

Church Security Team, does your Church need to have one?

Lieutenant M. Provo



MASS MURDER AT US CHURCHES: A HISTORY

by Carl Chinn

The Federal Bureau of Investigation describes “mass murder” as four or more murders occurring during the same incident, with no distinctive period of time between the murders. Typically, but not always, these events involve a single location where victims are killed in an ongoing incident.

Using this description, the following recounts mass murders at churches on US soil since 1960. The number of incidents where one, two, or three people have been killed or seriously wounded in church settings has escalated over the past fifty years and numbers in the hundreds.

September 15, 1963

16th Street Baptist Church

Birmingham, Alabama

Domestic terrorists planted a concoction of dynamite on a timer which exploded under a street-side stairwell at the church. An eleven-year-old and three fourteen-year-old girls were killed.

June 22, 1980

First Baptist Church

Daingerfield, Texas

A gunman attacked the Sunday morning service, coming through the sanctuary doors, yelling “this is war,” and firing into the congregation. He killed a seven-year-old girl, an adult woman, and three adult men in the shooting, which lasted barely one minute.

March 10, 1999

New St. John Baptist Church

Gonzales, Louisiana

On a Wednesday an estranged husband with a gun killed his wife’s mother at her home then drove to the church, where he walked into the evening service. When the gunman’s two-year-old son said, “Daddy,” the gunman said, “Boy, don’t call me daddy now,” and killed him. He then killed his wife and a young man sitting nearby.

September 15, 1999

Wedgwood Baptist Church

Fort Worth, Texas

A man, distraught over his father’s death, drove to what appeared to be a random location choice where a See You at the Pole celebration rally was being held. He shot his first victim while walking in the lobby doors, asking, “Is this where that (expletive deleted) prayer meeting is going on?” He killed two seminary students, a

member of the church staff, and four teenagers before taking his own life.

March 12, 2005

Living Church of God

Brookfield, Wisconsin

Angry at his pastor's sermon, a man left the Sunday morning service and came back in shooting. He killed the pastor and six others before killing himself.

August 28, 2005

Sash Assembly of God Church

Sash, Texas

A neighbor of the church walked up to a deacon in the parking lot, whom he shot and killed. He then shot and killed the pastor who was standing nearby. As he fled the scene, he shot and killed two women who had stopped on a road to check their horse trailer.

May 21, 2006

Ministry of Jesus Christ Church

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

An estranged husband attacked his wife in church, killing four others as he stormed into the service. He kidnapped his wife out of the church and killed her at another location. He also shot and critically wounded the pastor.

December 9, 2007

YWAM (Arvada) and New Life Church (Colorado Springs)

Arvada and Colorado Springs, Colorado

A young man posted a suicide diatribe on the internet stating, "Christian America this is YOUR Columbine." He then killed a young man and woman at a YWAM training facility, continuing to New Life Church, where he killed two teenage sisters before being stopped by church security.

9 killed: Charleston, S.C.



(Getty Images)

Dylann Storm Roof is charged with nine counts of murder and three counts of attempted murder in an attack that killed nine people at a historic black church in Charleston, S.C.

Authorities say Roof, a suspected white supremacist, started firing on a group gathered at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church after first praying with them. He fled authorities before being arrested in North Carolina.

6 killed, 3 injured: Oak Creek, Wis.



(Jay L. Clendenin / Los Angeles Times)

Wade Michael Page fatally shoots six people at a Sikh temple before he is shot by a police officer. Page, an Army veteran who was a “psychological operations specialist,” committed suicide after he was wounded.

Page was a member of a white supremacist band called End Apathy and his views led federal officials to treat the shooting as an act of domestic terrorism. He had been administratively discharged from the Army in 1998 after being demoted in rank.

Why do Churches Start a Safety or Security Team?

1 – What is the primary reason to start a security team? Safety of the members and guests!

The primary reason to start a team is because we care for the members and guests of our churches and need to have care givers in place.

2 – Due Diligence

A second reason is to know that we have done Due Diligence.

The definition of Due diligence in civil litigation (also known as due care) is the effort made by an ordinarily prudent person or reasonable party to avoid harm to another party. Failure to make this effort may be considered negligence.

The churches insurance company may not be willing to cover the awards in a lawsuit claiming the church permitted a violent event to happen if they believe the church has not completed their due diligence. This could be to a child who walked out of a toddler area, a fire exit that was filled with summer bible school items, a child taken by a parent with custodial rights, a robbery in a dark parking lot, a physical assault or lastly an active shooter. Although the number of assaults and shootings in churches is rare, it is increasing. If a team has been proposed and the church management team declined to implement it, can the church be held liable for the incident? Will the insurance company say the church is negligent and decline to pay a multi million dollar award?

With the noted rise in church violence you need to think about these items:

1. You have a duty to protect the church family and visitors
2. Do you provide reasonable protection for those in the facility
3. Do you do background check for staff and volunteers?
4. There is a tremendous amount on published incident on church violence, sexual misconduct, poor facility maintenance issues causing accidents.
5. Have you reviewed the above items

6. Have you completed a risk assessment?

3 – Peace of Mind for the church body

Can you live with yourselves if a child is assaulted or kidnapped by a predator or non-custodial parent?

Can the church pay a 1 or 2 million dollars or more settlement in a lawsuit and survive if the insurance company decided you have not met due diligence standards?

