

‘Pray, Believe, Prepare’: Churches Across US Step Up Security Amid Rise of Deadly Attacks

Once considered sanctuaries of peace, America’s churches are increasingly becoming targets of deadly violence. Since July, at least three fatal church shootings have shaken communities across the country, prompting pastors and congregations to tighten security and seek specialized training.

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At New Wine Ministry in Decatur, Arkansas, worshippers gathered to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles – while two Vietnam veterans patrolled the grounds outside.

“That kind of event will draw people that are curious and perhaps have some type of ulterior thing that they want to do to cause trouble,” said Don Huddle, part of the church’s security team.

Pastor Vincent Xavier said faith must be paired with vigilance. “We don’t want to walk in fear,” he said. “But we want to be careful and cautious because people’s lives matter. They deserve the right to fellowship in peace without worrying about someone coming in to do horrible things.”

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The heightened alert follows a string of deadly attacks: in September, a man set fire to a Mormon church in Michigan after killing four people; in August, two children were gunned down during a Catholic Mass in Minneapolis; and in July, two women were shot to death at a Baptist church service in Kentucky.

“A lot of churches are starting to see that they better step up,” said Ted Marshall, another security volunteer. “It’s a whole different game now.”

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In response, the United States Concealed Carry Association (USCCA) has expanded its “Protecting Your House of Worship” safety training nationwide. Firearms instructor Ron Garrett said more than 600 events have been held since May, training over 12,000 participants in threat assessment, active shooter response, and emergency medical care.

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