

Appendix E

Greeters & Ushers – First Line of Defense

Worship Without Worry: Safety and Security for Places of Worship (Tina Lewis Rowe)

Your challenge is to fulfill the dual roles of 1) Greeter and 2) Guardian.

- You will continue to smile and shake hands, direct guests and help during services...these will continue to be your primary tasks. However, greeters must also continuously observe people and the environment, assess the overall situation to see if there is danger, and respond appropriately.
- You must be balanced in your approach: provide a feeling of welcome and openness balanced with being watchful and appropriately wary.
- You must be realistic about your church environment – lots of activities and noise, lots of comings and goings.
 - People arrive early and late and in groups and alone.
 - Members and guests may roam around the lobby or wander down halls.
 - The lobby may be packed with people of all ages.
 - Your church may not have a greeting area, or it may have a large lobby.
 - If there is more than one service, people will arrive as others are leaving.
- You must know what to look for, and what to do if you see something of concern. You do not need extensive training to be reasonably effective. Your life experiences and some review and discussion will provide you with most of the knowledge you need.
- You must be willing and able to fulfill your security responsibilities. Your role is too important to treat it as a joke or something you do not intend to do because it is not comfortable for you. On the other hand, you must not react to people in a hostile, humiliating or excessively fearful way. Being balanced, knowledgeable and proactive is your goal.

Your primary security tasks are to observe and assess, then get assistance or take appropriate emergency action. The best way for you to fulfill your role is to be aware, alert and ready to get assistance. Going beyond that role can make a situation worse, or get you or others killed or hurt in the case of a violent or threatening person.

Get assistance if you have a concern, rather than trying to handle a situation on your own. Ask one—preferably two—Greeters to assist you if you need to talk to someone whose behavior concerns you or if you are checking on a suspicious situation. Do not confront someone on your own unless you have no other choice. Stay alert to such situations so you can assist others quickly.

Your security activities should focus on:

- 1. Observation:** Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully.
- 2. Assessment:** Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm.
- 3. Action:** Get help, then warn and help others. You may be able to do something to prevent violence or keep it from getting worse, but first try to get help and warn and help others.

1. Observation: Continuous and Purposeful

The same diligence that is necessary to ensure that guests and members are made to feel welcome will also allow you to do a brief security observation of each person. It may be helpful to have one or two Greeters whose primary job is to observe and assist.

Assigned responsibility: Each door, group of doors, or general entrance area, should have an assigned Greeters. One of the main causes of security failures is when everyone assumes someone else is doing a task. The attitude of, "If it's going to be, it's up to me" applies to the security function as well as to everything else.

Observe with purpose: Visually scan and personally greet members and every non-member, if possible. This not only fulfills your greeting role, it allows you the chance to observe people close-up and establish a friendly relationship with them. A friendly greeting and good eye contact can make a difference in how someone reacts, even when angry or upset.

Hands and body first: Before you make eye contact, look at the hands, general appearance, items being carried or worn, and the overall actions and demeanor of the person you're greeting. With practice, you can do this effectively in a few seconds while reaching out to shake hands or give the person a bulletin.

Limited entry areas after services start: Consider reducing the number of doors that are open and post a sign about which door should be used after that time. Fire department restrictions may affect which doors can be locked when people are present.

Security walk-through: You can probably perform a quick walk-through, and still be done in time to be in the service and participate in worship. Unless there is a legitimate reason for people to remain in halls, rooms and offices, or to stand outside, courteously remind them that the service has started. If you have a reason for concern, linger in the area until the person either goes into the service or leaves. Do not leave someone in a place where he or she should not be.

If there is a child-care area, check to ensure there are no outside doors propped open and that all the children are in the child-care area. Quickly inspect the parking areas and other areas you can easily see around the church building. Your church campus may be too large to make this practical, but if it is possible, it is a good security check before the service starts.

Maintain your role to maintain your effectiveness: Your role in all of your security activities should be limited to looking for situations and areas of immediate concern and dealing with emergencies. You will be resented and will lose your effectiveness if you are viewed as being meddlesome, over-bearing or excessive. If you see that tendency developing in other Greeters, gently help them regain their focus or discuss it as a team.

During services: Some churches keep one more Greeters in the lobby at all times, while others prefer to have all members in the church service. Even if Greeters are in the lobby, at least two should sit at the back of the sanctuary, in a location where they can observe doors and the congregation most effectively. They can sit with their families or friends, but need to be alert for problems.

2. Assessment: A Reasonable Evaluation of the Potential for Harm

While you are observing a person or situation, you should be mentally assessing what you see. Is everything normal? Is there something that bothers you? Do they seem to need assistance in some way? Is there a potential for danger? If the danger is obvious you may need to quickly decide the degree of danger.

Use your reasonable judgment. Your reasonable judgment will usually be enough to help you decide whether to call the police or what other action you should take. You don't need to be a doctor or psychologist to be able to tell if someone seems to be drunk or drugged, or if he or she is already angry or talking in a depressed way. You don't need to be a police officer to see if someone has a weapon or if they are wearing or carrying something that might conceal a weapon.

The same reasonable judgment you would use to decide if your safety or the safety of your family is at risk is appropriate for your role in church security. Your biggest decision is whether to call the police. Sometimes that is obvious. If it is not, it is better to call than not to call if you have any concerns.

