



Church Security

Making Your Mass & Events Safer



Risk Management

Safety Plan

It is important to understand there is no simple formula for survival in a threatening situation. Although, a survival mindset will get you a much stronger foundation upon which you can base your decisions and actions.



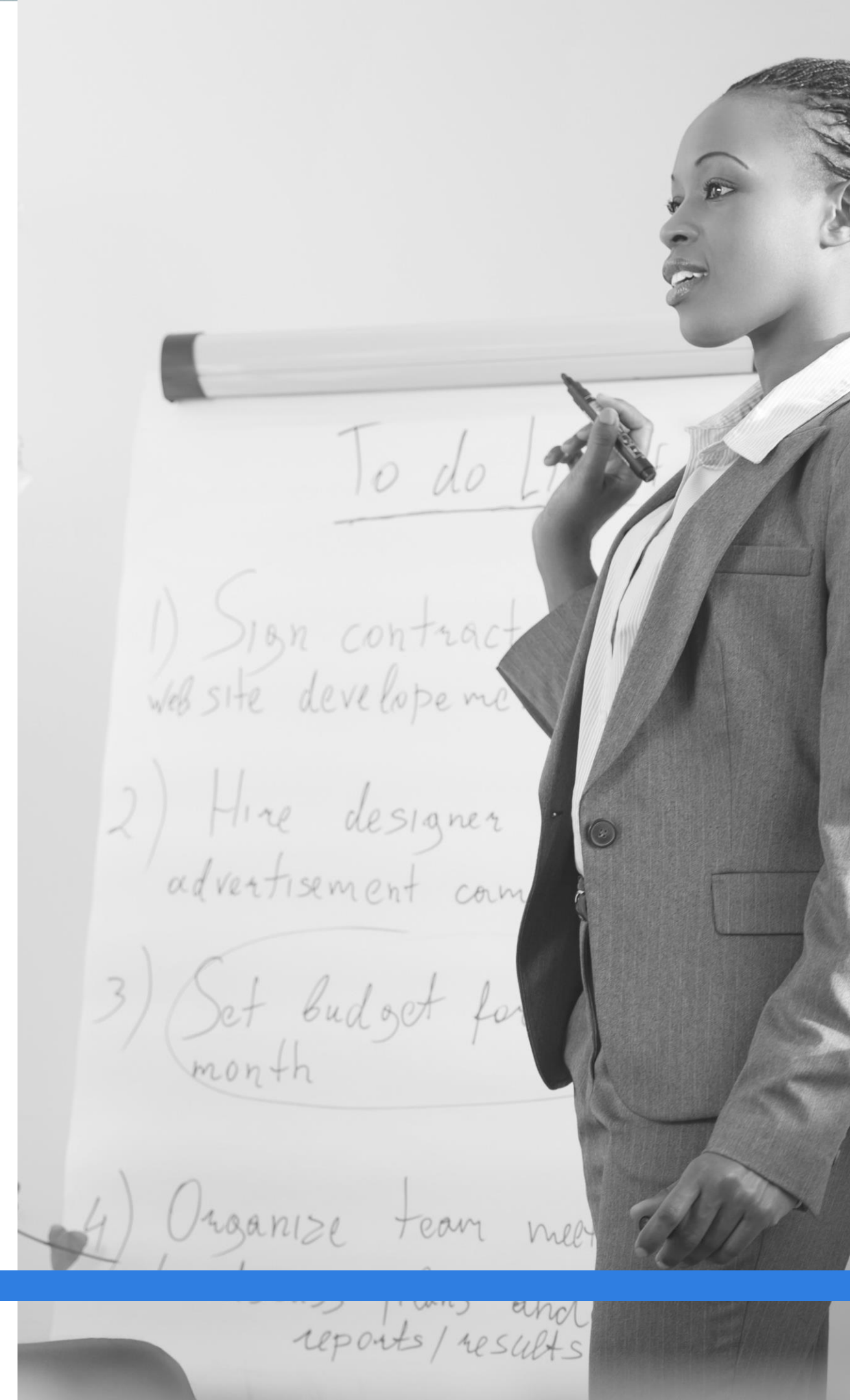
Safety Plan

Having a plan in place will reduce your exposure and increase safety.

- Without a plan:
Chaos and fear
- With a plan:
Structure and organized reactions

Trained vs. Untrained

- During an emergency or act of violence, the trained individual may experience anxiety but the untrained will likely panic.
- The trained individual will recall their training whereas the untrained will be in disbelief or shock.
- The trained will commit to action where the untrained will descend into helplessness.



AWARENESS

Involves taking the time necessary to gain a basic understanding of an active shooter, threat or emergency situation.

PREPARATION

There is no substitute for preparation. Look through a survival lens and prepare for “when” it happens and not “if” it happens.

