

## Appendix A: Incidents of Gun Violence in Houses of Worship

**February 11, 2024:** Lakewood Church, Houston, TX. On Sunday afternoon, a 36 year old Hispanic woman, accompanied by her 7 year old son, entered the megachurch where Joel Osteen preaches, immediately after the English language services concluded, and before the Spanish language services started. Osteen was greeting people leaving the English-speaking service. The woman was dressed in a trenchcoat, carrying a backpack, and armed with an AR-15 style rifle. Prior to entry, she pointed the rifle at an unarmed security guard, entered the foyer / commons / lobby, fired a short burst, then a longer burst then fired again, shooting about 30 rounds total. Two off-duty police officers from Houston Police and TX Alcohol Beverage Commission, performing security duties at the church, exchanged gunfire with the shooter, a gun battle lasting several minutes. A 57 year old adult male church employee / bystander was shot in the upper leg by the woman, the woman was fatally shot by the officers, the shooter's son was shot and critically injured in the crossfire. In the shooter's backpack was a .22-caliber rifle, which was not used. The shooter was not known to Lakewood church members or leaders, was said not to have attended there, neither did her ex-husband or family, while her mother attended infrequently. The shooter had a well-documented mental health history including a 2016 emergency detention order and a lengthy misdemeanor arrest and incarceration record dating back to 2005 including unlawful weapons carry and assaulting a corrections officer. 1 killed, 2 injured.

**June 16, 2022:** St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Vestavia, AL. On Thursday evening, a man opened fire with a handgun during a potluck supper at the church, where 25 people were meeting. The 70-year old man was well-known to the local police, but had no prior convictions for acts of violence. He was an occasional attendee of the church, and to these potluck suppers. While the subject brought food to the supper, he sat conspicuously alone, refusing offers of people to join them and did not eat anything. During the supper, seemingly unprovoked, the subject produced a concealed handgun from a fanny pack, shot and killed an elderly man and two elderly women. A church member hit the subject with a chair, and wrestled the gun away from him, restraining him until the police arrived. 3 killed.

**May 15, 2022:** Geneva / Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, Laguna Woods, CA. On Sunday morning, a Chinese-born, US citizen entered the main sanctuary of the church, and sat in the back reading a newspaper during the worship services. He indicated to the greeter staff that he had been to the services twice before.

After the services, the church provided a luncheon for about 140 people to honor their former pastor returning from Taiwan. Unknown to anyone, the shooter had entered the facility with two handguns and two bags, one with Molotov cocktails, one with extra loaded magazines. Between the services and the luncheon, he was seen by members chaining many of the doors, and putting Locktite in the locks of other doors, to prevent people from exiting. With a hate-motivation based on the current tensions between China and Taiwan, he opened fire during the luncheon. After the shooting started, a first time attendee / martial arts master crossed the room to try to subdue the shooter. He was shot several times, and died at the scene. During reloading (or a gun malfunction) following the first attempt to subdue the shooter, the pastor and others were able to overpower the shooter, and restrain him until law enforcement arrived. 1 killed, 5 injured.

**February 28, 2022:** The Church in Sacramento, Arden-Arcade (Sacramento), CA. Late in the afternoon, a father estranged from his wife entered the main sanctuary of the non-denominational "The Church in Sacramento" for a supervised family visit with his three daughters. Once there, he fatally shot and killed all three girls, all under the age of 15, and then fatally shot the female chaperone who was supervising the visit. The gunman then shot and killed himself. The main sanctuary this Monday was used as a meeting place, i.e., there were no formal worship services being conducted. Originally labeled as an Active Shooter event, this was later corrected to be a domestic violence-related murder-suicide; it was not a random shooting. The shooting was over in less than a minute. The man had a restraining order against him, and as such, was not legally allowed to possess a firearm. The gunman did not have a previous criminal history. The estranged wife was not at the scene. A social worker supervisor noted after the tragedy that family safety often means taking steps beyond relying on the restraining court order.

