

Our Churches Are Under Attack—What Should We Do?

Our prayers go out to those who have been hurt or lost family members or friends in church attacks. May God's grace heal the wounds of these losses.

In 2016, violent deaths were more frequent at faith-based organizations than at schools. In comparing 2016 to the most recent 10 years, it was second in the number of violent crimes with deadly potential (with 246 deadly force incidents, following 2015 at 248).

In 2016, from those 246 deadly force incidents there were 65 violent deaths—defined as homicides, suicides, and aggressors killed in action—all taking place at churches or ministries.

As in the news recently, 2017 is looking like it will be worse!

The following 5 “deadly force” incidents at faith-based operations in the U.S. occurred within last nine days of typing this blog (updated Nov. 5, 2017):

1. ***Texas, Sunday 11/5/17***: Multiple deaths and injuries when a man opened fire in a small Baptist Church
2. ***California, Sunday 11/5/17***: As mass was dismissing into the parking lot, someone opened fire killing a woman and wounding her companion.
3. ***Alabama, Tuesday 10/31/17***: A man was charged with attempted murder after ramming the car of others and then shooting once in the parking lot of a church.
4. ***Pennsylvania, Sunday 10/29/17***: A 5-year-old girl was taken from a church by her estranged mother who does not have custody.
5. ***Kentucky, Saturday 10/28/17***: Two men were shot as they got out of their car in a Temple parking lot.

Ministry safety and security must be a decision of leadership.

It should be based in faith and managed in action. We should embrace biblical teachings to “not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.” But being confident in our faith doesn’t mean we stop participation in our own preservation and social interaction.

We trust God for provision, but we don’t sit up in bed in the morning and raise our hands for clothes to float down on us out of heaven.

We don’t stroll leisurely through the day with a heavenly mist occasionally sprayed into our mouths to keep us hydrated.

No tasty morsels of manna appear magically in our mouths satisfying our hunger.

We all understand that the procurement and management of those needs is an intentional process of action on our part.

Providing for safety and security of congregations, staff and volunteers is exactly the same.

Yet very few faith-based organizations are intentional about it. This is especially true of churches. Many still say, “God will provide.” He does provide, but He expects our participation. The people in our care and the amenities they have funded with their contributions are worthy of intentional care.

This blog is hopefully a wake-up call to increase awareness and improve response actions.

“Nevertheless we prayed to our God, and, because of them, we set up a watch for them day and night” (Neh. 4:9).

As I stated in a previous blog, Faith Based and Church Security has been my passion for decades. I have established and assisted in establishing safety/security teams in churches

and faith-based ministries. It is my opinion the every place of worship should have a safety/security policy, procedures and a team in place. It is far better to have these in place and never need them than to have a crisis and have no idea what to do. There are so many situations that arise in a crisis that we never think of beforehand. We need to be prepared!

Christian Leadership University has a College Level Course (CHU 101) that is designed to assist places of worship to prepare for those potential dangers. The course can be taken for 5 college credits or it may be audited. Call 716-681-4896 to speak with Don Swartzlander about this course.

CHU 101 examines information from top leaders in the field of safety and security. It outlines their recommendations and gives step-by-step suggestions on how to assess your place of worship for safety and security. In addition and shortly following will be a course on suggesting how to establish a safety-and-security team. This course is designated as CHU 102 and hopefully will be released in the next few months.

Teddy Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." While speaking to reluctant troops preparing for the battle for San Juan Hill, the inspiration is consistent with the message of this article.

Keep it simple—but get started. {eoa}

This article originally appeared at .