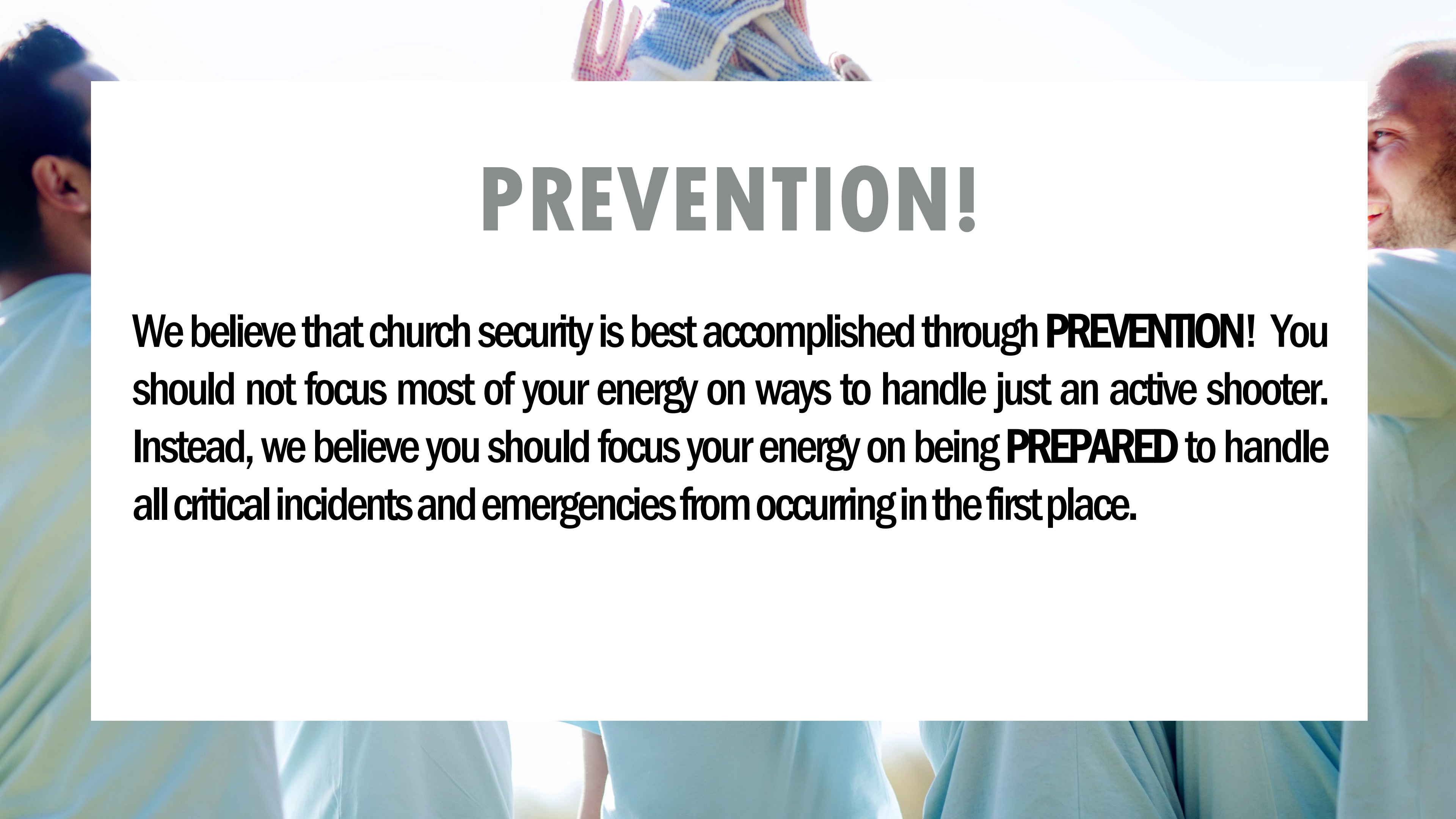
REHEARSAL

Involves practicing your plan. Rehearsing your plan will reduce response time and build confidence.



PREVENTION!

We believe that church security is best accomplished through **PREVENTION!** You should not focus most of your energy on ways to handle just an active shooter. Instead, we believe you should focus your energy on being **PREPARED** to handle all critical incidents and emergencies from occurring in the first place.



CHURCH SHOOTINGS ARE NOTHING NEW

- ✘** Actually, there are very few incidents, but they become high-profile when they occur.
- ✘** Number of casualties have increased (weapons used).
- ✘** Mental illness has factored into this epidemic.
- ✘** All violence at all houses of worship, has tallied more than 250 incidents each in 2015 and 2016.



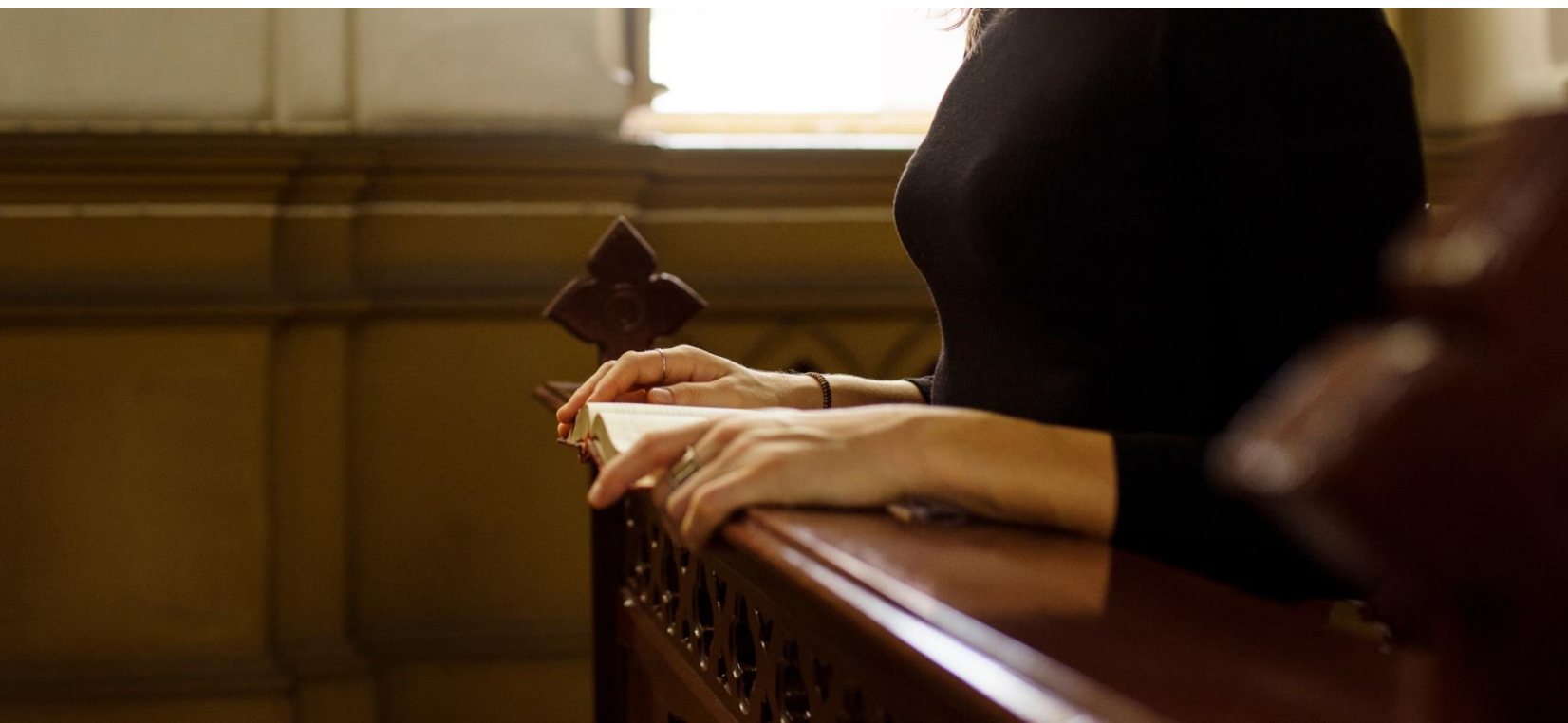
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**CHURCH SHOOTINGS OCCURRED
FROM 2006-2016**



17%

**THE ATTACKER FELT UNWELCOME
OR HAD BEEN REJECTED BY THE CHURCH**



12%

**SHOOTERS SUFFERED FROM A FORM OF MENTAL
ILLNESS**



CHURCH, SCHOOL, AND MASS SHOOTINGS

Today, we must change our mindset about safety and improve the protection of all who enter upon our church and school property.

