innocent persons wouldn't be hit. Critics who say he should have aimed to disarm, not kill, are not taking into consideration that a head shot was the only viable option.

This shows the importance of not wounding innocent people while stopping a killer. Those using a firearm need frequent time on the range to keep their aim sharp. They also need situation scenarios to practice zeroing in on the bad guy with other people moving around - this is what builds steadiness, patience, and timing.

Chance of Success

Let's be frank. You may have a gun, but it may not be the best option for you.

At the West Freeway church, Wilson was not the only security team member watching the guy with the fake beard. The other members were also watching him closely. When the man pulled a shotgun from his coat, the closest team member moved toward him while reaching for his concealed carry gun. He was just clearing leather when the killer turned and shot him. However, he was close enough to rush the gunman and tackle him. There was not enough time to shoot.

Maybe the shooter does not see you. Can you tackle him in less time than it takes to pull out a gun from inside your blazer or sweater and lift it to aim? Every half second longer it takes is time for him to shoot another victim, maybe two.

Ready to Choose

Don't leave your choice to chance. Prepare your mind and your responses ahead of time. Condition yourself for various situations where you will have to choose whether to shoot or not shoot.[15] Practice not only shooting, but other methods of stopping violent or potentially violent persons: verbal de-escalation, and unarmed control and self-defense moves. This leaves you with more options from which to choose.

Conclusion

In a situation with a threat of deadly violence, you may have to decide in a split second whether to shoot or not shoot. Prepare now to be ready to make that critical choice.

Also This Month

This is the third of five articles for October, The other four are "1999 Temple Grounds Church Shooting" (Lesson Learned), "Do I Smell Smoke?" (In Case of Fire), "A Safe Distance" (Isolating Offenders), and "Blue Life Support" (The Cornelius Project).

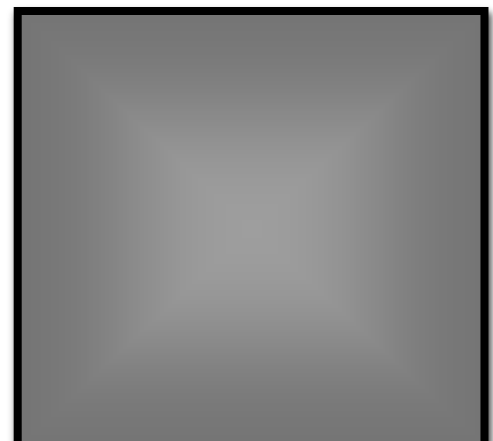
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A SAFE DISTANCE

Isolating Offenders

On the Web

These news stories show the need to keep sex offenders separate from children in the church:

Fredericksburg, Texas, November 2009 to April 2016 - A daycare worker in a Fredericksburg church was arrested for sexual abuse of children. It turns out that during 6½ years at least 15 preschool children had been abused by the man (age 31). He was promptly fired.[3]

Haverhill, Massachusetts, July 13, 2022 - A man living in New Hampshire who was listed as the pastor of a church in nearby Haverhill, Massachusetts, was arraigned for not registering in MA since he was a registered sex offender in NH. Among his victims in NH were minors under the age of 13.[4]

Lake Worth, Texas, January 4, 2013 - The 19-year-old son of a church family was charged with sexual molestation of a child under 6 (a boy age 4). As of the date of the news article, no other victims were known. The congregation has since strengthened its security.[5]

There are ministries working with sex offenders:

Chicago, Illinois, prior to the COVID Pandemic - When church staff observed a visitor's fascination with children at a church event, they made their acquaintance and found out who he was and where he was from. Using this information, they found out he was a registered sex offender. Contacting the man, they referred him to a nearby church with no children that specifically ministers to sex offenders.[6]

Fresno, California, December 2009 - A program named "Circles of Support and Accountability" (COSA) has been in operation at a Mennonite church in Fresno. This program ministers to sex offenders, especially those who have been released from prison. On January 29, 2010, the Religion and Ethics program on NPR aired a report on this ministry's activity.

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off ... And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off ... And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out ...

(Mark 9:43, 45, 47).

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea

(Matthew 18:6).