**January 15, 2022:** Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue, Colleyville, TX. A man who had been staying in a number of different homeless shelters in Dallas, was welcomed in the 140-member Beth Israel synagogue northeast of Fort Worth by the Rabbi. During Sabbath prayer, the previously calm man drew a pistol and took the four attendees hostage. One of the Trustees secretly dialed 911 on his phone, set the activated phone aside and followed the hostage taker's commands. The initial takeover was live-streamed on the synagogue's Facebook page. The increasingly irrational hostage taker made demands and local law enforcement and the FBI Hostage Rescue Team arrived. After 7-hours, one hostage was released, unharmed. About 10-hours into the ordeal, the Rabbi got the other hostages near a door, threw a chair at the hostage taker to distract him, and all of the hostages fled the building, unharmed. The police then breached the building and the hostage taker was killed. The Rabbi fully credited the security training he had received from Colleyville Police Dept., the FBI, the Anti-

Defamation League and Secure Community Network for knowing what to do during a hostage situation and when to try to safely escape. "We are alive today because of that education." 1 killed, 0 injured.

**January 3, 2021:** Starrville Methodist Church, Winona, TX. The evening of January 2, a man fleeing from the police crashed into a field near the church, leaving a shotgun behind. A police K-9 search of the wooded area failed to discover him. He later broke a window to enter the church building and hid overnight in a bathroom. The suspect was discovered the next morning before the worship services by the unsuspecting minister and his wife. During a verbal exchange, with the suspect holding the church's bank bag, the minister may have told the suspect to leave the building. At some point, the minister drew his handgun and may have ordered the suspect to lay on the floor. The suspect then rushed the minister, and the two wrestled on the floor. The suspect took the gun from the minister and shot him several times in the chest, killing him with his own gun. He then shot at the minister's wife, missing, and shot in the back another armed church member who had turned to seek cover. The suspect stole a pickup from another church member, fled the scene and was later apprehended with the help of OnStar tracking. Smith County, TX Sheriff: "If you are going to carry a firearm, you have got to be willing to use it." 1 killed, 1 injured.

**December 13, 2020:** Saint John the Divine Cathedral Church (Episcopal), New York City. Following a Christmas concert held on the steps of the cathedral, where several hundred people were gathered, a gunman opened fire with two semi automatic handguns, one gun in each hand. The gunman was dressed in black, with his face obscured by a baseball cap and a face mask. He fired around 20 rounds, over a period of about 90 seconds, as he darted in and out from behind a pillar. He was reported as saying "kill me" and "shoot me" as he fired. A detective and a police officer who were at the event, and an arriving sergeant, fired 15 rounds, killing the man. No one was injured

during the gunman's shooting spree. The church's Facebook page indicated that the man was firing into the air. The man had a lengthy criminal history including prison time, shooting at the police in the past and recently, menacing with a firearm. He was carrying a backpack containing a can of gasoline, rope, wire, tape, knives and a well-worn Bible. The gunman left a note detailing plans to take hostages in an attempt to get money, and that he did not expect to return home.

**December 29, 2019:** West Freeway Church of Christ, White Settlement, TX. A man with a fake wig and beard disguise, hat and long coat concealing a sawed-off shotgun stood up at the end of communion time, walked over to an usher, and spoke with him cordially. He then stepped back and produced a shotgun from under his coat, displaying it for 3-4 seconds. He then fired once at a church

security member who was in the process of drawing his gun, and fired a second time at the usher who he originally spoke with. Seeing the shotgun, another church security member, 12-14 yards away, drew his handgun and fired once, stopping the attack. At the time, 240 members were in attendance. The entire sequence of events was streamed live - YouTube video clips of this tragedy are being used for training purposes. 3 killed.

**April 27, 2019:** Chabad Synagogue, Poway (San Diego), CA. A man armed with an AR-15 (type) rifle entered the synagogue during services the last day of Passover. There were 40-60 people in attendance at the time. Yelling anti-Semitic slurs, he shot and killed one person, paused when the rabbi spoke to him, then shot and injured the rabbi. Two other people were injured by bullet fragments. At this point, the gunman fled the building - the assault rifle may have malfunctioned. An off-duty Border Patrol agent in attendance fired at, and hit, the escaping vehicle. The gunman later contacted the California Highway Patrol, surrendering to them. 1 killed, 3 injured.

**April 21, 2019:** Church Tsidkenu, a non-denominational church, San Diego, CA. A woman carrying a handgun and a baby entered the church during Easter services. Claiming to be the Messiah, she walked onto the auditorium stage, waving the handgun and made threats to blow up the church. She was known by the church leaders and had been attending on-again, off-again. Members of the congregation wrestled the handgun and the baby away from the woman. The police arrived two minutes later. 0 killed, 0 injured.