- We have become easy targets
- They are a large place of assembly
- Causes the most devastation

Sutherland Springs, TX

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

November 2015

26 killed



Parkland, FL

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS HS

February 2018

17 killed



Blacksburg, VA

VIRGINIA TECH

April 2007

32 killed





Jonesboro, AR

WESTSIDE SCHOOL

March 1998

5 killed



Littleton, CO

COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL

April 1999

13 killed

Charleston, SC

EMANUEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

June 2015

9 killed



Newton, CT

SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY

Dec. 2012

26 killed



Interesting Fact

SINCE 1967 (50 YEARS), HOW MANY **FIRE** DEATHS HAVE OCCURRED IN SCHOOLS ACROSS AMERICA?

1

Approx. 50

2

Approx. 100

3

Approx. 200



ZERO

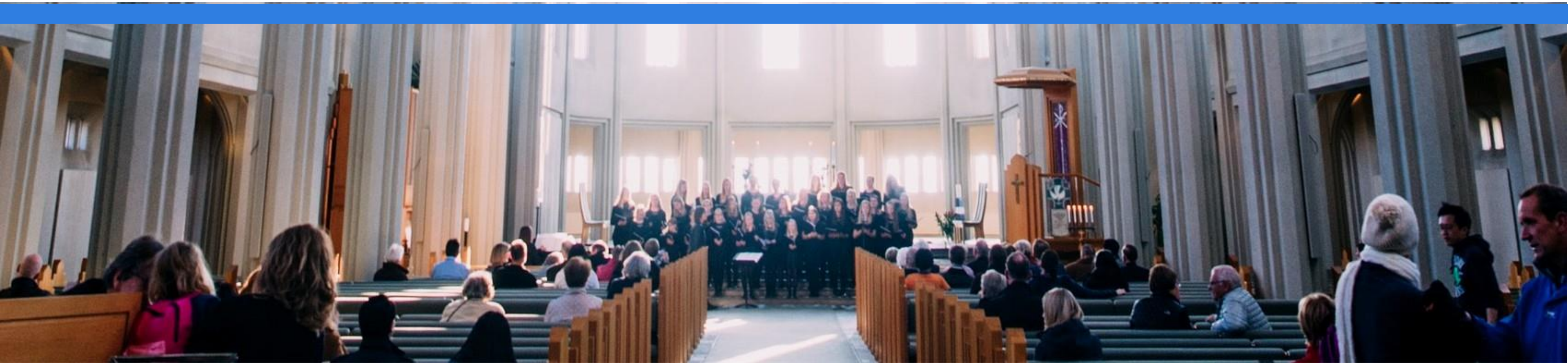


REASONING

- More than half the cost of new construction is based solely on life safety and fire codes.
- Yet, we have done little to provide adequate security to our students and parishioners.
 - Fire Service gets an A+
 - Security gets an NI (needs improvement)

Safety/Security Team

Having a highly visible safety/security team may actually prevent or reduce the potential for a threat and offer comfort to your parishioners. Since Ushers and Greeters are often in a position to be the first ones to closely observe visitors coming onto your property, they should all be part of your safety/security team and should have regular and documented training exercises.



Safety/Security Team

It is important to keep focus on both safety and security at your entire place of worship. Try to think basic before you think high tech or high costs. Your training does not have to be complex creating a “combat” ready environment; rather, it should consist of providing materials on safety and security issues, high risk or threat situations and general emergency situations.



Safety/Security Team

TEAM COULD CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Building/Grounds Engineer
- Medical/EMS Law Enforcement Ushers/Staff
 - Fire Service
- **UTILIZE ALL YOUR RESOURCES**



Safety/Security Team

- **Develop your Team and Plan**
- **Capable adults with sound judgement**
- **Staff/Ushers/Volunteers**
 - Everyone can have a role
 - Secretary
 - Custodian
- **Outside Resources**
 - Civil Defense
 - Legal

~~Plan A~~

~~Plan B~~

Plan C



THE TEAM

Should consist of capable adults:

- Given specific responsibility
- Alert and ready to respond to emergency/threat



THE TEAM

Assign a Safety/Security Coordinator

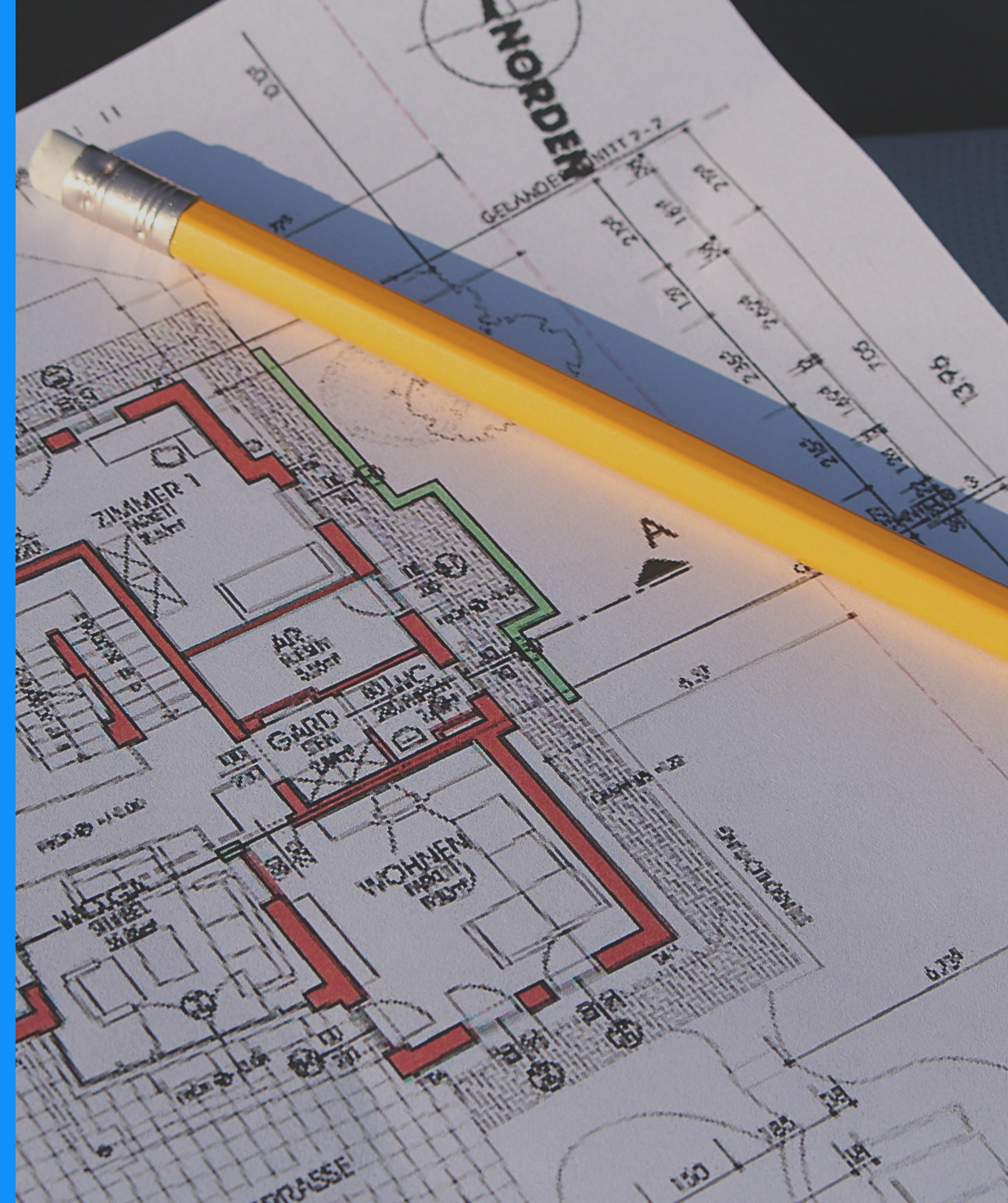
- Develop and oversee safety/security plan
- Keep plan active
- Keep updated and effective for your specific location
- Coordinate activities/training
- Schedules regular inspections/assessments