COSA began in Canadian Mennonite churches. Now it is used by several churches in the United States, including congregations other than Mennonite (Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist for example).[7]

There is advice for ministries on handling sex offenders:

Fort Wayne, Indiana - Brotherhood Mutual, an insurance provider for churches, has resources for churches and other ministries. Among the available resources is a White Paper, Registered Sex Offenders in Ministry Activities, and a Safety Library article, "Sex Offenders: Should They Be Allowed to Attend Church?" These are essentially parallel with some distinctions. A common point is that most churches will eventually be faced with the decision of how to respond to a registered sex offender who wants to attend, or discovers that one of its members or attenders is a sex offender. Among the considerations are the type of sexual offense(s) and the offender's openness and willingness to be accountable. They do say that ministries geared to help released prisoners and persons with addictions are better equipped to minister to sex offenders.[8][9]

Postwar Nuremberg, Germany, November 20, 1945 to October 1, 1946, and Mequon, Wisconsin, Summer 2015 - During the World War II war crime trials in Nuremberg, U.S. Army Chaplain Henry Gerecke, a Missouri Synod Lutheran minister, was assigned to minister to Nazi prisoners awaiting trial and execution. The principles he followed and the lessons he learned were used by Victor I. Vieth in a Summer 2015 article in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly as examples for how to minister to sex offenders. This article is available on the website of the Julie Valentine Center, a Greenville, South Carolina, organization that supports survivors of sexual abuse.[10]

Videocast and Show Notes

The subject of this article is discussed and expounded on by Kris Moloney in a [Sheepdog Church Security Academy](#) videocast on YouTube - the audio is in a [Church Security Roll Call](#) podcast on SoundCloud. Beneath the video screen is a link to the Weekly Show Notes (an article summary). The one for this article is available until the next article is posted a week later. This downloadable PDF can be printed and/or attached to a message to share with others.

Separating Predator and Prey

While working in the garage, a blur caught my eye. The cat had just run in with a bird in her mouth. I reached down, took the cat, pulled open her jaw, and released the bird, which flew off. I had separated a predator from her prey. After this, the birds at the feeder were more cautious.

In our churches, we don't have to wait until there's a sexual abuse incident to separate predator and prey. By being cautious, we take measures to keep sex offenders away from the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our congregation.

On the other hand, the ministerial heart of our churches wants the offenders to have their hearts and lives changed. We want them to be free from their addiction. At the same time, we need to be realistic. Since sexual abuse is an addiction, we need to keep an offender away from our children for their protection. The same measures should keep the offenders away from the temptation that most easily besets them (Heb. 12:1). For us the challenge is how to minister to the offenders while protecting our children.

Protecting Our Lambs

Safeguards and vigilance are how we protect our lambs.

Safeguards

Policies and procedures along with structure and technology constitute the safeguards for children and youth in the church.

Policies outline the goals and standards of child protection. This includes qualifications and disqualifiers for pastors, ministry leaders, and those who work with children and youth (both staff and volunteers). They also define proper behavior and relationships of church workers with children and youth. Other policies state that only certain persons can enter the childcare areas and take children out. Church leadership sets these policies with the advice of the Safety Committee and the Safety Director.

Procedures are how policies are carried out. The Safety Director works with ministry leaders in writing and adopting these procedures. A few examples of procedures are steps in the application process, children-to-worker ratios, check-in/check-out methods for childcare and nursery, and the Rule of Two.

Structural safeguards are design features of the church building, especially the childcare and children's education areas. Specifics depend of the overall design of the church itself. These are more easily included when designing a new structure. Some adaptation is needed when modifying an existing building. A few structural safeguards are:

- ◆ Reception counter (preferably with gate) at the entry to the childcare area;
- ◆ Dutch doors to the nursery and the toddlers room;
- ◆ Windows on the hallway walls and/or doors of the nursery, pre-school room, and children's classrooms to allow monitoring by roamers.

Technological safeguards may include:

- ◆ Wall-mounted intercoms (which can also listen to activity);
- ◆ Two-way security radio unit for each room;
- ◆ Security cameras;
- ◆ Check in/out church computer terminals for
 - ◆ Logging workers in and out, and
 - ◆ Checking children in and out.

