



step-by-step

Practical strategies to protect your ministry

Church Safety 101

Does Our Church Really Need a Safety and Security Team? 2

OVERVIEW | Yes, and here's why.
By Jeff Hanna

Are We Keeping Our Church Safe and Secure? 5

ASSESSMENT | Use this assessment to find out.
By Jeff Hanna

Create a Strong Church Safety Team 7

HOW TO | Follow these steps to get the team you need.
By Jeff Hanna

Is Our Ministry at Legal Risk? 9

THE LEGAL SIDE | What you don't know can hurt you.
By Richard R. Hammar

Deliver Us from Evil 14

IT'S TRUE | A bomb shattered the silence of Sunday prayer. How would your church cope?
By John R. Throop

Resource Center 20

LEADER'S GUIDE | Quick tips and recommended resources.

OVERVIEW

Does Our Church Really Need a Safety and Security Team?

Yes, and here's why.

By Jeff Hanna

Let's be honest: It would be far better if a church didn't have to spend time dealing with church safety and security issues. I wish we could spend all our time reaching lost souls and equipping the faithful. But integral to doing those things is the responsibility to protect the people and ministries God has entrusted to our care.

I've heard many reasons why a church didn't think it could form a safety and security team: "We don't have enough people" or "we don't have enough time." Some say, "We shouldn't have to do it; we're the church. To have to worry about child molesters is the same as conforming to the world." Others wonder, "If we start protecting people and property, where will it end—guard dogs and armed security?"

A phrase that worries me most is "Those bad things would never happen in my church." But the facts, figures, stories, and statistics show that people and institutions of faith are experiencing new attacks: claims, lawsuits, ministry disruption, and financial losses.

Claims

Those responsible for the business side of church life know that insurance premiums are on the rise. Some church customers have seen their insurance premiums rise anywhere from 10 percent to over 50 percent in the past several years. This is no conspiracy at the hands of big insurance companies, but the natural result of the growing numbers of claims for injuries and accidents filed by churches. Often, when the dust settles on a claim, it is learned that the church has not done a good job of providing a standard of care for its people, property, or resources. Most claims can be prevented. For instance, many slips, trips and falls—the number one reported claim—can be prevented by maintaining a safe hallway, stairs, or walking surface.

Lawsuits

Lawsuits against churches are on the rise. What's interesting is where those lawsuits are coming from. Years ago, if you heard of a lawsuit involving a house of worship, it was most often the result of a visitor getting hurt and seeking damages. Now we're seeing more lawsuits from the church's members and staff.

I recently read of a pastor suing his church for wrongful dismissal and defamation of character. Another church is being sued by its denominational district, claiming the district—not the local church—owns the property. More churches are suing their local governments for refusing to let the church build on a particular property, or for seeking to seize the church under eminent domain.

Ministry Disruption

With the growing number of accidents, injuries, claims, and lawsuits, the result is something no one wants: ministry disruption. A church embroiled in a sexual-misconduct case will have to stay engaged not only during the criminal case, but also through any civil litigation. The criminal and civil aspects can last five years or more, years the church will be distracted from doing ministry at the level it could have.

Financial Losses

In all of these situations, the loss of finances is almost always present. Not only might a congregation be forced to pay a settlement, but also as a result of these events, some members may move to other churches or blame the events on the church leaders, causing funding to decline. One vibrant congregation, after uncovering the sexual violation of at least 50 children at the hands of two high school-aged boys from their congregation, had their membership fall from over 1,000 members, to under 200 participants. All of their staff members eventually left or were replaced, and the lawsuits against the church totaled over \$15 million. A safety and security team combined with solid, written, and followed practices and procedures most likely would have prevented the event.

Biblical Mandate

Scripture makes the case for attending to safety and security. In one narrative, we see two incidents of concern. First, the wise men, after spending time with the newborn King, were warned about Herod in a dream, and as a result, “They returned to their country by another route” (Matthew 2:12). Likewise, Joseph was told by an angel that Herod was wanting to kill Christ, and so “He got up, took the child and his mother and left for Egypt” (Matthew 2:14). Throughout Scripture we see illustrations of people being warned of danger and choosing a safer way. And that’s what security and risk management in the church are about today: seeing the dangers and choosing a safer way.

