

Church Safety: Making the Case

Executive Summary — A Leadership Guide for Starting the Conversation

Church Safety Deserves Intentional Attention

Churches prepare services, classrooms, volunteers, facilities, and ministry activities. We make sure people are ready to carry out their responsibilities.

Safety deserves that same intentional attention.

Church safety is not simply about preventing violence or having security personnel at the doors. It is about caring for the people God has entrusted to us and preparing to respond wisely when circumstances require it.

Not every church needs the same safety program, a formal security team, or armed personnel. But every church should intentionally consider how its safety responsibilities are being addressed.

Prayer and Preparation Belong Together

Nehemiah gives us a practical example:

“Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.”
— Nehemiah 4:9, NKJV

They prayed. They also prepared.

Preparation does not replace faith or ministry. Done appropriately, it supports ministry by helping us care for people when unexpected circumstances arise.

Church Safety Is Broader Than Security

A church may need to respond to:

- Medical emergencies or injuries
- Children's ministry and child-release concerns
- Disruptive or escalating behavior
- Fire, severe weather, evacuation, or sheltering
- Access and facility safety concerns
- Domestic or personal conflicts affecting ministry
- Suspicious activity or concerning behavior
- Serious violence or other active threats

These situations do not all require the same response. An intentional safety program considers the broader responsibilities of caring for people rather than focusing only on the most serious event leadership can imagine.

Having Capable People Is Not the Same as Having a Plan

Many churches already have people who contribute to safety: an attentive usher, a nurse, a police officer or firefighter in the congregation, or someone with security experience.

Those people can be valuable resources. But their presence does not necessarily establish responsibility, authority, communication, or preparation for the roles leadership expects them to carry.

An intentional approach makes those responsibilities clear before circumstances force decisions under pressure.

What an Intentional Safety Program May Include

A safety program is more than a security team. Leadership should consider:

Leadership and Accountability

Who makes safety-related decisions, and how does leadership oversee them?

Understanding Needs

What needs, ministries, facilities, and capabilities should guide preparation?

People and Preparation

Who carries safety responsibilities, and are they appropriately selected and prepared?

Everyday and Emergency Readiness

How will the church address medical needs, children's safety, concerning behavior, communication, and emergencies?

Documentation and Improvement

How are significant incidents reported and lessons addressed?

The program should reflect the church's circumstances, not simply copy another church's approach.

Armed Security Is a Separate Decision

Armed personnel may be appropriate for some churches, but that decision belongs within the broader safety discussion.

Armed personnel do not address medical readiness, children's ministry, emergency communication, or de-escalation.

Churches may reach different conclusions. Any decision requires deliberate review of applicable requirements, personnel suitability, training, authority, accountability, and broader safety needs, with qualified guidance where appropriate.

Addressing church safety does not automatically mean establishing an armed security team.

Five Questions to Begin the Conversation

1. Responsibility: Who currently has responsibility and authority for church safety?
2. Current Preparation: What practices, policies, people, and resources do we already have?
3. Unanswered Concerns: What important safety responsibilities or concerns have not been clearly addressed?
4. People and Readiness: Are those expected to respond appropriately prepared for their responsibilities?
5. Next Steps: What should leadership examine, clarify, or address first?

Where Do We Go From Here?

The first step need not be a security team, equipment purchase, or another church's program.

Identify existing responsibilities and preparation, determine what needs attention, and choose the next step. Leadership may clarify practices, gather information, or seek a formal assessment.

The objective is an appropriate approach to caring for the people entrusted to the church.

See the complete GS-LG-001 — Church Safety: Making the Case and its Leadership Discussion Worksheet.

About Gibborim Security

Gibborim Security helps churches develop ministry-first approaches to safety through consulting, training, and practical resources.

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