THE TEAM

Develop your Plan

- Plan should address all emergencies
 - Weather
 - Medical
 - Disruptions
 - Violent acts
- Seek assistance from first responders for logical approach



THE TEAM

- Team should be trained to report threats/concerns
- Trained to react to anything making them uncomfortable
- Should be able to identify a threat and take action
- Train with other ushers/staff from other churches
- *Keep in mind though, what works for them may not be suitable for your location*



THE TEAM

- Designated to observe certain areas of the church
 - Narthex
 - Nave
 - Parking Lot
 - Doors
 - Altar
 - Interior Rooms
- Wear clothing representing who you are
- Wear badges or lanyards to be easily identifiable





TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

Early detection is critical

- Most violent acts begin in the parking lot
- The parking lot and entrance(s) should be the focal point
- Security cameras monitored
- Ushers/Greeters observing people entering the church



TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

Develop Three Circles of Security

1) Parking Lot

2) Exterior/Interior doors

3) Interior of church



PERIMETER SECURITY

- Given the importance of perimeter security, it is crucial that you provide the appearance of your property to be well secured.
- Mass shootings are not typically spontaneous but are thought out and planned based on the appearance of security at a location.
- Do not provide an open invitation for an attack on your property.



AWARENESS

What is Situational Awareness?

- Observant of surroundings
(Looking for signs)
- Investigate disturbances on your property
- Report anomalies to your leadership
- Don't assume that vandalism on your property was just for the thrill of doing so. It could be a precursor to a threat or break-in. (Cameras, door locks, etc.)



BEST PRACTICES

- Conduct security assessment prior to and during the Mass or event
 - Exterior and Interior
- Repair/replace as soon as possible



BEST PRACTICES

- Parking Lot(s)
 - Doors
 - Windows
 - Lighting
- Landscaping
- Neighbors
- Other Structures



PARKING LOTS

- Research indicates that over 60% of all mass shootings begin in the parking lot
- This should be the focal point of your perimeter security plan
 - *Are your lots easily visible from the streets/public?*
 - *Adequate lighting?*
 - *Does landscaping in or around your lots provide hiding places?*

PARKING LOTS

- During arrival/departure of parishioners, be vigilant of people and activities occurring.
- After Mass/event, don't assume threat level has diminished.
- During Mass/event, conduct walk-arounds. Look for suspicious activities or anomalies.
- This can be seen as deterrent to a potential threat.
- Being visible also offers a form of comfort to those in attendance.

PARKING LOTS

- Consider having a vehicle labeled Safety Patrol.
- Park it at the entrance and/or drive through the lot during the Mass/event.
- Partner with law enforcement and ask if they can attend your event and sit in parking lot.
- Some agencies may be able to leave an unmanned vehicle during Mass to act as a deterrent.



DOORS

Can your doors be properly secured?

Are there any weak points?

Do you have all glass doors?

- Your security assessment of the property may require you to update or replace some doors.
- If you are replacing any doors, always ensure they comply with local and national fire code.



DOORS

- We recommend locking all your secondary doors after Mass has started. Late arrivals can be directed to the main entrance.
- This can only be done so long as it is not a fire code violation.
- If you choose not to secure the main entrance of the church during Mass, we recommend it be safeguarded by your team.
- You should however, have a lockdown procedure for all doors should a credible threat be determined.



DOORS

- Exam your doors and inspect for deficiencies and or evidence of tampering.
- Ensure they latch properly.
- Criminals will “scope out” your property for weaknesses.
- An open door policy is no longer conducive to today’s society.
- A key control policy is a must.



DOORS

- Glass doors offer a unique situation for your security.
- Security window film could be installed.
- Although it does not prevent access, it delays it giving you ample time to employ your security action plan.



WINDOWS

Do your windows pose a security issue for your property?

- Inspect windows for tool markings, pry marks, or cracked glass.
- This may be evidence of an attempted break-in.
- Or, someone may have gained access to the church prior to Mass and are hiding/waiting to plan their attack.
- Ensure all windows open/close properly and have adequate locking mechanisms.



LANDSCAPING

- Landscaping can add beauty to your property but also can be a place of refuge for an intruder.
- It is important to keep well maintained.