Good News

While you may feel overwhelmed, please don’t. There really is good news in this. While the need for risk management increases, so does the number of resources and help available to guide you.

Church Safety 101 | Does Our Church Really Need a Safety and Security Team?

4

As church leaders, we should pause, count the cost of doing ministry, and move forward in faith—choosing the safest way to do so. As we do, we may save lives, reduce claims and lawsuits, and stay even more focused on the higher calling before us.

You're not alone. You're on this journey with many others. And you've already taken steps toward better stewardship of what God has entrusted to you by seeking out this information. Congratulations, and keep reading.

ASSESSMENT

Are We Keeping Our Church Safe and Secure?

Use this assessment to find out.

By Jeff Hanna

Use this assessment to decide where you stand on the issues of safety, security, and risk management.

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Do you have a designated person or team responsible for safety, security, and risk management training and oversight?			
Do you have a written and followed transportation policy regardless if you own church vehicles?			
Do you have a written and followed child and youth-protection policy that includes hiring, screening, supervision, reporting, and regular training of all staff and volunteers working with minors?			
Do you engage in a regular and documented facility inspection and maintenance program and have written policies for groups using the church facilities?			
Do you have a written and followed financial-protection policy?			
Do you have a written and followed emergency preparation and response plan and the personnel needed to oversee such a ministry or event?			

Church Safety 101 | Are We Keeping Our Church Safe and Secure?

Item	Yes	No	Action Steps
Do you have a written and followed policy addressing personal protection of staff, members, and visitors to your facility?			
Do you have a written and followed plan addressing opening, closing, and protecting the facilities?			
Is your church incorporated under its state law as a non-profit corporation?			
Does your church have a written and followed personnel/ employment manual?			
Does your church have a designated attorney who advises you and approves all policies that you adopt?			

Date: _____

Compiled By: _____

HOW TO

Create a Strong Church Safety Team

Follow these steps to get the team you need.

By Jeff Hanna

As with anything that will last, building a solid foundation is critical. When one person starts a ministry or program, it may work well for a while, but without a team, the project can, and often will, crumble.

After getting the commitment of the staff and board, a well-designed strategy for building a Church Safety and Security Team should be put into place. To assist in the process, consider taking the following steps:

Select: Churches can begin the process by thinking about a team approach. Selecting four to eight people who will act as the Church Safety and Security Ministry Team can build long-term consistency and begin the process of getting your church to “prepared status.” If you select construction, police, medical, human resources, and insurance types from your congregation to form the team, they will be able to bring their expertise and experience to the team and church. Add to them concerned parents and grandparents who want to create a safe church environment for the children and members.

Educate: The team should then be educated and trained and should begin the process of thinking of practices and procedures that address the wide variety of potential emergencies and threats you may be faced with. Many churches have put together these plans and are willing to share them with others. Your denomination may be a good source. There are also a growing number of resources available through [ChurchSafety.com](https://www.churchsafety.com).

Develop: The team should next work toward the development of practices and procedures in writing that address the wide range of issues surrounding ministry and people protection. Though this may be a longer, intensive task, having a good, written plan in place will provide a solid foundation for moving forward. Again, looking to outside sources, seek to find sample policies. However, don't simply find a policy written by someone else and adopt it as your own. Find a variety of plans and select those parts that apply to your church in your setting. Always ask an attorney to view the plans you put in place before making them official.

Train: Next, the team should plan for the ongoing education and training of the church staff, volunteers, ushers, and members as to what their role is in the face of a threat, emergency, or incident. The idea is to slowly work safety, security, ministry protection and risk management into the fabric of who the church is and how they do ministry. Your desire should be to have everyone asking, as they plan an event or new ministry, “Is there

a safer, better way to do this?” Don’t be afraid to recognize people and groups on a job “well done.” We would also highly recommend developing a section of your church library that addresses safety and security.

