

How Your Church Should Prepare for an Active Shooter

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I hate the title of this article.

I hate that I even feel compelled to write about the topic. But many of you contacted me after the tragic murders at First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas. Here are some basic issues:

1. **Don't be in denial.** Church shootings are increasing every year in America. And while the percentage of churches with shootings is relatively small, this issue is one where we must be prepared. The downside is just too great.
2. **Have a church security plan.** This plan should include all issues of security, from active shooters to child abuse. Local law enforcement is almost always very willing to work with churches and make recommendations.
3. **Remember that church security is a ministry more than an expense.** I have little patience with church leaders and members who say they can't afford church security. The church doors should not be open if it can't afford to keep members safe and secure. The church or leaders may have to spend money to go to a training seminar, or to retain a local police officer every weekend. Those are investments in security, not expenses.
4. **Keep church security as a matter of prayer in your church.** While we should work as hard as possible to make our churches as secure as possible, let's never forget that we should seek God's power, strength, and protection.
5. **Organize a church security ministry team.** You need leaders who are passionate about this issue. And it is especially helpful if those leaders have a background or experience in security, safety, or law enforcement.
6. **Keep your facilities secure.** Too many churches have too many members with keys and access to the church buildings. It is not unusual for doors to be left open and security to be lax because of the nearly unlimited access. I know one church where a former member had a key and decided to have a meeting at the church without asking anyone. Your church needs clearly controlled hours of operation and clear guidelines on access. If the locks have not been changed in a while, it's probably time to do so. Ideally your church can move to digital access that can be changed at anytime.
7. **Strive for total member awareness.** Remind your members from time to time that they should watch for anything unusual at the church. Greeters at different places in the church facility, from the parking lots to the worship center, should be trained toward awareness as well. Those with keen eyes and discernment can save lives.

We continue to pray for First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs. Please see [my post from November 6](#), and feel free to add your name as one who is praying for the church. And as we pray for them, we pray for wisdom and protection for all other churches.

Active shooters are a harsh reality of church life today.

We can be prayerful.

And we can be prepared.

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