**March 27, 2019:** Church of Scientology, Inglewood (Los Angeles), CA. A man wearing a hoodie entered the church wielding a Samurai sword and began acting erratically. The police were called and physically confronted the suspect. The suspect was shot and killed, with the two officers each also suffering non-life threatening gunshot wounds. 1 killed, 2 injured.

**October 27, 2018:** Tree of Life Synagogue, Pittsburgh, PA. Shooter walked in the open synagogue carrying an AR-15 rifle and three pistols. Shouting, "All Jews must die.", the shooter killed 11 and injured 6, including 4 injured patrol officers. Shooter was in the synagogue for 20 minutes before shot and wounded by a police tactical team. Ages of victims range from 54 to 97, with most over 70. Squirrel Hill is one of the safest neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. Synagogue had previously had training from Homeland Security on building exit routes (functional, accessible), saving lives.

**November 5, 2017:** First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, TX. The shooter, wearing black tactical gear, a bulletproof vest and black mask, and wielding a Ruger AR-15 pattern rifle, opened fire as he approached the church. He shot two people, fired into the building, and entered a side door. He walked up and down

the aisle and methodically shot people in the pews, killing 26 and wounding 20 more. The police recovered 15 empty 30-round magazines from the scene. The shooter exited the church, was shot and wounded by a neighbor before fleeing in his vehicle. He was later found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The shooter had attended a church festival the weekend before, a church where his mother-in-law attended. The dispute with his mother-in-law was later determined to be the sole motivation for the massacre. At the time, the average church attendance was between 40 and 50 people. 26 killed, 20 injured.

**September 24, 2017:** Burnette Chapel Church of Christ, Antioch, TN. Shooter wearing ski mask killed woman in parking lot, made entry to church through open back door, shooting and injuring six (6) people until subdued by an usher / deacon. Shooter was injured by his own firearm during the scuffle. 1 killed, 6 injured.

**September 20, 2015:** Oasis Tabernacle Church, East Selma, AL. The shooter entered the church and sat on the front row with his girlfriend and his infant son. Soon after, he pulled out a gun and started shooting, injuring the woman, the infant and the preacher. Church members subdued the suspect and took the gun from him. The shooter fled the scene but was taken into custody close to the scene. A dispute over child visitation and ongoing domestic violence motivated the shooting. 3 injured.

**June 17, 2015:** Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Charleston, SC. A White Supremacist entered the church during an evening Bible study and prayer meeting. Before the attack, the shooter had actively participated in the Bible study. Then, shouting racial epithets, he shot and killed nine African-American members, wounding three others. Among the dead was the senior pastor / state senator. The Emanuel AME church played an important role in the civil rights movement and recently in Black Lives Matter. The shooter used a semi-auto pistol carried in a fanny pack along with eight spare magazines, reloading five times. The shooting lasted about six minutes. The shooter fled the scene, was later arrested and convicted. 9 killed, 3 injured.

**May 24, 2015:** First Church of the Nazarene, Hartford, CT, 1 wounded

**December 4, 2014:** Bayshore Baptist Church, Bradenton, FL, 3 killed, 1 wounded

**June 13, 2014:** Mother of Mercy Church, Phoenix, AZ, 1 killed, 1 wounded

**April 13, 2014:** a Neo-Nazi gunman shot three people at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, Overland Park, KS, 3 killed

**August 19, 2013:** Uptown Baptist Church, Chicago, IL, 1 killed, 4 wounded

**March 31, 2013:** Hiawatha Church of God, Ashtabula, OH, 1 killed

**January 12, 2013:** Full Gospel Christian Church, Flint, MI, 1 killed

**December 10, 2012:** Faith Center Church, Sunrise, FL, 1 wounded

**December 3, 2012:** First United Presbyterian Church, Coudersport, PA, 1 killed

**November 5, 2012:** Principe de Paz church, Westlake, CA, 1 killed, 2 wounded

**October 24, 2012:** World Changers Church International, Atlanta, GA, 1 killed

**October 30, 2012:** Greater Sweethome Missionary Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, 1 killed

**September 6, 2012:** West Pensacola Baptist Church, Pensacola, FL, 1 wounded

**August 5, 2012:** a 40-year-old man opened fire in the parking lot of the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, WI and then entered the building shooting congregants. He killed six people and injured three including seriously injuring a police officer and then, in a gunfire exchange with police officers, killed himself; 6 killed, 3 wounded