Direct: Once the team is selected and has established practices, procedures, and training, it is good to evaluate, continue practicing, and keep the lines of communication open as you direct the congregation. Always be open to making necessary changes to your policies, practices, and procedures as new threats and information become available. Communicate those changes to the staff, volunteers, and congregation.

Reach Out: Further, the team should have developed a positive, ongoing relationship with other local and state emergency providers and congregations in the area to develop a response plan for the community that involves area churches. With coordination, each of the churches can take on a different component of an emergency response plan and together become a positive force for good. By putting a comprehensive team in place, meeting regularly, and following through, your congregation will have a much better chance to avoid and respond to threats, accidents, and emergencies; prevent or reduce claims; keep you out of court; and keep your ministries protected and moving forward. Preparation and protection should start now in your church.

Thought Provokers

- What is the first step for creating a safety and security team at our church?
- Who can we ask to be a part of the team?

HOW TO

Is Our Ministry at Legal Risk?

What you don't know can hurt you.

By Richard R. Hammar

Shortly after World War II, a church was having a picnic at the farm of one of its members. In a single moment, what had been a time of joy turned into sorrow. A young boy drowned while swimming with others in a pond located on the farm. As a church community, the people drew together to support the grieving family. They experienced the loss together as a church, and as a church they cared for one another as they coped with the pain. No one turned to an attorney for advice or threatened a lawsuit. At that moment in time, such actions were not part of the culture. People thought of what happened as an accident—there was no corporate blame even though there was a widespread feeling of loss and guilt.

Today such events tend to be handled quite differently than they were just a few generations ago. Churches are sued just like any other organization. Consider these sobering facts. More than 20 million civil lawsuits occur annually in the United States. Findings from a study of over 1,100 churches revealed that only one church in five had any risk-management plan, and only one church in ten even conducted a risk-management audit within the past year. This was true even though 45 percent of these churches claimed to have someone on their staff responsible for risk management. Among this same group, one church in 50 had been sued the previous year and 40 percent had filed an insurance claim during the same period.

Our research on churches also revealed the following:

- 3 percent reported that a minor had been sexually molested by a paid or volunteer staff member or while participating in a church program
- 8 percent reported that sexual misconduct had occurred between a staff member and an adult member of the church
- 52 percent reported that an accident requiring medical attention had occurred at a church program within the previous three years
- 12 percent reported that they have a sexual harassment policy
- 11 percent reported that they have a church handbook that has been reviewed by an attorney.

Below are the most common lawsuits faced by churches today, found in the article “The Ten Deadly Lawsuits” from *Your Church* magazine. By familiarizing yourself with these possible pitfalls you can help protect your church against them.

1. Suits based on negligence—general public.

People still slip and fall in front of churches, but charitable institutions no longer enjoy the immunity privileges they once did. Your church can be held liable for accidents caused by dangers you knew existed on your property but the general public did not. It does not matter whether the person was invited onto the property or not. A warning sign, prominently posted and disclosing the danger, is often sufficient to avoid needless injury and absolve church liability.

2. Suits based on negligence—parishioners.

You owe a greater duty to church members and visitors. You must not only warn them of dangers that you know about but also exercise reasonable care and take necessary precautions to ensure their safety at all times. This means you must vigilantly look for things on your property that could cause harm, and, when you find a hazard, either fix it or warn members.

3. Suits based on negligence—“nuisances” that attract children.

Property owners have a special duty to prevent hazards that can cause injuries to children, even if they are trespassing. Your church has a duty to keep children safe from conditions against which you might expect them to be unable to protect themselves. On the other hand, your duty to trespassing children does not extend to conditions that are obvious or not inherently dangerous. As one court noted, in concluding that a church was not liable for the injuries suffered by a Sunday school student who fell into a well, “there is almost no condition which an adventurous child cannot turn into an injury-producer: tree swings, slides, stairs, hard-surfaced playgrounds, and soft-surfaced playgrounds can all be a source of harm to the young.”

Nonetheless, it is prudent to keep gates locked and restrict access to such potential dangers as piles of debris and construction material, which can attract young people’s attention.

