

All Churches and Places of Worship Need Security



SECURITY *blog*

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Churches and Places of Worship welcome people in with open doors, but that could be the window of opportunity that leaves them vulnerable to someone with bad intentions.

Case in point: the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in downtown Charleston, SC where an attacker took the lives of nine individuals, and now, the shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, which as of this writing, left 26 individuals dead and 20 wounded.

Each church and place of worship is unique and has its own challenges and there are many factors to consider. We can't do a cookie cutter here because based on the age of the church, the size, the design, and even the location makes a big difference as to the types of protocols you put in place.

I recommend a 5 step plan:

1. An immediate security assessment of the church or place of worship and their properties by an experienced security consultant. The assessment results serve as the initial step in developing any type of action plan.
2. The formation of a safety and security committee of members of the congregations.
3. Examine current emergency crisis plans, and make updated changes that reflect what is current around the surrounding community.
4. Implement security technology; cameras systems, access control, communications, notification systems and other types.
5. I'm not in favor of individuals carrying weapons in churches or places of worships. I do recommend a written agreement with the Sheriff's department or local law enforcement to have a full time deputy sheriff or police officer in uniform with a vehicle assigned during all service hours. Or, consider hiring off-duty law enforcement officers.

Being proactive and seeking out preventive measures are the best ways to protect not only a church and house of worship, but the congregation, and training could be all the difference in a life-altering situation.

It takes the entire community to really make a difference. Respect the fact that it's a church or house of worship, but security measures still need to be in place.

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