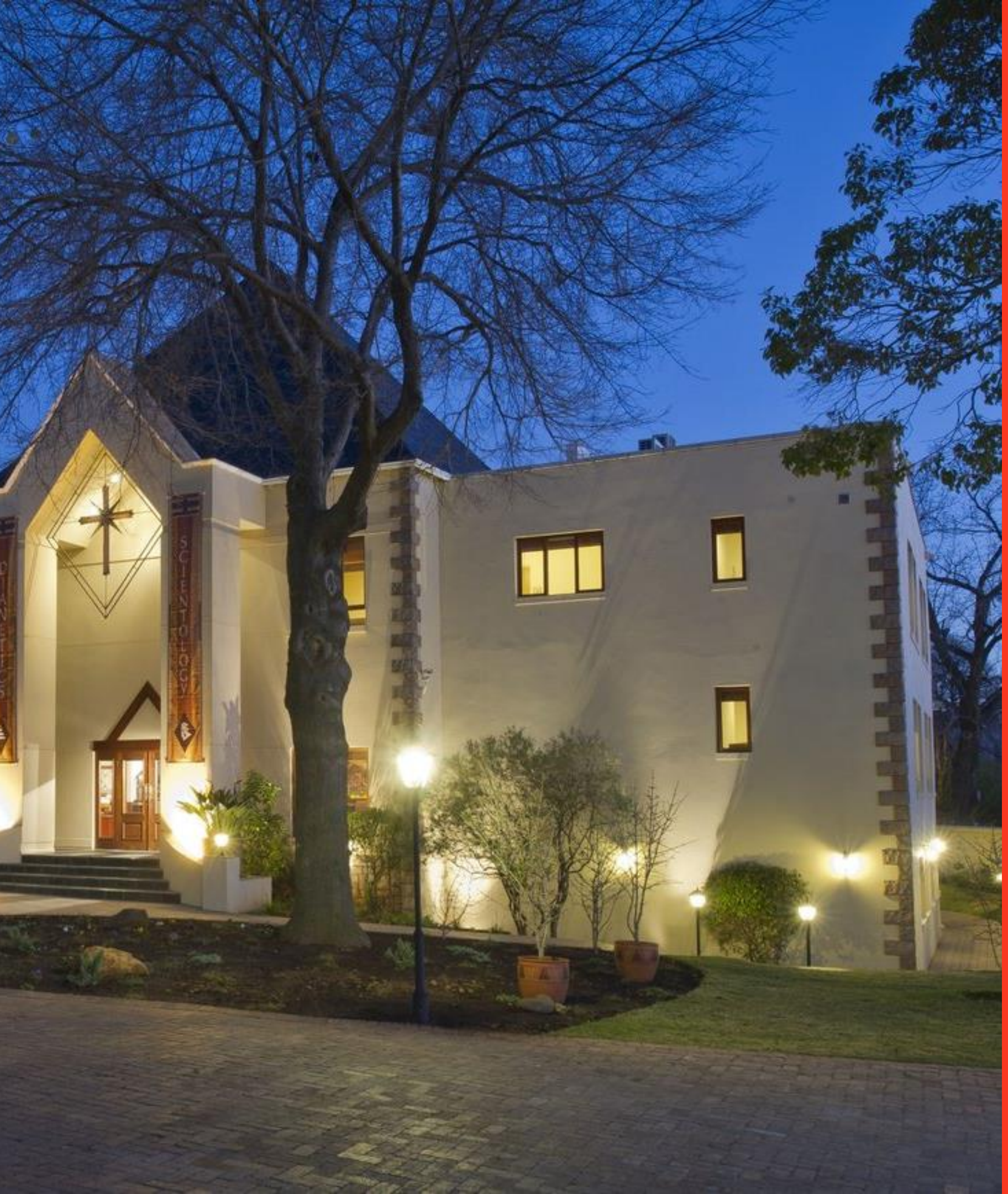
Does your landscaping hide your entrance doors or windows?

- As mentioned earlier, this is the invitation that an intruder will look for.
- Your security assessment of the property should address any issues.



LANDSCAPING

- When conducting your walk-around prior to Mass, search behind the landscaping for evidence of disturbances such as someone sleeping in the area or attempting to unlawfully enter your building.
- If you have questionable landscaping and it is not feasible to remove, consider trimming or reducing the size to allow increased visibility.



LIGHTING

Is there adequate lighting?

- Your exterior lights should be illuminated all night.
- Having property well lit at night will also be a deterrent and give the intruder that sense that your property is secured and not an easy target.



NEIGHBORS

- Any given neighborhood wants their community to feel safe from harm. Consider developing a Neighborhood Watch Program as part of your Safety/Security ministry. Your local law enforcement agency can likely assist you in developing this program specific to your community.
- If one is already in place, look for ways to enhance it with respect to the current culture on the need for church security.



NEIGHBORS

Reach out to the adjacent neighbors that border your property. Ask if they would consider being your eyes and ears for suspicious activities around the property during and/or after events.



NEIGHBORS

Consider providing an email address for these neighbors to report instances that may be occurring on your property either during events or after hours. Provide them a contact name/number to report unusual activity around the church.



Audible alarms and/or strobe lights installed on the exterior of your buildings could also be a deterrent and notify neighbors of an intrusion. Individuals with a threatening plan seek out easy targets and could be “staging” their attack based on the security or lack of security at your parish.

Detection – Deter - Delay

Detection – Early detection of a threat is a key element to the safety of all who enter upon your property. If a potential threat can be detected early, you have a much greater chance of neutralizing it. Qualified and trained individuals who can identify suspicious signs of behavior should be strategically placed at your entrances and parking lot. Keep in mind, if a threat is identified, your lockdown procedure and emergency response plan should be activated immediately.

Detection – Deter - Delay

Deter – If the situation allows, there may be an instance where you will need to confront an individual to determine their intentions. If this can be accomplished in a safe manner, the mere fact that you are addressing the individual may in fact deter them from committing any acts of violence. While engaging someone, you should be able to respond calmly and effectively as to keep control and de-escalate any potential high emotional conflict. If there is no opportunity to verbally engage individuals, making eye contact with them can also be a deterrent to someone with ill intentions.

Detection – Deter - Delay

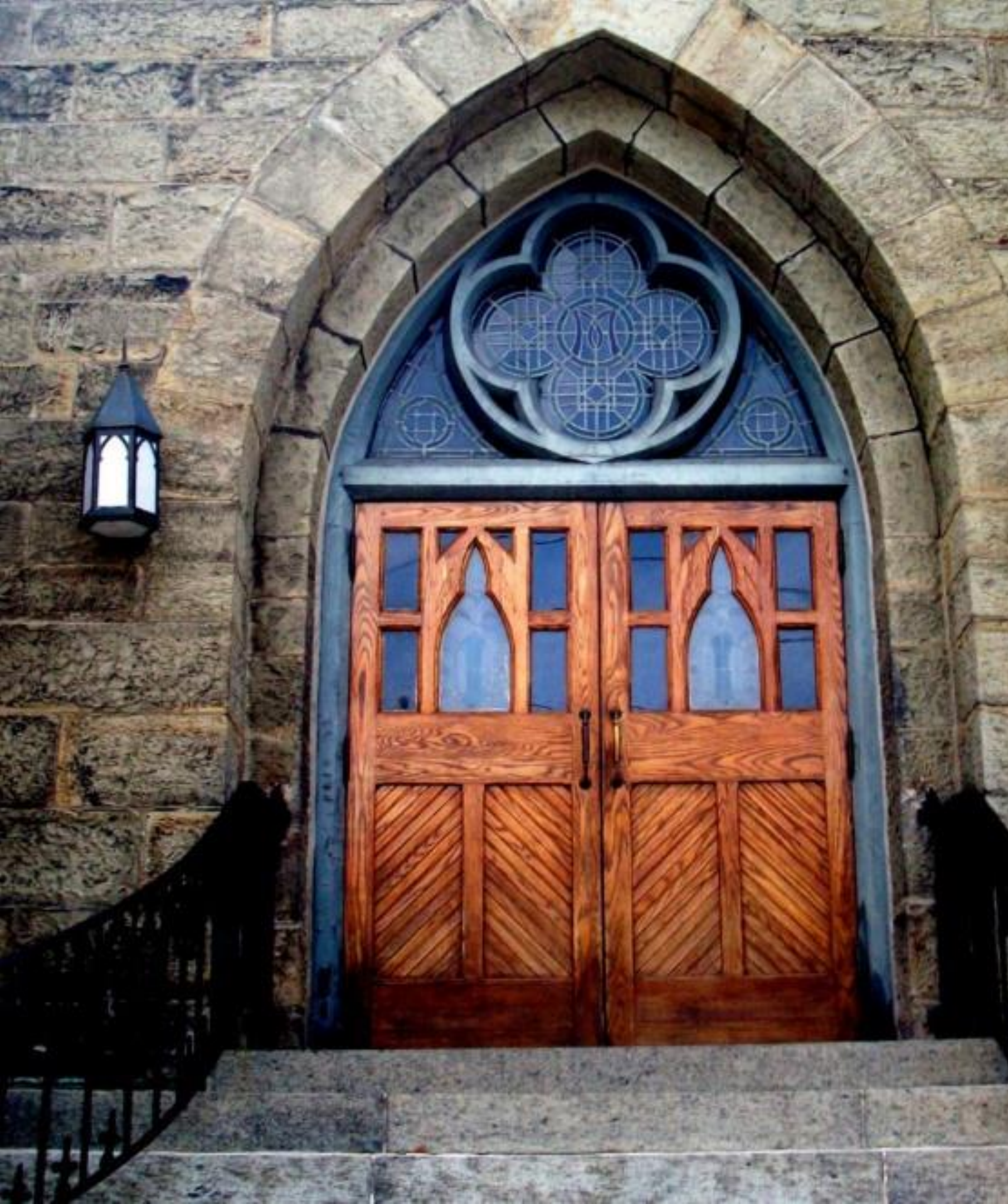
Delay – Your safety plan should include locking of all doors during Mass. If this is not possible for Mass or other events, your plan should include emergency lockdown procedures to help delay the intruder. If a threat is imminent, lockdown procedures need to be activated immediately. Seconds save lives and anything you can do to delay an attack will help reduce the potential for harm.



TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

Parking Lots

- Drive through the lot with vehicle labeled as Safety Patrol
- Be visible as this could be a deterrent
- Arrive early and look for unusual vehicles
- After mass has started, look for persons still sitting in vehicle



TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

Doors

- Ushers/Greeters should observe people as they enter
- Consider locking all doors after mass has started
- At the very least, secure all secondary doors
- Monitor front/main entrance during mass



TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

Interior of Church

- Do a walk-through of church prior to Mass
- Look through interior rooms, restrooms, kitchens, etc.
- Look for signs of disturbances
- Report anything and everything to the Team for discussion



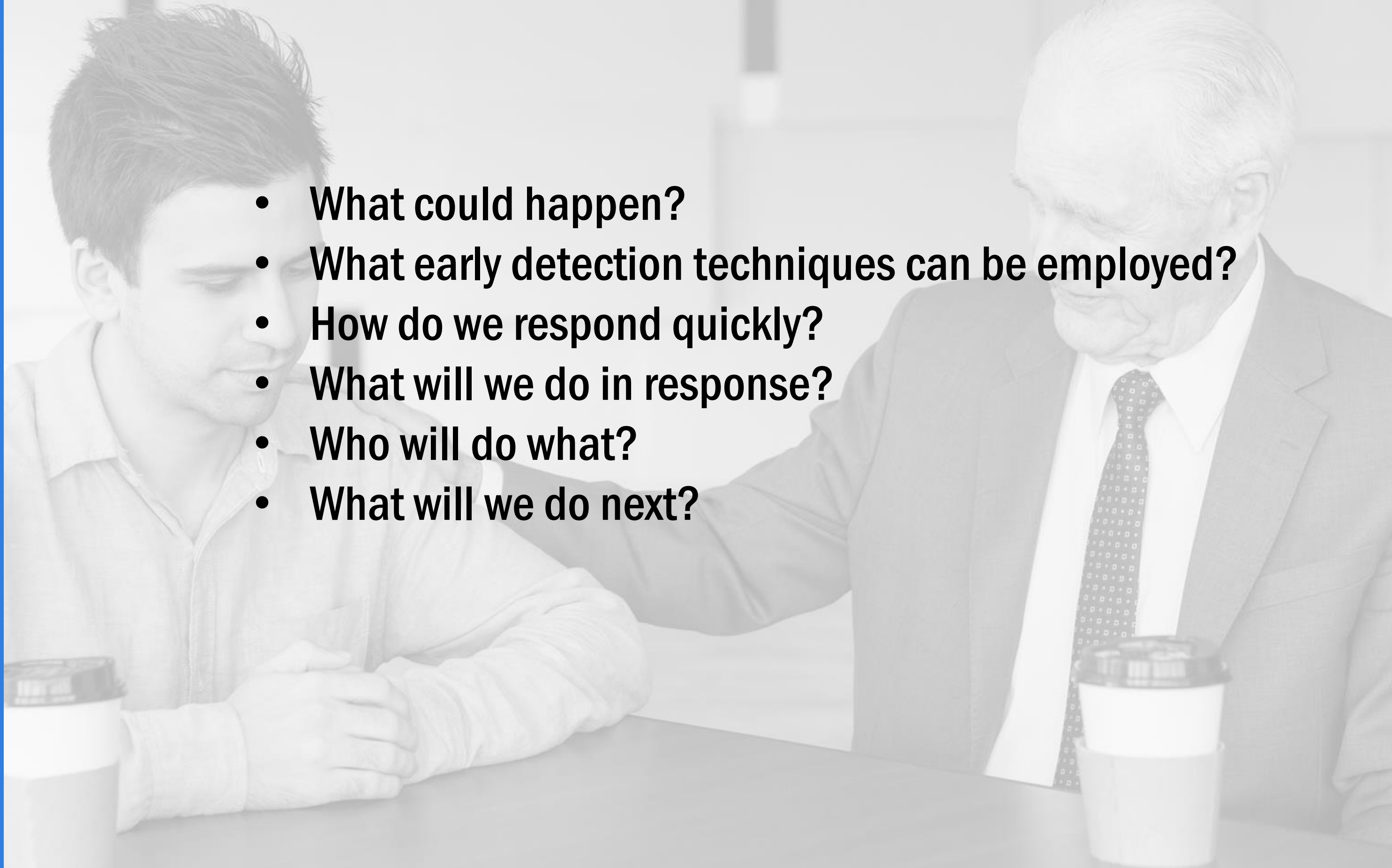
TRAINING & BEST PRACTICES

- Conduct a briefing with Team prior to Mass
- Train for and practice situational roles
- Conduct monthly meetings to discuss safety and current events
- Training should be recurring
- Play out an emergency situation and evaluate

THE PLAN

The best type of emergency response training is to ask:

- What could happen?
- What early detection techniques can be employed?
- How do we respond quickly?
- What will we do in response?
- Who will do what?
- What will we do next?