4. Suits based on negligence—supervision of employees.

After you have hired an employee you have an ongoing duty to protect the public and members of your own congregation against any violent or criminal propensities of the employee that come to your attention. If you hear of disturbing conduct from another member of your staff via complaint or report, you should investigate the charges unless the person bringing the complaint specifically requests that you not. If you proceed with an investigation you should thoroughly document it—noting the specific charges alleged, the people you spoke with and what they said, any documents involved, and all else pertinent to your determination as to whether the charges

warranted action. Failure to take action after hearing of a complaint or turning a blind eye to misconduct a later investigation reveals practically guarantees that your church will be sued along with the employee if he or she harms someone. A church's duty extends only to conduct that is foreseeable by a reasonable person and only to events that relate to work done for you. What an employee does on his or her own time is not your responsibility.

5. Suits based on sexual harassment.

Church staff can become vulnerable to charges of sexual harassment given the close relationships that often develop when clergy counsel members of the opposite sex. Depending on the case, the church may be able to avoid liability based on the First Amendment. However, it is wise for church staff and other leaders to receive education on harassment issues.

Anyone in the church in a position of authority can be accused of an intemperate remark or even a pattern of improper conduct while supervising employees or counseling members of the opposite sex. Church staff should act with due caution and the utmost integrity in all situations, taking prudent steps to guard against harassment charges.

6. Suits based on defamation.

Defamation is the publication to a third party of false or misleading information that you know will cause a person the loss of reputation or other injury.

Defamation may be written, known as libel, or oral, known as slander. Employees who feel they have been wrongly terminated often accuse their employers of having defamed them if the employer discusses the termination with anyone inside or outside the company. Any discussion, written or oral, that one of your employees has within the church or with any outside person about a termination could be turned into a libel or slander suit, if the fired worker is disgruntled and looking for retribution. Thus, it is important that you limit or control any such discussions to avoid providing ammunition for such suits.

Similarly, should any church members be disciplined and asked to leave the body or voluntarily resign their membership under unpleasant terms, discussions about the circumstances of the departure among remaining members or the church leadership could lead to a lawsuit. Disparaging comments simply have no place in these situations.

When a church lacks clear divisions of authority between clergy and laity or within these two groups, projects can be commenced and work begun without proper approval being obtained. Sometimes a dispute can arise about what approval is necessary.

In these circumstances, outside consultants, such as lawyers, accountants, and contractors, can be hired by one group whose decision is subsequently overruled or not recognized when the time comes for the consultant's bill to be paid. When the statement is presented the church may well be liable for the expense even though the vestry, elders, or board of trustees never sanctioned the assignment. If the group that did the hiring appeared to have the power to do so and the consultant relied on that appearance to his or her detriment by expending the time and energy necessary to do the job requested, the church will likely have to pay the consultant's bill or face legal action. This situation can be avoided if the church has outlined, in writing, who has budget and hiring authority in what matters.

8. Suits based on disputes over election of the pastor.

At least twice in the past year churches were embroiled in suits over claims that a new minister was hired improperly and should not be allowed to lead. In one case, the majority of a parish's trustees were replaced by another group at a special meeting of the church. That group then voted to reinstate a minister whom the previous majority had voted to let go. The previous majority sued, and a court ultimately ruled that the actions taken to replace them were proper. In another case, a minister brought suit to confirm that he had been properly hired by trustees who were empowered to do so. These types of cases are obviously devastating for the church involved no matter what the result. No important decision, such as the calling of a new minister, should be made until internal issues of control and authority are completely resolved.

9. Suits based on disclosure of confidential information.

Recently a church member brought suit claiming that his pastor had revealed confidential information about him when announcing disciplinary action against him for divisiveness. The court ruled against the man because it could establish that he had consented to subject himself to discipline at the time he became a church member. Nonetheless, a church can expose itself to charges of invasion of privacy and infliction of emotional distress by making public information that should be kept private.

