

Deadly Force Incidents on the Rise in US Churches and Ministries

Deadly force incidents at churches and other faith-based organizations in the U.S. are on the rise, according to ministry security expert and church violence researcher Carl Chinn.

In 2012, Chinn reported, there were 135 “deadly force incidents,” a 36 percent increase over 2011. More than half the 2012 incidents were attributed to domestic violence situations that spilled over into the church, personal conflicts and robberies. Seventy-five people died as a result of those attacks.

Chinn’s first encounter with ministry-related violence occurred in 1996 when an angry gunman took hostages at the Colorado-based Focus on the Family, where Chinn worked as a Building Engineer. He believes ministry safety and security must be a leadership decision based in faith and managed in action.

Chinn and others began developing an intentional security program for New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo. He was part of the team of responders directly involved with the active shooter in December 2007, and he continues to serve New Life security as the threat investigator and liaison between law enforcement and ministry security operations.

On his website, , Chinn maintains current statistics on church and ministry-related violence, a chronicle of church crime history and offers advice on safety and security measures.

“Faith-based organizations,” he states, “must increase their awareness of, and preparation for, the accidental, criminal

and environmental hazards capable of compromising their primary ministry purpose.”

In his book, *Evil Invades Sanctuary*, Chinn writes: “Unlike other organizations, Bible-based entities struggle with the perceived conflict between divine protection and active security planning. But there is no conflict; just because we pray for God’s protection before driving does not mean we speed or dismiss the value of seatbelts. Likewise, faith-based organizations must intentionally provide for the safety of staff and visitors.”

Chinn, a frequent speaker for the National Organization of Church Security & Safety Management, has been featured in national media and publications, including *Focus on the Family*, *The 700 Club*, *Preaching* magazine, *Christianity Today*, Moody Bible Institute and radio interviews.