

# THE DEACON'S BENCH



Practical risk management guidance  
to help today's Christian ministries thrive

Volume 1 – 2018



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# CHURCH SECURITY:

## A WAKE-UP CALL

As helicopters circled above Sutherland Springs, Texas, news quickly spread about a lone gunman opening fire inside First Baptist Church on Sunday morning. When the gunfire ended, 20 people were injured and 26 were dead. At his home that Sunday, Brotherhood Mutual attorney Steve Case felt a familiar sinking feeling. Another senseless tragedy. More innocent lives lost. An entire community devastated. Mentally, he prepared for his phone to ring.

It didn't take long. Within hours, concerned church leaders began calling. They wanted to know how to protect their congregations. Should they encourage everyone to carry guns? Did they need an armed security team? What about tactical defense training?

Brotherhood Mutual's free Legal Assist service had seen church leaders' interest in security increase after other mass shootings. But nothing like this. As they had done for a decade, company attorneys took every call, offering guidance about managing the risk of violence at church.

"Society's changing, and a lot of what happens across our country makes its way into our church," says Steve Case, senior corporate counsel for Brotherhood Mutual. "We want to make sure that when it starts to creep into our church, we have resources and coverages in place to help ministries through that."

### PREPARE FOR HIDDEN THREATS

Mass shootings serve as a wake-up call for ministries to prepare for a variety of threats churches face. Most of the current buzz about security in ministry settings concerns active shooter training and questions about guns in church. However, churches are far more likely to experience a fatal heart attack on Sunday morning or an abusive husband angry with the pastor counseling his wife.

Crises can erupt quickly, faster than police or paramedics can arrive. If your ministry wants to improve security, it must plan for more common—but just as serious—events that could happen at any time, anywhere.

### Threat: Domestic Violence

While some may think domestic violence only happens in private places, evidence indicates otherwise. It often spills over to places victims frequent, including church, school, and work. In the U.S., a woman is killed at work by an intimate partner about twice a month, according to the nonprofit organization Futures Without Violence. Another source has found that more than half of the mass shootings in America involved the shooter's partner or a family member.<sup>1</sup>

"Domestic violence can lead to explosive, unpredictable behavior," says Juan Barrientes, a police trainer and church security officer. "Often, aggressors see the church as a place to find and attack victims," he says. "Pastors also can be targets, particularly if counseling a victim of domestic abuse."

National research shows that about 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of intimate partner violence.<sup>2</sup> Despite that, nearly half of the Protestant pastors surveyed in 2017 said their church didn't have a plan in place to respond to a victim of domestic violence.<sup>3</sup>

So, what should the church do to confront the threat of domestic abuse? Author Mark Spansel urges churches to make safety its top priority in a 2016 article, "How to Combat Domestic Violence in the Church."<sup>4</sup>

"It's not uncommon for a woman to really think her abusive husband will kill her," Spansel writes. "This fear should never be dismissed as 'extreme' or 'dramatic.'"



**On average, it takes seven minutes for an ambulance to arrive. In rural areas, the wait could be much longer.**

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**ALMOST HALF of Protestant pastors said their church does not have a plan in place to respond to a victim of domestic violence, according to a 2017 LifeWay survey.**

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Among other things, Spansel encourages church leaders to increase their understanding of the problem by talking to experienced counselors and to provide accountability by reporting abusers.

**Some issues to consider:**

- How could your church become better informed about domestic violence and the issues it raises?
- How could your ministry provide a safer workplace for employees who might be in abusive relationships?
- What resources could your church or community provide to domestic abuse victims?
- What protective measures could be taken, if your church counsels victims of abuse?
- How could your ministry better protect your congregation against the risks created by domestic violence?

**Threat: Medical Emergencies**

What are the chances of an elderly person slipping on an icy sidewalk, children's heads colliding in a bounce house, or a volunteer falling from a ladder while doing maintenance?

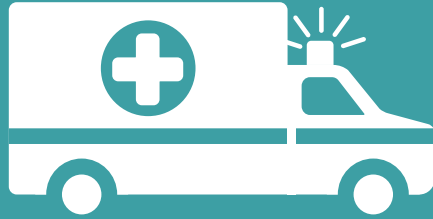
On average, it takes seven minutes for an ambulance to arrive. In rural areas, the wait could be much longer.<sup>5</sup> It pays to have a plan for responding to medical emergencies. Even something as simple as teaching volunteers whom to alert if an accident happens can speed the arrival of emergency services.