10. Suits based on unfair acts.

In another recent case, a church was sued over injuries a security guard it hired caused attendees at a church fair. The claim was brought under an unfair trade practices act. Such acts are common in most states and provide that businesses may not act unfairly or unscrupulously.

The court in this case dismissed the plaintiffs' claim because they did not demonstrate with enough specificity what the church did that was unfair or unscrupulous. The court did not say, however, that the church's conduct could not fall within the scope of the trade practices act. Thus, it seems possible that when a church is engaged in a money-making activity it will be subjected to the requirements of relevant unfair practices acts.

Church Safety 101 | Is Our Ministry at Legal Risk?

13

To avoid most of these cases all that is required is for a church to be honest and caring toward both its members and the public. A church that is faithful to its mission and diligent in pursuing the safety and well-being of its members is also likely to satisfy its legal obligations.

Adapted from **Risk Management Handbook for Churches and Schools** by Richard F. Cobble, Jr., and Richard R. Hammar; and **The Ten Deadly Lawsuits**, by Stephen Chawaga, YOUR CHURCH, May/June 2001.

Thought Provokers

- Were we surprised that churches dealt with these suits?
- How have we protected our ministry from each of these suits?

IT'S TRUE

Deliver Us from Evil

A bomb shattered the silence of Sunday prayer. How would your church cope?

By Brett Laurence

The people were seated, and Pastor Dennis Rogers was at the pulpit.

“Let us pray,” he said.

Then chaos.

A bomb shattered the silence of Sunday prayer. The explosion ripped through the heart of a sanctuary and its worshipers.

The bomb, which investigators discovered had been left outside the building near a central air-conditioning unit, tore a 10-by-15-foot hole in the sanctuary wall adjacent to the church's youth-seating section. Of the 35 people injured that morning, more than 20 were teenagers.

When Rogers reflects on that Memorial Day weekend, he realizes it could have been much worse.

Now the veteran of more than 20 years of ministry says the congregation at First Assembly of God in Danville, Illinois, is stronger than it has ever been.

Rogers knows people should feel safe in God's house. But he, like many pastors, struggles with how to protect those who attend his church while remaining an open, welcoming community where people can come freely to find Christ.

“We want to provide a secure worship environment for our staff, our members, and our guests,” says Ron Aguiar, director of safety and security at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, a congregation of about 17,000. “Because it's a church, I have to balance how I do it. I cannot put magnetometers on the front doors and use metal detectors.

“We're seeking the lost—you want the people that the police are after to come in. Essentially, when I work with our police department, they'll say, ‘Hey man, these guys are undesirable.’ I say, ‘Hey man, this is where they need to be.’ And so there's a delicate balance that you have to achieve.”

Few people understand the struggle to find that balance like Al Meredith, pastor of Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Meredith leads a congregation that lost its sense of security when a gunman barged into a Wednesday night youth rally and gunned down 14 people, killing seven.

“You can’t protect,” says Meredith. “There is no safe place in the universe except the center of God’s will. You can make your church a fortress; you can put armed guards at every door; you can set metal detectors at every door and waste the kingdom’s resources. But it’s trusting in horses and chariots.

“I guess it’s a matter of where you draw the line, what degree you take. You go to reasonable measures.”

Violence Comes to Church

What constitutes reasonable measures? It’s a subject of considerable debate among church leaders.

Jeff Hanna, former pastor and the author of [Safe and Secure: The Alban Guide to Protecting Your Congregation](#), says, “Very few people across the country are dealing with this issue. I started looking for things that had been written and couldn’t find anything.” Statistics addressing the number of crimes perpetrated against churches are hard to find.

“There is no repository or database of information for church crime,” Aguiar says. “Everything is mishmash. If there’s a burglary, when the police get it they don’t say ‘church crime,’ they say ‘burglary.’ “Though news of the Wedgwood shooting was beamed across America, several other disturbing church crimes have gone unreported by the national media and unnoticed by most of the Christian community.

Two men were killed in the parking lot of Faith United Methodist Church in Southaven, Tennessee, while attending a Sunday evening youth service at The House of Praise, a congregation that had used building space on the property for the previous year.