**June 7, 2012:** Victory for the World Church, Atlanta, GA, 2 killed, 2 wounded

**May 3, 2012:** St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Ellicott City, MD, 2 killed

**April 22, 2012:** Destiny Christian Center, Aurora, CO, 1 killed

**September 18, 2011:** Greater Faith Christian Center Church, Lakeland, FL, 1 killed, 1 wounded

**December 24, 2010:** Mosaic Church, Chattanooga, TN, 9 wounded **November 16, 2010:** East Oakland Church, Oakland, CA, 1 killed

**September 27, 2010:** St. Dominic Roman Catholic Church, Youngstown, OH 1 killed

**August 30, 2010:** Church of Latter Day Saints, Fresno, CA, 1 killed

**February 14, 2010:** New Gethsemane Church of God, Richmond, CA, 2 wounded

**October 29, 2009:** Adat Yeshurun Valley Sephardic Orthodox Synagogue, North Hollywood, CA, 2 wounded

**April 7, 2009:** Korean Religious Retreat Camp, Temecula, CA, 1 killed, 2 wounded

**March 8, 2009:** a 27-year-old man entered the First Baptist Church, Maryville, IL armed with a gun and a knife. He first shot the pastor. When the gun jammed, he pulled out a knife and stabbed two congregants who tried to subdue him. 1 killed, 2 injured

**November 23, 2008:** a man entered St. Thomas Syrian Orthodox Church, Clifton, NJ, where he shot and killed his estranged wife and another congregant who tried to intervene, and wounded another, 2 killed, 1 wounded

**July 27, 2008:** a 58-year-old man entered the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Knoxville, TN during a children's performance and used a shotgun to kill an usher and a visitor, and injure 7 others. He was stopped and restrained by church members until the police arrived, 2 killed, 7 injured

**December 9, 2007:** a 24-year-old former member of the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) youth training center in Arvada, CO, attacked the mission, killing two people. Thirteen hours later he opened fire at the New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO, where he killed two women. The gunman was shot several times by an armed volunteer security officer but ultimately killed himself; 4 killed, 5 wounded.

**August 12, 2007:** First Congregational Church, Neosho, MO, a 52-year-old man killed the assistant pastor and two deacons, and wounded five others in the church. The man had argued the night before with the two deacons he shot, both who were relatives of his, 3 killed, 5 wounded.

**May 20, 2007:** First Presbyterian Church, Moscow, ID, 3 killed, including one police officer

**October 2, 2006:** West Nickel Mines Amish School, Lancaster County, PA, 5 killed, 3 wounded

**May 21, 2006:** a 25-year-old man entered the Ministry of Jesus Christ Church, Baton Rouge, LA and fired at congregants during the Sunday service. After killing four people

and wounding the pastor and another, he fled in a car and was later captured at a nearby apartment complex, 4 killed, 2 wounded

**February 26, 2006:** Zion Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Detroit, MI, 2 killed

**August 29, 2005:** Sash Assembly of God, Sash, TX. A 54-year-old man, known to the church members but not a member, had been in a verbal argument with some members in the parking lot. He left but returned a short time later armed with two handguns and opened fire in the parking lot of the church killing two people. The shooter fled the scene, shot into a vehicle at an intersection, killing two occupants, and fled the scene. The shooter committed suicide at his home after a standoff with the police. 5 dead.

**March 12, 2005:** a 44-year-old man shot six people at the Living Church of God, Brookfield, WI, during a church meeting held at a hotel. He killed the pastor, the pastor's 16-year-old son, and himself and injured four others, 3 killed, 4 wounded

**June 11, 2002:** Conception Abbey, Conception, MO. A 71-year-old man armed with two rifles entered the Abbey, walked down the hallway, shot and killed one person. He proceeded to the cafeteria where he shot and wounded two other people. He continued to walk throughout the building where he shot and killed one other person. The shooter committed suicide at the scene. 3 dead, 2 wounded

**September 15, 1999:** a 47-year-old man entered the Wedgwood Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX, during a teen rally and began shooting. He killed seven people, including three teenagers, and injured seven people. He threw a pipe bomb into the church and then killed himself, 7 killed, 7 injured.

No amount of planning can stop someone from wanting to harm others. Nevertheless, having a plan of prevention and response can make your church a more difficult target and can help reduce the harm if violence occurs. A frequent recommendation for effective planning is to prepare for when something happens rather than if it happens.