Vigilance

All the policies and procedures in the world will not work unless they are followed. Many lawsuits, even some criminal complaints, are based on the ministry not following its own policies and procedures. Logging all activity will document how well they are adhered to.

Everyone - including Safety Team members - practices situational awareness. For instance:

- ◆ Is there anything out of place which may indicate attempts at bypassing safeguards?
- ◆ Are there indications of voyeurism, such as a hidden camera?
- ◆ Does anyone coming in act suspiciously, such as the visitor to the Chicago church?
[6]

A Separate Ministry

Speaking of the Chicago church, there was a church in the city where sex offenders could worship without other attenders worrying about their children. More than just worship, Bible studies, and fellowship, there was also counseling, accountability, and discipleship. The news story did not name the program used by that church, but COSA[7] was already being used in the United States.

There are churches that have a separate ministry for sex offenders, including worship services at separate times and/or in a separate building. Larger congregations may also have separate pastors and staff who are trained and experienced in this type of ministry. This type also includes ministries in prisons, in rescue missions, to newly-released prison inmates, and to alcoholics and drug addicts. Sex offender ministries also deal with pornography addiction, since that's related to sexual abuse.

Ministering to sex offenders separately not only keeps the offenders separate from potential victims, but is better than just pushing them to the edge of society. There is the potential for change, as in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Transformed offenders will stop seeking children to exploit. Some even welcome the separation from temptation. Transformation of sex offenders is the work of the Holy Spirit. It includes the offender taking responsibility for his (or her) own actions, admitting the need for help, and willingness to be held accountable (see Proverbs 28:13). This will be a life-long struggle for many, as it is for alcoholics.

On the ministry side, this requires study, discipline, and prayer.

Online Resources

There are a number of resources online for community safety, separate ministries, and managing offenders.

Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website

This public website managed by the Department of Justice is more than a sex offender registry. It also has an educational function. Under the Safety and Education tab is the How to Prevent section with a Family and Community Safety subsection. The second and third chapters of this are "Safety in the Community" and "Safety in Schools." These are written as advice for parents, but can inform community entities, such as churches and church-affiliated schools and daycare centers. Each chapter ends with a list of resources, many with guidance for the institutions themselves, such as "[Free resources to prevent sexual abuse in youth-serving organizations](#)" from Gatekeepers for Kids, and "[Overview of effective child sexual abuse prevention programs](#)" from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.[2]

Christian Resources

Besides the Brotherhood Mutual articles[8][9] and the article in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly[10], there are other Christian resources for churches dealing with sex offenders:

Adventist Risk Management, by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, has a guide published in 2012, "Recognizing & Dealing with Sexual Predators." It has three sections: "Sex Offenders in the Church: A Legal Guide" by Karnik Doukmetzian, "Sex Offenders in Church" by Robert Burrow, and "Sex Offenders - the Struggle" by Victor Elliot. Just one quote from this PDF captures its essence:

"There is also an idea that springs from secular culture into church life, which impacts decisions on how to manage The Struggle. The idea is this: We should not judge the behavior of others. The reality is that while we cannot judge the heart of another, we do and must judge behavior."[11]

The Network, a site for ministers in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, has an article by Ron Knol, "Sex Offenders in the Church?" Knol addresses the situation of a sex offender released from prison asking to join or re-join the church. The lasting relevance of this question is evident in the original article of 2011 being updated in 2018. He says that "there is no 'right' answer' to this question.[12]

There are other denominations and church fellowships that have posted advice for how pastors and church leaders should deal with sex offenders.**

Advice from Lawyers

Several law firms around the nation advise churches on legal issues. One such firm is Simms Showers LLP (SSL), a partnership of J. Stephen Simms and Robert Showers, serving Northern Virginia, D.C., and Maryland. Their practice areas include, among others, Church Law, Non-Profit Law, and Family Law.

Their description of Church Law includes "Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Defense." An article on this topic is "Successful Church Assimilation of Sex Offenders." The need for this discussion is given in the first paragraph, which cites the results of a survey by Christianity Today International. In this survey, almost 80% of church leaders believed a sex offender should belong to a church. However, most churches have no policies on how to serve these offenders while keeping the congregation safe.