A small group leader at First Church of God in Sidney, Ohio, was shot and killed in his home by a member of the congregation who had associations with a satanic cult. A pastor’s sermon was interrupted at New St. John Fellowship Baptist Church in Gonzales, Louisiana, when a gunman kicked open the sanctuary doors and fired two gunshots into the ceiling. He proceeded to kill his wife, 2-year-old son, and another congregant, while wounding four others.

Pastor Andrew Lofton of Christ Temple Apostolic Faith Church was talking to a group of Bible-study participants following the Wednesday evening service when he was shot and killed by a choir member.

What to Defend Against?

Hanna says incidents such as the Wedgwood shooting should be seen as “aberrations.” “I’m more concerned about day-to-day things,” he says, “people breaking into my church and taking my sound system, people getting assaulted in the parking lot. I don’t think we’re going to see a huge, rapid increase of church violence.”

Aguiar and Rogers don’t see it that way.

“I think the church fails to realize this is spiritual warfare,” says Aguiar, whose oncampus security concerns include a 9,000-seat sanctuary, 773,000 square feet of building space, and more than 100 acres of property. “To me, it’s going to get worse, not better.”

Rogers says the fear of God that was once the cornerstone of American society is now gone.

“Heretofore, there was a holy reverence for the house of God. That is gone in this country,” he says. “So rather than thinking these are isolated incidents, I believe they’re going to increase.”

The Security Challenge

Believing the worst is yet to come doesn’t mean Rogers and his church have significantly changed their long-term approach to security. Prior to the 1998 bombing, the church installed nighttime security lights and asked ushers to periodically patrol the parking lot. The lights are still there and ushers continue to keep an eye on things, but Rogers says the church has no intention of turning itself into Fort Knox.

“We did clean all of the shrubbery away from the perimeter of the building,” he says. “Many churches in the area did that.”

The church also changed its locks, replacing old keys with ones that cannot be duplicated.

“We discussed putting in a video security system,” he says. “We discussed having a guard full-time. But we came to the conclusion that if there is a person who is determined to set a bomb or shoot a gun, there is not a lot you can do to stop it.”

Meredith, still reeling from the massacre at his church, believes it is impractical and unreasonable to implement wide-sweeping security changes at his church.

Before the shooting at Wedgwood, Meredith says his church’s security measures were relatively simple and included screening procedures and background checks on nursery, children’s and youth workers and a policy that requires two adults in each nursery classroom. The church also has an electronic security system to protect the building when it’s unoccupied.

Those measures have remained in place since the shooting, but Meredith says introducing a new round of security procedures is unlikely.

“I don’t foresee it becoming a fortress with police cars in the parking lot and screening every weird-looking person who comes in,” he says, “because frankly, there are a whole lot of believers who are weird looking. To me what the undershepherd does is protect the flock from the attacks of the wicked one.

“I know that just sounds unbelievably idealistic and smugly spiritual, and I don’t want to come across that way. But I cannot imagine the early church hiring private police to protect them in the catacombs or from Rome or anywhere else the prince of darkness seeks to bring destruction.”

Doctrine of Internal Security

Bob Welch, associate professor of church administration at Fort Worth’s Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, also has taken cues from the early church to develop his security philosophy. But his interpretation of the apostles’ approach reflects a different understanding than Meredith’s.

He says the church in the Book of Acts had a keen understanding of the importance of providing first-century Christians with a sense of security.

“They met in homes; they went into caves. In Rome, what are the catacombs?” he wonders rhetorically. “If they were going to get caught and were martyred, they at least made an attempt to be safe, even going so far as to use some secret signs like the fish.

“Knowing that we are now in a culture that can be quite anti-Christian and is becoming more hostile, I think there’s a valid reason for us to think about that. If it means trying to supply internal security, I think God expects us as rational people to do that.”

Welch’s opinion isn’t just a personally held opinion. It’s also included in his curriculum at Southwestern, which counted five of the 14 Wedgwood victims among its students and alumni.

