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## **Church Security Checklist**

### **Key Principles:**

- You cannot stop someone willing to die to take life, but preparation, objective analysis, and detailed planning can mitigate risk and minimize damage.
- Most incidents are interpersonal / domestic rather than ideological. The “most likely” threat differs significantly from the “most dangerous” threat.
- Layered, practical security beats expensive single solutions. People are more important than hardware.

Recommended First Step: Form a small Security Committee (3-5 trusted members) and conduct a simple walkthrough Threat Vulnerability Assessment (TVA) this week.

The following are practical, low-cost measures for houses of worship to consider.

### **1. Threat Vulnerability Assessment (TVA) - Start Here (Low / No Cost)**

- ☐ Walk the entire property (interior and exterior) during a typical service and note vulnerabilities.
- ☐ Identify all entry / exit points, parking areas, children’s spaces, and isolated rooms.
- ☐ Map “most likely” scenarios (disgruntled individual asking for help / money who may escalate) vs. “most dangerous” (planned rampage).
- ☐ Note behavioral indicators to watch for: known mental health / substance / anger issues, unusual fixation, or sudden behavioral changes.
- ☐ Review past incidents or near-misses at your church or similar local houses of worship.
- ☐ Document findings in a simple one-page report and review quarterly.

## 2. Facility Access Control & Hardening (Mostly Low-Cost)

### External / Perimeter

- ☐ Trim landscaping and trees to eliminate hiding spots and improve natural surveillance.
- ☐ Improve exterior lighting (LED motion-sensor lights are inexpensive and effective).
- ☐ Limit vehicle / pedestrian entry points during services; consider temporary barriers or cones if needed.
- ☐ Post clear signage i.e., “All visitors please check in at the main entrance” or “Area secured by trained staff” (simple deception / deterrence).

### Entry Points / Internal Access

- ☐ Designate **one primary public entrance** during services; lock or monitor all others.
- ☐ Install or upgrade basic deadbolts and door viewers on interior rooms (classrooms, offices, nursery).
- ☐ Create a simple visitor log or greeter sign-in process.
- ☐ Consider affordable wireless cameras or doorbell cameras at main entrances (many under \$50-\$100).
- ☐ Add basic alarm sensors or door chimes on key exits if budget allows.

### Technical Monitoring (Start Simple)

- ☐ Install or expand basic video coverage on main entrances, parking lot, and children’s areas.
- ☐ Assign a specific person and back-up to monitor live feed or review recordings after services.
- ☐ Test any existing alarm/PA system and make it remotely accessible to key personnel if possible.

### 3. Security Team Personnel (Volunteer-Focused, Low-Cost)

#### Core Team Structure

- ☐ [ ] Appoint a **Security Team Lead** with clear authority and backup.
- ☐ [ ] Recruit a balanced team: greeters / ushers, armed (if legally permitted and trained), unarmed responders, medical, communications, and child protection roles.
- ☐ [ ] Conduct background checks on all security team members and key volunteers / staff (many affordable online services).
- ☐ [ ] Define clear roles and responsibilities in writing: initial contact response, crowd control, child protection, trauma response, law enforcement (LE) link-up.

#### Armed vs. Unarmed Considerations

- ☐ [ ] Evaluate legal requirements, insurance implications, and risk / reward.
- ☐ [ ] Require documented initial qualification, regular refresher training, and mindset development for all armed team members.
- ☐ [ ] Unarmed team members still play critical roles (observation, de-escalation, crowd control, medical, communications).

### 4. Training & Mindset Development (High Impact, Often Low / No Cost)

- ☐ [ ] Provide **situational awareness and de-escalation** training for greeters, ushers, and staff.
- ☐ [ ] Train the team on recognizing behavioral indicators of potential violence.
- ☐ [ ] Conduct **active threat response** training (Run / Hide / Fight principles adapted for church environment).
- ☐ [ ] Require or encourage **Stop the Bleed / basic first aid / CPR** training for multiple team members (often free through local fire department, Red Cross, or hospitals).
- ☐ [ ] Develop mindset: ability to function under stress and willingness to act decisively to protect innocent life.
- ☐ [ ] Include clergy and key staff in at least basic awareness training.

### **Special Teams Training Focus Areas**

- Initial contact / de-escalation
- Child protection and accountability
- Trauma / first aid response
- Communications (up / down chain)
- Law enforcement link-up procedures (visual signals, code words, ID verification)

### **5. Emergency Procedures & Communication (SOP Development)**

[ ] Create a simple written ***Emergency Action Plan / Security SOP*** covering:

- Chain of command
- Lockdown / shelter-in-place procedures
- Evacuation routes and assembly points
- Active threat response
- Medical emergency response
- Bomb threat / suspicious package response

[ ] Establish reliable internal communication (two-way radios, group text / app, or code words).

[ ] Create external communication plan with local law enforcement and EMS (pre-incident liaison is critical).

[ ] Post simple emergency instructions in visible locations (classrooms, sanctuary, foyer).

[ ] Conduct regular drills and rehearsals (tabletop and practical) periodically; invite local law enforcement when possible.

[ ] Supervise and enforce the SOP consistently.

### **6. Medical & Trauma Response**

[ ] Maintain well-stocked first aid kits and trauma kits (tourniquets, hemostatic gauze, etc.) in multiple locations.

[ ] Identify and train at least 2-3 “trauma responders” per service.

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- ☐ Consider acquiring an AED (many churches obtain through grants or donations).
- ☐ Establish a plan for rapid EMS notification and on-site handoff to arriving responders.

### **7. Coordination, Partnerships & Variables**

- ☐ Build a relationship with your local law enforcement agency (request a free security assessment).
- ☐ Coordinate with neighboring churches or faith-based groups for shared resources or mutual aid.
- ☐ Review insurance policy regarding security measures and armed personnel.
- ☐ Address leadership and congregational buy-in early; communicate the “why” clearly and compassionately.
- ☐ Plan for the psychological and emotional impact of violence on staff and congregation (debriefing and support resources).
- ☐ Prioritize actions based on your specific risk vs. available budget and volunteer capacity.

### **8. Ongoing Review & Continuous Improvement**

- ☐ Review and update the TVA, SOP, team roster and conduct After Action Review (AAR) at least quarterly or after any incident / drill.
- ☐ Track lessons learned from drills and real events.
- ☐ Stay current with free DHS / CISA, FBI, and local law enforcement resources and training.
- ☐ Reassess as the congregation, facility, or threat environment changes.

### **Quick-Start Priority List (First 30-60 Days)**

1. Form a Security Committee and conduct initial TVA walkthrough.
2. Establish primary entrance control and greeter protocol.
3. Create basic Emergency SOP and communication method.

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4. Schedule an awareness / de-escalation training session.
5. Build relationship with local law enforcement.
6. Stock basic medical / trauma supplies and identify responders.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting your congregation.

Preparation saves lives. Start with what you can control today; people, procedures, and partnerships, then layer in technology and hardening as resources allow.

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### **Disclaimer**

This checklist provides general, practical recommendations drawn from real-world incident data and established security principles. It is not a substitute for a professional Threat & Vulnerability Assessment (TVA), legal advice, insurance consultation, or training.

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