SSL goes on to list "a few critical points" for churches that do want to minister to sex offenders. We do not want to quote the article in more detail without permission, but reading it is highly recommended. We'll cite two items here.

- ◆ First, a "lesser offense" on a sex offender registry may be the result of a plea deal.
- ◆ Second, allowed attendance should be conditional.

I can summarize their advice as Proceed with caution.[13]

Disclaimer

Do not consider this article as legal advice. Consult your church's attorney. For insurance questions, contact your church's insurance agent.

Conclusion

Most church leaders want to protect their children from sexual abuse. They also want to minister to sex offenders to help them overcome their addictions. The safest way to do both is to keep the children and the offenders separate.

Also This Month

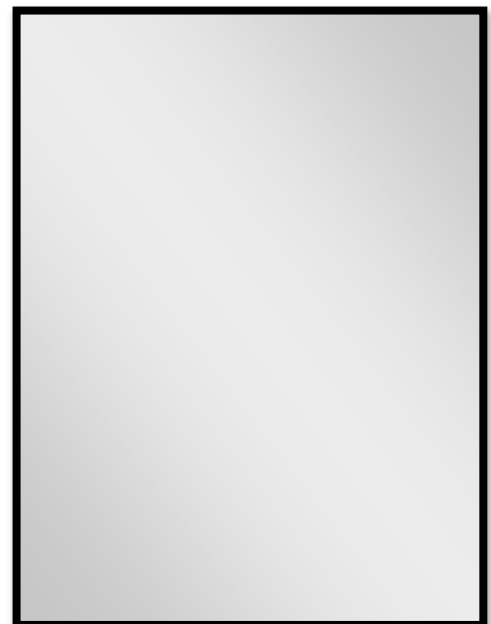
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[Article References](#)



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Protect your flock with a proven church volunteer screening service.
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CHURCH SECURITY ROLL CALL

WEEKLY TIPS AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHURCH SECURITY TEAMS
HOSTED BY KRIS MOLONEY



1999 Temple Grounds Church Shooting

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Arson Prevention

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To Shoot or Not to Shoot

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Isolating Offenders

[LISTEN ON SOUNDCLOUD](#)

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NEWSLETTER EXCLUSIVE GUEST ARTICLE

See Something Say Something

BY: ROBERT E DOWNING, ED.D.

While visiting a local church, I had an interesting experience (from a Safety/Security standpoint). My wife and I attended and organ recital at a church after they had installed a massive new pipe organ.

The organ was centrally placed with a massive lighting system set up around it to highlight it. The overhead lights lit up the entire area around the organ and additional lights (perhaps as many as 40 small lights) were set up underneath the organ to highlight the various pedals used by the organist.

The organist (well accomplished and semi-famous) explained to the audience the history of the new organ and what she would be playing. She then proceeded to play a number of different pieces and would occasionally stop to talk about additional pieces she would play.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, I quickly became distracted. As the organist would play the organ, I noticed that all the lights in the church would get dim on occasion. Lights dimmed on 12 different occasions throughout the performance.

It occurred to me that there's was likely an electrical short in the wiring system set up for the new organ. And, I mentioned to my wife I need to call this to the attention of someone at the church. Note: she asked me not to raise the concern as it would delay are leaving.

As we were leaving, I saw gentleman that appeared to be in charge. I pulled him aside and made him aware that all of the lights in the church were dimming at the various times throughout the performance. And, I indicated this might be an electrical issue (safety concern).

He then stated that he noticed that the lights dimmed when the organ was playing. However, he didn't realize there could be a safety issue. He further stated he knew exactly who to tell and that the problem will be corrected. He did not offer to close the loop and tell me when the problem was corrected.

From a Safety and Security standpoint we often tell people that when they "See Something, They Need to Say Something ". As I thought about it, I realize there were several potential security/safety issues.

- ◆ The gentleman saw the light dimming but didn't realize there was a potential safety concern.
- ◆ The piano had been played several times during the several regular Sunday services – and no one in the congregation had noticed the light dimming or they have not reported it.