**Some issues to consider:**

- Could bystanders quickly find a first-aid kit containing the materials needed to treat the injury?
- What process should be followed for medical emergencies?
- What care could your staff or volunteers provide while waiting for an ambulance to arrive?
- What systems need to be in place so your church directs emergency responders to the right place quickly?
- Would your ministry benefit from having an AED or CPR gear?
- Should your church establish a medical first responder program?

*Continued on page 6*

# CHURCH EMERGENCIES HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE?



Each year, millions of people suffer life-threatening medical events like choking, heart attack, or stroke. There are also thousands of violent encounters at churches. Many crises can become critical within seconds.



## EMERGENCY STATS

Medical emergencies and church violence happen quickly and often without warning. Developing safety and security teams and putting plans in place can help your church prepare and reduce risk.



**795,000**  
STROKES  
ANNUALLY



**790,000**  
HEART ATTACKS  
ANNUALLY



**325,000**  
CONCUSSIONS &  
HEAD INJURIES  
ANNUALLY



**2,471**  
VIOLENT  
CRIMES  
ANNUALLY

## EMS RESPONSE TIME

If someone in your church has a medical emergency, you must act quickly. Having a medical response team with individuals trained in CPR/AED and basic first aid can help save lives.



**7-30**  
MINUTES  
**AVERAGE EMS  
RESPONSE TIME**  
AFTER 911 IS CALLED



**DEATH OR  
DISABILITY**  
CAN OCCUR  
WITHIN MINUTES

## POLICE RESPONSE TIME

Having safety and security plans that encompass Monday through Saturday are just as important as having a plan for Sunday. Violent encounters at church can happen any day of the week. Planning ahead helps protect pastors and staff.



**<10**  
MINUTES  
**AVERAGE POLICE  
RESPONSE TIME**  
TO VIOLENT CALLS



## Threat: Disruptive Individuals

How likely is it that someone could enter your church, either midweek or on Sunday, and start causing a disturbance?

Assaults, thefts, and other crimes at churches happen about every half-hour, according to FBI data. (See Page 7). Often, there are warning signs that precede an act of violence. But not everyone knows what to do if they see or hear something that could signal trouble ahead.

“People need to know the warning signs and what can be done,” says Peter Weinberger, a senior researcher at the University of Maryland’s START center, a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence.

“If you look at the statistics (on mass shootings), close to 80 percent of the time, they told someone,” Weinberger says. “That person didn’t go to someone else and report it, either because they didn’t know what they could do, or they didn’t know what they should do about it.”

To prevent the bystander effect—when no one does anything because they think others will—Weinberger says it’s important for churches to teach their congregations what to do.

### Some issues to consider:

- How could your ministry start a dialogue about the role church members could play in improving church safety and security?
- How could your staff and volunteers improve how they identify and respond to potentially disruptive individuals?
- What actions would you like congregants to take if they hear someone hinting at violence?
- Who would be best suited to approach anyone who appears disturbed but not dangerous?

## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MINISTRY

Being prepared for a variety of medical and security issues offers an opportunity to pursue a new type of ministry. 🏡

## THE DEACON’S BENCH ONLINE

Learn more online at  
[www.brotherhoodmutual.com/db/churchsecurity](http://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/db/churchsecurity)

### VIDEOS

#### A Heart for Ministry

In the wake of the Sutherland Springs tragedy, church leaders had questions. Hear how Brotherhood Mutual’s legal team helped ease their concerns.



#### Spotting a Threat Before It’s Too Late

This three-part video series helps you understand why safety is everyone’s responsibility.

### GUEST PASTOR EDITORIAL

Should church security teams resemble German Shepherds or Border Collies? Hear what a pastor who survived a mass shooting has to say.

### RESOURCES

#### Firearms at Church

By using this downloadable guide, you’ll learn the important questions to ask before your ministry makes a decision about firearms.

#### The Church Safety & Security Guidebook

Improve your readiness to respond to crisis situations with this step-by-step manual.

#### Building a Team

Whether you’re starting from scratch or improving an existing team, this webinar offers solutions for ministries of all sizes.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> “5 Statistics that Explain the Link between Domestic Violence and Mass Shootings,” by Valentina Zarya, Fortune Magazine, November 7, 2017. <http://fortune.com/2017/11/07/domestic-violence-shootings-statistics/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Why Domestic Violence in the Home Endangers Your Church,” by Ruth Moon, Church Law & Tax, August 18, 2017. [www.churchlawandtax.com/web/2017/august/why-domestic-violence-in-home-endangers-your-church.html](http://www.churchlawandtax.com/web/2017/august/why-domestic-violence-in-home-endangers-your-church.html).