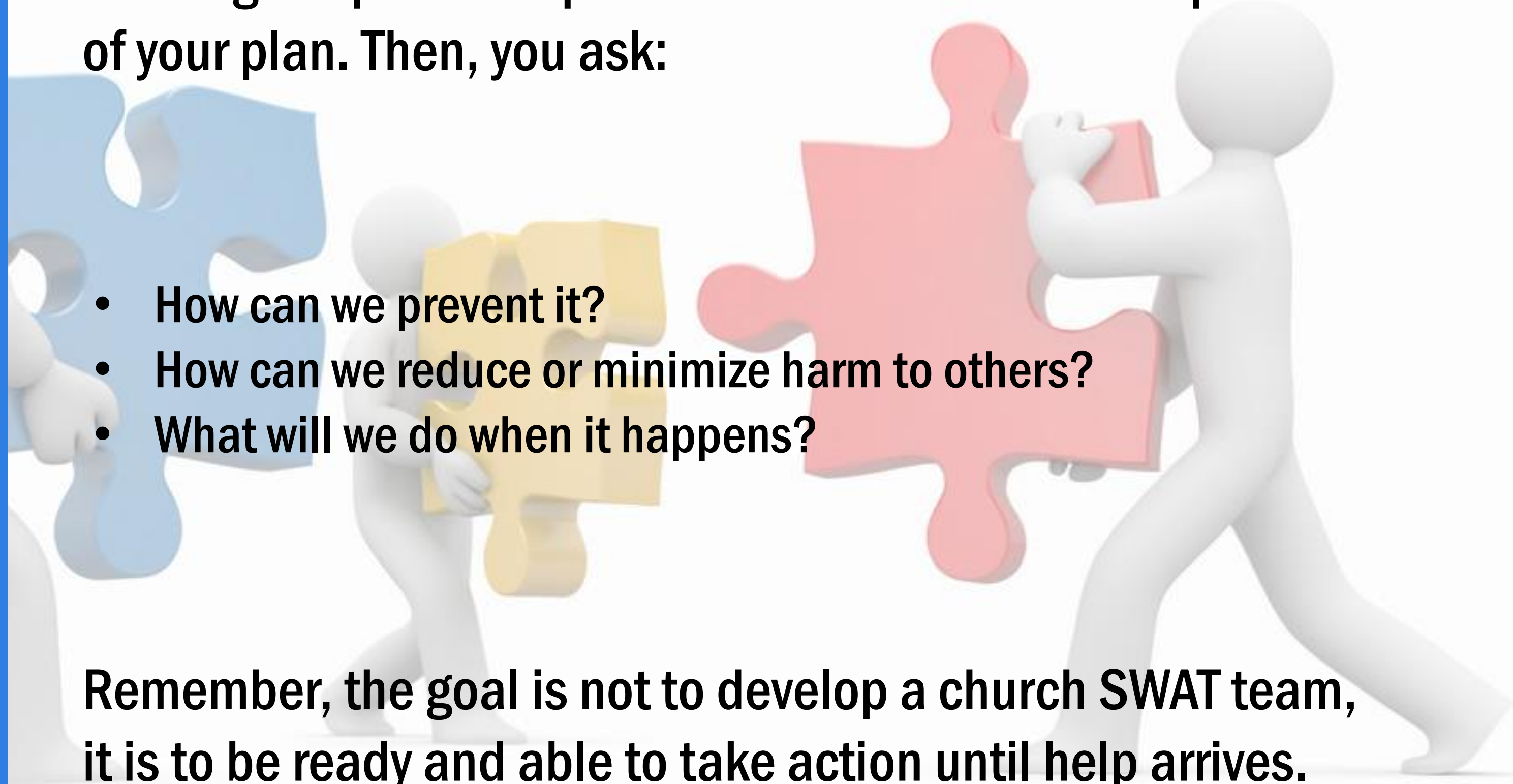


THE PLAN

Utilizing the previous questions will assist in development of your plan. Then, you ask:

- How can we prevent it?
- How can we reduce or minimize harm to others?
- What will we do when it happens?

Remember, the goal is not to develop a church SWAT team, it is to be ready and able to take action until help arrives.



SAFETY/SECURITY PROCEDURES

Commit to a Whole Church focus:

Plan should include all buildings and events in which the church may be at risk of harm

- Expand your thinking past the main services the church provides
- Consider all activities and events that occur at your church



AWARENESS



Being vigilant – Always on the look out

Early detection – Identify threat

Rehearsed reactions – Practice

Prevention – Stop from occurring

AWARENESS

- **Be aware of anything that might indicate the church is being targeted such as recent public criticism.**
 - **Consider anything that might increase a negative interest in the church.**
- 
- A woman with long brown hair, seen from behind, standing in a church looking towards the altar. The church interior features stained glass windows and a wooden altar.

Before Mass

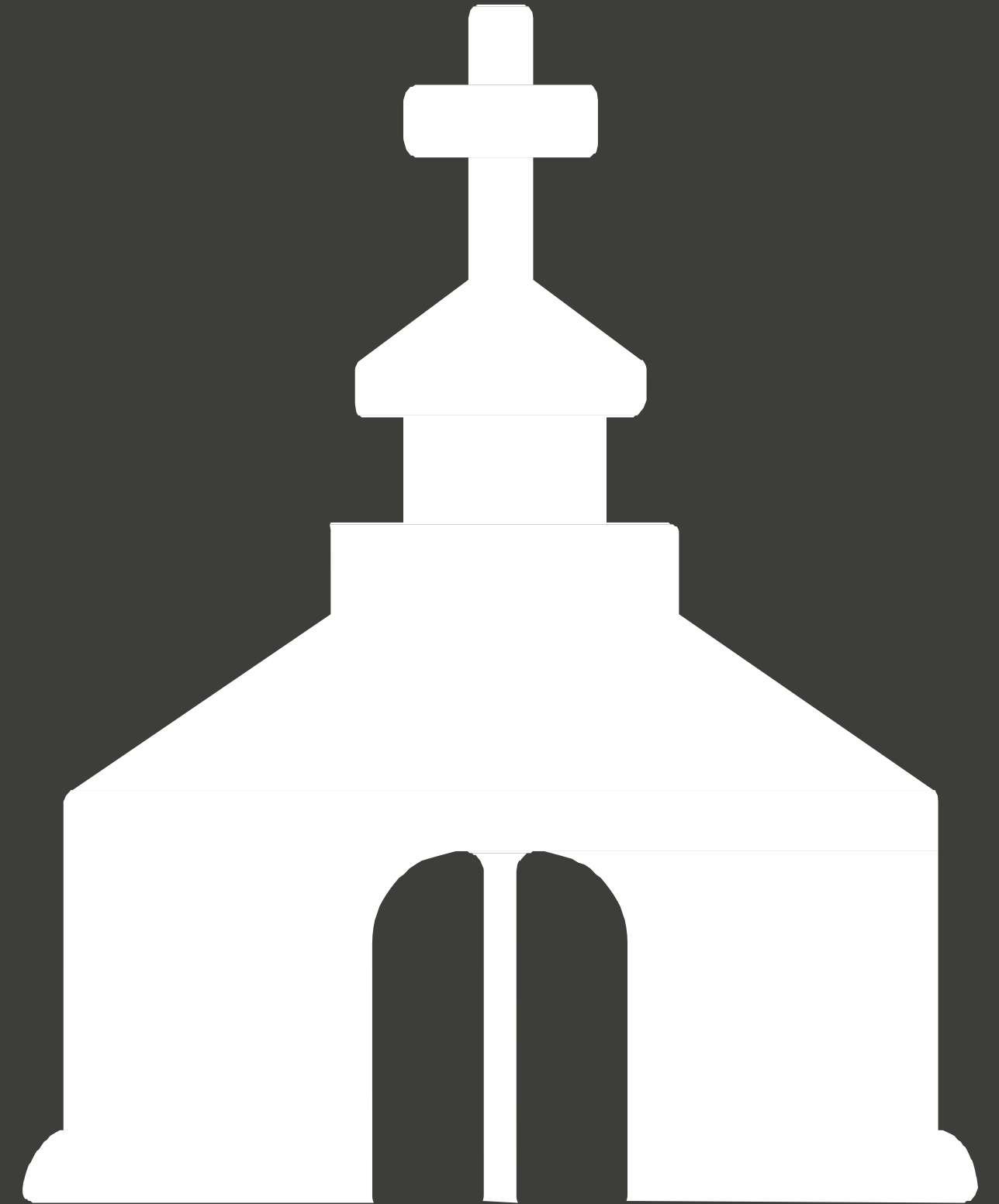
- Observe people entering the church/buildings
- Watch for suspicious behavior
- Watch for signs of concealed weapons
- Monitor who enters the choir loft
- Monitor who enters restrooms/stairwells, etc.
 - Check for disturbances with ceiling tiles. Perpetrator may have hidden gun days before the event.
- Narthex and exterior of main entrance should always be monitored