This also helped me realize that sometimes individuals may become complacent. They sometimes fail to see things when they are in a place where they feel safe or comfortable.

I brought this topic up at a meeting of the Faith-Based Safety and Security Network of Hampton Roads. I thought it would be a good opportunity to discuss this incident and the potential impact on Safety and Security in Houses of Worship.

The attendees in the meeting agreed that people can sometimes be too complacent. Some of the potential ideas raised by the members were:

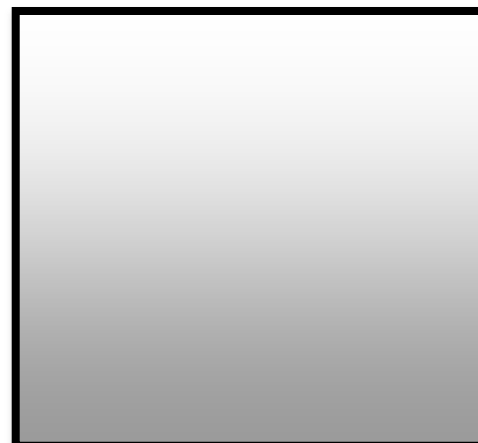
- ◆ It may be valuable to have a different set of eyes walk through their houses of worship. They realized that they may not "See " the areas of potential concern. Several members volunteered to visit other churches and provide an outside perspective. They offered to provide another set of eyes to look for problems.
- ◆ Additionally, several of the Safety and Security teams realized their team members needed to work at developing "eyes that see".
- ◆ Part of the discussion also focused on maintenance within their facilities. Several members had no idea about the maintenance priorities at their facilities. All of the members realized that the Safety and Security teams should have the opportunity to review the priorities of the maintenance departments and have the authority to change the priorities (if safety and security are impacted).
- ◆ Just as a side note, at the recent Uvalde shootings the outside door to the school and the door to the classroom (where the students and teachers were killed) had broken locks. It is my understanding, that maintenance was not even scheduled to repair the broken locks as the broken locks had not been reported by the school administration.

Lastly, the Safety and Security team members focused on the fact that there was no follow up from his church to let me know if the security issue was resolved. This presented a problem from the team members point of view:

- ◆ If I were one of the church members and I reported a safety concern and did not receive any feedback, would I be likely to report safety concerns in the future? The team members took the position that a failure to respond back to an individual, that had raised a safety concern, was highly likely to discourage any future reporting.
- ◆ A positive take away was that several of the team members in attendance decided that they would review their procedures for documenting and responding back to individuals that raised safety concerns.

Usually when discussing safety and security issues we tend to focus on major events (disruption of the church, vandalism, theft, shootings, etc.). However, sometimes, even a relatively simple safety issue can provide us with an opportunity to learn and review our safety practices.

		<h1>RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT FOR SAFETY MINISTRIES</h1> <p>VISIT THE SDCS ONLINE STORE</p> 
		
		



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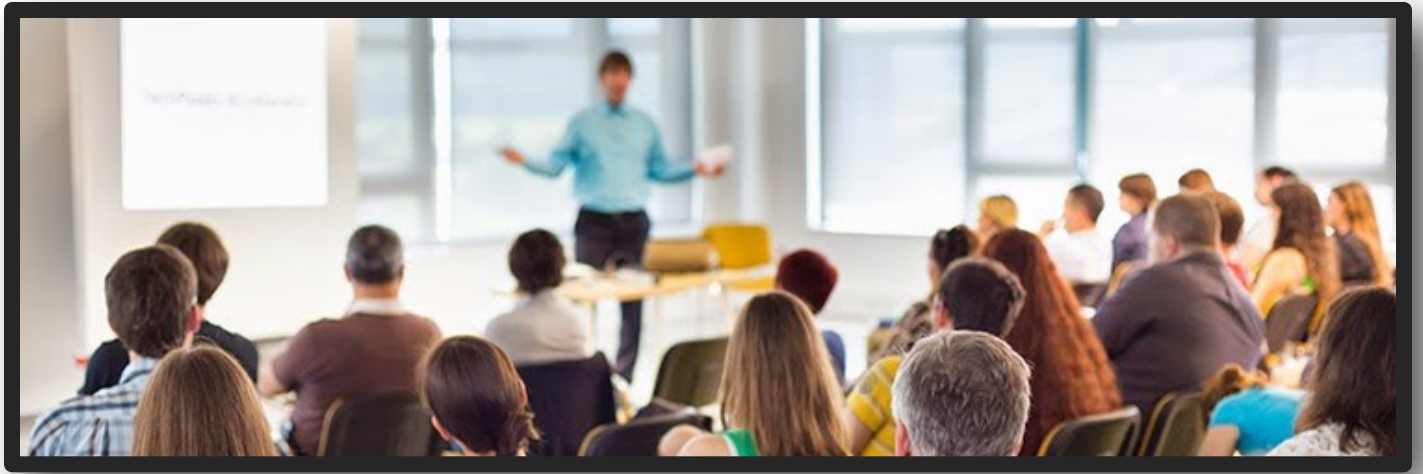
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SHEEPDOG SEMINAR FOR CHURCHES