<sup>3</sup> “Good Intentions, Lack of Plans Mark Church Response to Domestic Violence,” by Bob Smietana, LifeWay Research, February 20, 2017. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/02/20/good-intentions-lack-of-plans-mark-church-response-to-domestic-violence/>.

<sup>4</sup> “How to Combat Domestic Violence in the Church,” by Mark Spansel, The Gospel Coalition, January 5, 2016. [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-combat-domestic-violence-in-the-church/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-combat-domestic-violence-in-the-church/).

<sup>5</sup> “Rural Patients Wait Longest for EMS.” American College of Emergency Physicians. July 19, 2017. <http://newsroom.acep.org/2017-07-19-Rural-Patients-Wait-Longest-for-EMS>.

# MIDWEEK SECURITY

*(It's not just for Sunday)*

Protecting and caring for the church extends beyond Sunday. Pastors, members, and staff are equally vulnerable Monday through Saturday. From the church secretary locking up at night to mid-week youth ministries and Saturday morning work days, safety and security are important seven days a week.

Consider that in 2016, there were more than 21,000 assaults, thefts, acts of vandalism, and other incidents at U.S. houses of worship.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, since 1999, there have been 1,691 deadly force incidents at houses of worship in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Effective risk management techniques can help increase church safety and security. Below are some tips to help make your church safer and more secure every day.

- **Lock doors.** Balancing safety with a welcoming environment can be difficult. During the week, actively monitor any unlocked doors, greeting people as they arrive. Secure all other entrances. Ensure that the exit doors remain unlocked from the inside. Remember to lock vehicles as well.
- **Control entrances.** Door access control systems, like the ones that remotely unlock a door or “buzz in” a guest, limit access to work areas, like lobby and administrative offices. This extra layer of protection for staff and administrative areas can help minimize surprises and potentially violent encounters.
- **Install security cameras.** During the week, cameras can play an important role in your ability to keep an eye on the church. Consider cameras for parking lots, exterior entrances, staff entrances, and the main entrance. Office staff can monitor cameras so they know who is coming and going during the day.

## CHURCH CRIMES BY THE NUMBERS

ACTIVE  
SHOOTER EVENTS  
2000–2015

8

This equates to  
**ONE MASS CHURCH  
SHOOTING EVERY  
1.875 YEARS**



DEADLY FORCE  
INCIDENTS\*  
1999–2017

1,691

This equates to  
**ONE DEADLY FORCE  
INCIDENT  
EVERY 3.8 DAYS**

\*Deadly force incidents that occurred inside a church or on church property

### PEOPLE, PROPERTY & SOCIAL CRIME IN 2016

21,554

This equates to  
**ONE CHURCH CRIME  
EVERY 24.38 MINUTES**



Crimes in this category include:

- **PROPERTY** – Theft, breaking and entering, vandalism
- **PEOPLE** – Murder, assault
- **SOCIAL** – Drug violations, gambling



- **Let there be light.** Make sure interior and exterior lights are on a timer or sensor to light up the building and parking lot. Many incidents take place outside church buildings, so it's important to maximize lighting.
- **Secure the night.** For evening classes and events, assign a safety team member to greet attendees. Ensure that volunteers in this position are equally trained as your Sunday crew to spot suspicious behavior and activity.
- **Have a plan.** Develop customized safety and security plans for various church activities. For example, a staff plan for Monday through Friday will be different than the plan for mid-week events. Identify separate individuals who can cover evening events, weekday events, and weekend events. Ensure every volunteer has a list of emergency contact numbers. 📌

<sup>1</sup><https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2016/tables/data-tables>

<sup>2</sup><http://nebula.wsimg.com/70d448166eff8d95fea2c66429a1b9df?AccessKeyId=16B07A2D0672906279DB&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>





# I LAYED YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE LAIR

Violence against your staff, congregants,  
and property is unpredictable.

But so are fires, heart attacks, domestic  
violence situations, and weather emergencies.

The key is to prepare for the unexpected.



**A caring member of your team may be able to defuse the situation by simply asking, “Do you need someone to talk to?”**

**Emergency preparedness begins with awareness and training people how to respond. By adding two layers of protection—in parking lots and on the steps of your church—you increase your ability to respond to any crisis.**

### **LAYER 1: PERIMETER SECURITY**

**Monitor lots and property perimeter.** Assign at least two volunteers to monitor your parking lot before, during, and after services. Volunteers monitoring your building from the outside can quickly:

- **Relay information to other team members** inside your facilities, giving them additional time to put a plan into action (see Develop emergency communications systems, below).
- **Direct emergency services**, like ambulances, to where they are needed on your property.

