

Appendix B

Six Common Objections and a Reasonable Response

The Church Safety and Security Guidebook (Brotherhood Mutual Insurance)

1. We don't need organized security.

Leadership may use this objection if your church is small, or is located in a rural or low-crime area. Sometimes it's because leadership doesn't want to think something bad could or would happen at church. Maybe it's because nothing truly bad has happened at your church, or that incidents in the past have been minor, so leadership feels there's no immediate need to start a security program. The churches that have experienced crises may have been thinking these same things, right up until the moment that a crisis came to their church.

The idea of an organized approach to church security is an ancient one. "But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat" (Nehemiah 4:9 NIV). The idea was that they put their faith in God. They looked to Him for protection and for safety, but at the same time they knew that they had a responsibility, as well. They took up arms and they posted guards. They were ready to protect. They did everything humanly possible and then put the end result in God's hands.

The same is true today. There are specific, practical things that church leaders can do to make their worship centers safer places. God expects us to use our minds, our God-given capabilities. He doesn't just do everything for us.

We have to deal with reality. As pastors and church leaders, we have the responsibility to create an environment where parents can know that their children are safe in the children's department, and their teens are safe in the teen department, and adults are safe when they come together to worship and to fellowship. We have a moral responsibility, and we have a tremendous opportunity to help create a safe environment where God's people can gather in safety.

2. Having a safety / security team will scare or worry the congregation and/or visitors.

Actually, the opposite is more likely. The members of your congregation see and hear what's going on in the world on the news. They live in it every day. When they hear about church vandalism or a church shooting, are they wondering what your church or their church would do if that happened?

Do they think you've already thought of that and know how you will address an incident? Do they have an expectation their family will be safe at church, and that you've put plans in place to help ensure their safety? Having a security team and plan will likely have a calming effect. People will appreciate that your ministry cares about them and their safety, and that you are working to give them a place to worship in peace.

3. We don't have the budget, the people, the time, or the knowledge to set up a safety / security program.

Most security professionals will say you can't afford to not have a safety and security program in place. Church security doesn't have to cost a lot of money. In fact, there are free and low-cost options available. Don't be paralyzed by analysis. Church security can be tackled like any other issue—one step at a time. Most likely, there are small things you can do immediately to make a difference in safety at your facility. You just have to start.

Don't go it alone. Ask for help from inside the church, from other churches, and from outside the church. Chances are you have people in your congregation right now who would be willing to help. This ministry might be their opportunity to get involved and make a positive contribution. You may have an EMT, a law enforcement professional, or a firefighter in your midst.

Ask your congregation what skills they have and if they're willing to help form the team and join in the discussion about safety and security. When you've gathered help and advice, choose someone to lead the initiative and delegate responsibility to him or her.

4. We haven't talked about safety and security at our church before.

Even if security hasn't been discussed by church leadership, it may be on the minds of your members. Often, it is a member of the church who has law enforcement or military experience who brings up the subject of security at church.

5. People will take action if there is ever an incident.

Leaving security to chance can be dangerous for members and visitors. There are good people in your congregation, but do you know how they would react in an emergency? Would anyone react? Would multiple people react and be at odds with each other on how to handle the situation? Are they trained for a medical emergency? Are they trained to address a distraught or violent person?

Do they have a ministry mindset? Do they know the layout of your facility, have communication protocols in place? Can they work as a coordinated unit in case of a fire or weather emergency? The simple answer is that you can never truly know how others will react in a situation, but you can reduce incidents and increase safety and security by having a plan and team in place.

6. We have a guy who can handle things if anything happens.

One person cannot be everywhere, all the time. Even if that one person is highly trained, he or she needs help, needs a backup, needs a vacation. Does your "go to" person have the skills to cover all possible situations? Can he or she cover a medical situation? Does he or she know verbal de-escalation tactics?

Having a team brings depth and diversity of skills, as well as hearts to serve. While a diminutive security team member might not be able to subdue a 250-pound man, he or

she may have a calming voice and demeanor that can minister to a distraught individual.

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