Summary

The reality of the team is it is really there to be a servant based ministry to help people as well as keep them safe from a multitude of events.

Safety Coordinated by a Church Security Team

Sample S.O.P.

Effectively keeping your church safe and secure will take more than the direction or efforts of the pastor. God never intended for one person to do everything in the Church. Everybody has a part — the topic of the next post.

Forming a team of individuals who are trained and ready to serve in the event of an emergency or dangerous situation could be a helpful step toward developing a safe environment. A visible, coordinated presence in the church can actually detour trouble. But, you must be careful to communicate that having a security team does not alleviate the responsibility of each person in the Body doing their part to keep each other safe.

To have an effective church security team you must:

- Identify situations potentially needing action.
(unruly, suspicious, or mentally unstable people, armed intruders, threats, protests, medical emergencies or injuries, fire, natural disasters, child abduction or abuse, etc.)

- Identify skills needed to properly act and react in a variety of situations.
(observation, assessment, physical stamina, mental/emotional stability, able to communicate, able to remain calm in midst of chaos, restraint in the midst of provocation, good people skills)

- Identify structures that need to be put in place for effective responses.
(lockdown, evacuation, call 911, check in/out, locking doors that are not under surveillance, screening, etc.)

- Identify sources of help.
(getting to know those who would be your first responders within the community and those within the church body who are doctors, nurses, or others you can call on)

- Identify service assignments of each person on the team.
(behind the scenes tasks, visible presences both outside and inside the church building)

Above all, a security team needs to see what they do as a **ministry of love** for “love protects” (1 Cor. 13:7). What they do is about more than looking out for the physical safety of the Body. In maintaining physical safety, they are protecting what is happening in the worship service and classrooms so attention can stay focused on worshiping the Lord and receiving His Word. As such, they are expressing love to God and people.

Purpose

The Security team member provides a sense of safety to our members and guests. A member or guest that feels secure will be able to focus squarely on the reason they are at church to begin with, to build a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, without the fear of so many of the dangers in today's world.

Responsible to Volunteer Coordinator ()

Description of duties

- Identify questionable behavior and respond quickly.
- Patrol the grounds before, during, after services and at special events for anyone out of place.
- Report any behavior to the proper authorities that could escalate out of control
- If an incident is threatening the safety of the congregation, dial 911 immediately.
- In the event of a threat directly towards the Pastors and their families, dial 911, notify leadership and make your way to the Pastor as quickly as possible.
- When responding to an incident, check the area for any potential dangers.
- Intentionally greet strangers on campus with ("May I help you with something?" "Is there someone you are looking for?" "May I assist you with anything?") Gauge the answers to those questions to determine the phase of action.
- Use of Force - In the event that restraint of an individual becomes necessary to prevent further harm, be advised that the restrained individual is legally your responsibility and this is not to be taken lightly. Use of force should never be considered routine and should be reserved only for the most unique of circumstances.
- Sound judgment and discretion are the foundation of the Safety Team. You should diffuse any situation whenever possible to eliminate or reduce the need to use physical force to subdue any unruly person. The person should not be restrained if they attempt to leave the church property.
- Inform the worship director in advance of any anticipated absences from rehearsals or Sunday worship.
- Commit to being on time and focused on the tasks at hand.
 - Display an attitude of excellence in every aspect of church security.
 - Participate in opportunities for spiritual and relational growth with other individuals who serve within any of the church ministries.
 - Perform any other duties, as required by the Lead Pastor, in support of the mission and vision of () .

Sunday 9:00 am— Pre Service

Attend pre service volunteer meeting and then begin walk through of all areas, including parking areas.

Sunday 9:57 am— Service Starts

Walk through all areas at varying times throughout the service; do not walk through on any type of schedule.

Time requirements

Approximately three hours on Sunday, or until the congregation has dispersed.

Term

Security team members typically serve in ongoing ministry, but may choose to commit one year at a time and renew that commitment each year.

Training and resources

Volunteer Training course is required for this position and additional training may occur throughout the year.

Qualifications, skills and gifts

- Past Military and Law Enforcement experience is suggested, but not mandatory.
- Security must be able to communicate with others in a clear and concise manner both verbally and in writing.
- Understanding that this can be a very dangerous position in todays seemingly unstable environment.
- It is necessary to be able to tell trespassers to leave the property without escalating the situation.
- You will need to be able to spot any irregularities around the property, such as unlocked windows or doors and unauthorized persons.
- There may be occasions when security assistance is needed for special offerings or events.
- Must be familiar with the layout of the campus and buildings, understanding emergency means of egress and traffic patterns.
- Self-motivation is very important and the ability to work well with others is a must.
- A commitment to the ministry, mission, and vision of the church.
- Willingness to spend time in prayer regarding the security of the staff, volunteers and guests.
- Security personnel must be dependable, serious, levelheaded and mature.
- Commit to being on time and focused on the tasks at hand.
- Display an attitude of excellence in every aspect of setup, worship time and breakdown.
- Participate in opportunities for spiritual and relational growth with other individuals who serve in the security ministry.

- Tithe: Malachi 3:10 – “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”
- Perform any other duties, as required by the Lead Pastor, in support of the mission and vision of ()�.

Benefits to the Worker Serving on the Security Team will give a true sense of pride knowing that our staff, volunteers and guests feel confident in your ability to keep their families safe.