**Create a single entrance into your buildings.**

Assign an usher or team member to lock most exterior doors once your service starts. Any unlocked doors should be actively monitored. Exit doors should remain unlocked from the inside.

**Develop emergency communication systems.** Rapid notification of a threat or emergency can save lives. All team members need quick and easy ways to communicate with each other.

- **Invest in two-way radios.** Two-way radios eliminate spotty cell service and scrambling to locate a list of internal phone numbers. Safety team members, ushers, day care workers, and office staff equipped with two-way radios can relay information quickly throughout your campus.
- **Establish alternate systems.** A second method of communication is critical, especially if a radio battery fails or it's important to stay quiet. Develop verbal or nonverbal signals to alert others, such as flashing lights or hand signals.
- **Keep an eye on the sky.** Weather alert radios are inexpensive and can help save lives. Equip your perimeter security team, as well as child care areas, staff offices, and kitchen, with them.

### **LAYER 2: GREETERS—A CRITICAL ROLE**

What roles do your greeters and ushers play? Certainly, they create a welcoming atmosphere. But as members of your perimeter team, these front-line folks can scan the crowd for safety issues, respond to emergencies, and may even provide medical assistance.

**Include caring people.** Because your safety and security team is a ministry, ensure each person serves in a role suited to their calling. A person that catches the attention of the team may not

pose an immediate threat; it could be that the person is feeling overwhelmed. A caring member of your team may be able to defuse the situation by simply asking, “Do you need someone to talk to?”

**Train your greeters.** Training gives greeters an added layer of protection for your ministry. Equip them with the knowledge, skills, and practice they need to assist other safety team members, whatever the emergency.

- **De-escalation techniques.** Conflict de-escalation training teaches team members to calmly respond to someone threatening harm. Look for materials online or from your local library.
- **Life-saving measures.** The American Red Cross offers courses in basic first aid, CPR, and AED use.
- **Basic self-defense.** Ask your local police or nearby university if they offer a basic program for all ages.
- **Conduct an accurate threat assessment.** Can you identify when someone’s feeling overwhelmed, sick, or angry? Is a person speaking gibberish a true security threat—or exhibiting signs of a stroke? The truth is, assessments can be difficult, even for trained professionals. Start by learning what’s “normal” for your ministry’s people and schedule. Discuss what to do when something doesn’t look right.
- **Make a decision.** Do you call the police? Take immediate action? Can you safely confront the person? When in doubt, don’t worry alone; share your concerns with a team member.
- **Take action.** This is where practice drills and tabletop exercises really pay off. By discussing scenarios ahead of time, your menu of response options already has been well thought out.

**Drill, drill, drill.** By training and running practice drills, your team can learn to spot, and act on, potential problems before they become a crisis. Include:

- Classroom instruction to discuss policies, procedures, and scenarios.
- Tabletop exercises to examine potential responses to crisis situations.
- Emergency drills or exercises to walk through mock situations.

Repeated rehearsal and role-playing reinforces the lesson and helps keep the information fresh. The team can also learn what doesn’t work—before a crisis hits. 🌟



## READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

### The Safe & Secure Church Training Kit

In partnership with Brotherhood Mutual, *The Safe & Secure Church Kit* provides comprehensive training with a compassionate approach to church security. Includes manuals and 10 DVDs.

Order today:

**Group.com/Security**

**10% off code: BMIC10**

### HOW LAYERS WORK TOGETHER

These scenarios help illustrate how added layers of protection can work in harmony with your current safety practices.

**SCENARIO 1:** Minutes after your service concludes, a man walking to his car falls to the ground and is unconscious. A perimeter volunteer calls 911 and alerts the safety team inside for immediate medical assistance. Another perimeter volunteer controls the flow of traffic away from the scene, and keeps clear a path for responding emergency vehicles.

**SCENARIO 2:** With severe weather forecasted during a Saturday afternoon teen rally, a volunteer stationed at the entrance scans the skies. At the same moment her weather radio signals a tornado warning, she spots the tornado closing in on the property. She alerts the team inside to get everyone to pre-designated shelter areas.





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## What's inside



### Pg. 3 CHURCH SECURITY

Three common threats your ministry must prepare for to improve safety and security.

### Pg. 7 MIDWEEK SECURITY

Six tips to make your church safer, seven days a week.

### Pg. 9 LAYER YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Two simple ways to improve your crisis response by adding layers of protection.

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