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Church Safety Team, Police Officers, all First Responders - any citizen concerned about unlawful violence. **LEARN HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FLOCK!**

DATE:

Saturday Morning, November 12th, 2022

TIME:

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Quartzsite Alliance Church

720 W. Desert Vista St.

Quartzsite, AZ 85346

COST:

\$30.00 for ONE ticket

45.00 for TWO

Lunch is provided (*Ladies: if you register for the women's safety seminar, you're invited to come early, about 12 noon, and join us for lunch compliments of the church!*)

Subjects addressed:

Verbal De-Escalation — Learning how to calm someone by your presence and verbal skills

Recognizing the "clues" that indicate something may be wrong or is "about to happen"

Protecting the flock from sex crimes

Responding to an active attack (assailant with gun, knife, etc)

How to form a safety team at your church (who to put on the team; who NOT to put on the team)

What does the team do on Sundays and for all other events... Where to station team members during church

and much more!

WOMEN'S SAFETY SEMINAR will be held at the church on Saturday afternoon, November 12, from 1:00 until 3:00. Admission price is \$5.00

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!](#)

SHEEPDOG CORNER



Hi Sheepdog,

Many of you have heard about the church security guard that was killed just this last Friday. (If not: <https://www.krqe.com/news/crime/church-security-guard-killed-while-on-the-job-suspect-in-custody/>)

Some of you asked about approaching suspicious vehicles. Here is my response for now... When in doubt, Call the Police about Suspicious Persons (SP) and Vehicles (SV). (Especially during off hours and late at night/dark.) Call for Backup. Never approach a SP or SV without someone in an overwatch/cover position. (Contact/Cover Procedure Applies) If you don't have backup, Call the Police. Approach SV from the side, avoiding the front and back of the vehicle. (ie. possible path of the vehicle should they attempt to leave or try to run you over.) As much as possible, approach in their line of sight. Don't sneak up on them. (If you feel like the situation calls for you to 'sneak up' on them then it is a 'Call the Police' situation. Smile, wave, and watch their demeanor (facial expression, movements, trying to look casual, etc.) If they show strong emotions (anger, fear, despair, nervousness, etc), Fall Back and Call the Police. If they move around a lot (possibly going for a weapon, hiding something, etc.), Fall Back and Call the Police. Greet them kindly. Ask them if you can help them. Use Verbal De-escalation skills to maintain control. Respond to any force used against you.

Here are four possible situations (You may be able to think of more.)

They are NOT up to no-good. Maybe stopping to meet someone, using the Wi-Fi, using their smartphone, getting directions, etc. Good public relations opportunity. Go about your day. They are up to no-good but the threat is minimal. Your contact may be enough to delay or deter their plan. They are in Crisis. Medium Threat. Use verbal de-escalation to keep the subject from becoming violent. Fall Back and Call the Police if you are unable to de-escalate or the subject escalates. High Threat. Respond to any immediate attack as necessary. Fall Back, if possible. Seek cover, in the church if possible. Go into Lockout. Call the Police.

We will expand on this in a future Article and [Church Security Roll Call](#) video.

Your Loyal Companion in Christ,

Kris P. Moloney