PERIMETER SECURITY

Monitor the exterior and entrance of the church utilizing cameras, security team, neighbors, etc.

Have methods in place to quickly lock exterior and interior doors or to barricade them.



WHOLE – CHURCH PROGRAM

Developing, training, and maintaining an effective safety/security team in a place of worship, is an ongoing process.

Inspection

Protection

Prevention

Detection

Readiness



HOW TO INCREASE READINESS

- **Stay alert in a reasonable way. Report security and safety concerns and potentials for any situations.**
- **Develop a team of effective individuals, ready for a coordinated response (train with walk-throughs).**
- **Conduct ongoing inspections and follow-up. (Reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen methods for prevention, detection, and protection).**

HOW TO INCREASE READINESS

Weather and natural emergencies

Fire/smoke alarms, explosions and bomb threats

Medical emergency/injury/illness

Disturbances, interruptions of mass/events

Persons with weapons

Other emergencies, pertinent to specific individuals, specific groups, the building or the locale



DISRUPTIONS & DISTURBANCES

Discuss and plan with church leadership to decide at what level of disruption should the security team intervene.

If a disruptive person is unknown to the congregation, 911 should be called. (He/she may have done it other places, may be wanted, may need assistance).



OPTIONS FOR DISTURBANCES/DISRUPTIONS

Shield & Guard

Stop from advancing

Divert & Direct

Use persuasion to remove the person





SHIELD & GUARD

Put a barrier between the threat and the protected person or group

DIVERT & DIRECT

Distract and Delay:

- **Guide the disturbance away and outside**
- **Leave a way out, in the direction of an exit**
- **Do not corner someone or yourself**
- **Do not prevent the person from leaving**

Take Advantages Away From A Threat

- Their ability to catch everyone off-guard
- Their ability to arrive and blend in without being monitored
- Their access to vulnerable or targeted areas or people



Take Advantages Away From A Threat

- Their ability to find unmonitored exterior or interior entry points
- Their ability to have time on-site to prepare for an attack
- Their ability to hide inside or outside and wait
- Their ability to act without being detected



Take Advantages Away From A Threat

- Their ability to be anonymous or unidentifiable
- Their ability to know the location and capabilities of the security team
- Their ability to sustain an attack



A man in a grey hoodie is blocking a woman's punch. The woman has long hair in a ponytail and is wearing a blue shirt. The background is a light-colored wall. The entire image has a blue overlay.

The most obvious option for dealing with a violent person, whether or not they have a weapon.

CONFRONT CONTAIN CONTROL



OTHER OPTIONS

Become a Stakeholder in your own safety

- Throw chairs, books, purses, or other items
- Use fire extinguishers, flags, food or anything else
 - **ANYTHING!**

The Goal

Distract, startle, slow down the attack, harm or neutralize

Have A Leadership Role

Balance concern with reason, steadiness, and optimism.

- Keep a dual focus: Security and Safety
- Keep your entire place of worship in mind
- Think basic before high tech or high cost
- Start with people solutions
- Think and talk of safety and security as something you and everyone can help achieve



You are not alone in this fight. Law enforcement agencies around the world are developing action plans to address the crisis of mass shootings. As such, it is vitally important to utilize your public officials and first responders in an effort to develop your safety/security plan for all emergencies. Having a plan in place will offer a level of security and comfort to your parish and give you the best chance of reducing the potential for a threat.

TOGETHER IT IS POSSIBLE

Catholic Mutual Statement

Catholic Mutual strongly recommends that employees or volunteers not be armed as part of your Safety and Security Plan. An armed employee or volunteer acting as security in all likelihood, would not be protected under the diocesan insurance program; thus exposing them to great personal risk should they be involved in an active shooter situation. Rather, we strongly recommend hiring armed security firms and/or active law enforcement whom require training and carry professional liability insurance.



Additional Resources

Catholic Mutual Group offers an excellent active shooter training scenario and training geared for our schools. This information could also be useful for you to construct your plan for the church and other parish buildings. You may access this training on our CMG Connect platform at:

www.CMGconnect.org

CMGConnect

Additional Resources

- **CARES** document “*Active Shooter Emergency Response*”

This can be found at:

www.catholicmutual.org

Click Member Login, enter your Username and Password, Select the Risk Management Info icon, Property, and then Emergency Preparedness.

- **Catholic Mutual’s Emergency Response Procedures App**

The instructions to download this app to your cell phone or tablet can be sent to you by contacting your Risk Management Representative.

Additional Resources

- **Department of Homeland Security:**

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Developing_EOPs_for_Houses_of_Worship_FINAL.PDF

<https://www.dhs.gov/publication/active-shooter-emergency-action-plan-guide#>

- **FEMA:**

<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/33007>

Thank You

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact your Risk Management Representative at Catholic Mutual Group.

800.228.6108



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