“We have, for a long time, taught security issues—lighting, internal security,” says Welch, a veteran of the United States Navy. But he expects more of an emphasis on the issue in the wake of the crosstown shooting, noting that most of the current teaching is included in the administration classes.

“It’s much easier to make an example in class when you have something across the neighborhood instead of across the state,” he says.

While Meredith and Welch allow the New Testament to guide their security efforts, Aguiar looks to the Old Testament, pointing to Nehemiah 4:9—“But we prayed to God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night”—as an example of the way congregations ought to respond to potential problems.

And though some pastors would bristle at Southeast Christian Church’s approach to security—there’s video surveillance, a guard on duty around the clock, a police car parked at the building throughout the day, armed guards to escort ushers after the offering is collected and uniformed officers who direct traffic and patrol the parking lot before, during, and after services—Hanna points to the church as the paradigm for church security in the 21st century.

A Proactive Defense

Improving security, Hanna believes, starts with changing the mindset of a church’s leaders. That can begin with the formation of a church security team.

“Everybody needs to look at their parking lot lights,” says Chester Quarles, a professor of criminal justice at the University of Mississippi. Quarles is a certified protection professional who has designed training and crisis plans for missionaries and worked with leaders at Wycliffe Translators to examine their security procedures.

“Walk the darkest places and recesses of the church, daytime and nighttime. Make sure doors and locks and frames are secure.”

Team members also should review police reports from the past few years to examine how other area churches have been violated, adds Quarles.

In addition, churches should meet with officials from local law enforcement agencies to ask for help. The church should start by showing police the building and asking for suggestions on how to make it safer. Ask for recommendations about getting the offering to the bank safely.

“You’d be surprised,” says Aguiar, “how much free stuff they can advise you to do.”

Another critical component of effective church security is communication. “The most important security device at any location in America is a cell phone,” says Quarles. “The welcome committee at the front or back of the church needs the 911 connection.”

Educating ushers or a security team is important, too. “Churches need to be training ushers and leaders to wear a different set of glasses, to see things through a different set of eyes,” Hanna says, “They should be walking hallways, looking for potential problems. We want them to do more than hand out bulletins and take the offering.”

If a church has multiple entrances, both Hanna and Quarles suggest locking the doors that aren't being used during office hours and service times.

Though most security experts admit these procedures won't ensure a church's safety, they'll go a long way toward deterring crime and minimizing the damage if something does go wrong.

"The bottom line," says Hanna, "is you do the very best you can and leave the rest in God's hands."

This article, which first appeared in LEADERSHIP JOURNAL, shares the experiences of a growing number of churches around the nation. Let these testimonies and insights encourage you to take steps, no matter how small, toward a safer ministry.

Thought Provokers

- If someone wanted to cause harm to the people at our church, what precautions do we have in place to prevent an emergency?
- What policies and procedures can we create to ensure security on our church property?

LEADER'S GUIDE

Resource Center

Quick tips and recommended resources.

Tips for Using Articles

Consider these options for using the articles and information in this download:

- Pass the **Are We Keeping Our Church Safe and Secure?** (see “Assessment” section above) around at your next board meeting and have a 15-minute discussion.
- Copy one of these articles, pass it on to the staff, and plan to discuss it at the next staff meeting.
- Determine how your church can strengthen itself in the area of providing accessibility, and discuss your plans to do this.

Related Church Safety Downloads:

- **Preparing Your Church for Any Emergency**
- **Creating a Safety Team**
- **Internal Controls for Church Finances**
- **Creating a Safe Outreach Ministry**
- **Creating Child Protection Policies**
- **Your Guide to Employee Handbooks**
- **Preventing Crime on Church Property**

Books, Kits, and Other Resources

- **Church Safety and Security: A Practical Guide**
by Robert Citrin, John Edie, and Dennis Lewis.
- **Keeping Your Church Safe**
by Ron Aguiar

Are you a **ChurchSafety.com** member? If not, find out more today at ChurchSafety.com/membership/ and try our special 14-day free trial. Join for only \$99.95 per year and enjoy unlimited access to all downloads.

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