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Local churches discuss safety plans after Texas church tragedy

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WILMINGTON, NC (WECT) - Churches are supposed to be a place where a community can gather, but after the [attack at a church in Texas](#) on Sunday, local churches are taking a closer look at their security plans.

"Churches do have an open door policy. We do allow people to come in as they are," Clifford Barnett, pastor at Warner Temple AME Zion Church in Wilmington, said. "But one of the challenges that we have to face is that because of the society that we're living in, some people may come in with negative intentions."

According to Patrick Fiel, a security consultant who speaks around the world about what to do when there's an active shooter, everyone needs to be prepared for an active shooter event.

"We want open arms, and we want a church to have continued services, but we have to try to prevent these bad guys from coming in and disrupting our entire community," Fiel said.

Warner Temple has someone at the door for the entire service who sees everyone who walks through the door, according to Barnett.

If they think there's an issue, they'll communicate with each other about whether or not to escort that person out.

Barnett said there's also a group of men, some in law enforcement and the military, who sit in the back row to keep an eye on things.

Fiel said churches could do more, though.

"The biggest key, I would say, is the mentality that it's not going to happen," he said. "It should never happen, and I agree with that, but it is happening and it can happen anywhere at any time at any place. What I want to do is prepare these places of worship and churches to be somewhat prepared."

Fiel recommended that churches invest in security cameras and a security team that is part of its congregation. He also said churches should participate in active shooter drills and training.

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