Behaviors and appearance may be clues or indicators. The presence of the following behaviors and appearance do not make it likely that someone is going to do something harmful. However, each has been observed in the behavior and appearance of those who have committed crimes and acts of violence and it is reasonable and appropriate to watch for them. Action to take if these indicators are present will be discussed in the next section.

A. Look for indicators of unusual emotion.

- Anger or rage
- Crying
- Unusual laughter or hilarity
- Nervousness, furtiveness or evasiveness
- Fear or panic
- Out of control or "wild-eyed"
- An unusual absence of any emotion

B. Look for unusual behavior.

- Standing or sitting in a vehicle for an extended length of time.
- Taking unidentifiable items out of a vehicle.
- Walking up to the door and looking around as though on the lookout.
- Running up to the door.

- A suspicious appearing person being dropped off but the car stays idling.
- Someone walking in with members who do not seem to know the person.
- Two or more unknown people entering together and going different directions.
- Obviously trying to go unnoticed, being furtive or looking for concealment.
- Confrontational or angrily questioning or arguing with you or someone else.
- Asking for monetary or other assistance, especially if you know it cannot be provided.
- Asking about a church member or about the pastor.
- Talking or muttering, or fidgeting or moving excessively.
- Indicating self-hatred or disgust with self.
- A grin or smile that seems inappropriate for the situation.
- Intoxicated, drugged, flustered or confused.
- Responding with anger to greetings or questions.
- Staring in an exaggerated way; especially, staring while moving toward someone.
- Standing very still when others are moving forward.
- Seeming to stall for time.
- Standing alone or facing the congregation in the sanctuary instead of sitting.
- Doing something that does not fit with the service at the time.
- Going into areas other than the sanctuary when no one else is present.
- Spending an excessive amount of time in the bathroom.
- Attempting to get a Greeters or someone else to go away from the main area.
- Walking awkwardly, as though having concealed weapons.

Note: A frequent action of those who have a concealed weapon, explosives or drugs, is to touch the area or keep a hand in the pocket or bag where the items are hidden.

C. Look for clothing or characteristics that might be linked to problem behavior.

It is becoming more the norm for people to wear casual clothes to church. Even though some clothing may seem inappropriate or offensive to you, clothing alone is not an indicator of problem behavior. The characteristics of some attire seem to be linked to a potential for disruptive behavior. Observe closely or talk to the person in a friendly way to assess the situation.

- Wearing unusually inappropriate clothing for a church environment.
- Wearing military, hunting or camouflage clothing without a reason.
- Wearing menacing-appearing clothing: Pulled-down hats, all dark, long-coats, etc.
- Wearing clothing with wording or a photo to convey a hostile message.
- Being noticeably dirty or unkempt or having a very offensive or unusual odor.
- Carrying or wearing a bag or backpack, especially if it looks stuffed full.
- Wearing a coat or other clothing that looks as though something is being concealed.
- Looking much less heavy than the bulkiness of the clothes would indicate.

3. ACTING ON YOUR ASSESSMENT

You will not have time to observe and assess much of anything if someone runs into the church lobby, sanctuary or other area with a weapon and begins to fire it at people. That frightening scenario would require immediate action in a panic situation. There are many other times when you can prevent a conflict or violent situation, or reduce the harm, by responding in an effective way.

Possible Assessment Options and Escalation

- Observe and assess both the physical and mental state of the person; and determine if a concern is justified or if an immediate threat exists.
- Courteously separate the person in question from others.
- Talk in a normal and calm tone of voice, but keep some distance between you and the other person.
- Signal to another Greeters if you become more concerned during the talk.
- If you are still concerned, even if you don't have specifics, let a Greeter in the sanctuary know about your concerns. If you are a Greeter in the sanctuary, alert other Greeters so they can watch when you are busy.
- If in doubt, or if the situation escalates or cannot be resolved, call the police or have someone else call immediately.
- Do not attempt to detain a person who wants to leave before the police arrive.

Greeter/Usher Security Checklist

Y/N

1. Do I know the policies of my pastor or other leaders about my security role?	
2. Do I have a Greeter post assignment?	
3. Do I know where other Greeters are supposed to be?	
4. Have I talked with other Greeters to develop plans about emergency responses?	
5. Am I comfortable being assertive with a suspicious person or situation?	
6. Do I know the best route to every exit in my church building?	
7. Do I know how to covertly signal another Greeter to call 911 or to assist me?	
8. Do members of my church know my role if an emergency occurs?	
9. Have I walked the route from my Greeter post to every exit in my building?	
10. Have I ever practiced getting to another area while staying low?	
11. Do I have a plan for how I can separate a suspicious person from other people in the lobby or sanctuary?	
12. Do I know what items or areas in every part of the building would provide the best protection, barricade or concealment?	

13. Do I know where mechanical and utility areas and items are located and how to access them? (Electrical boxes, water supply, alarms, gas, fire extinguishers, ladders, tools, potential weapons, office keys, etc.)	
14. Do I know where crawl spaces, overhead storage and closets are located and if they would be useable for concealment?	
15. Could I lock every front door quickly?	
16. Do I know which interior doors have locks?	
17. Do I know the best location outside for viewing each parking area?	
18. Do I know where there is a flashlight in several areas of the building?	
19. Have I ever checked to see if I could move a pew, desk, table or other item if it was necessary to do so in an emergency?	
20. Do I have a plan for how I might respond to an emergency in a variety of church areas? (Lobby, during the service, classroom, fellowship hall, parking lot?)	