

Health Safety and Security

Below you will find a compiled list of ideas, practices and technologies that are being used by various congregations in Huntingdon Presbytery. Not all ideas and items will work for every congregation or every building. Not all ideas will be acceptable to every Session or congregation. The goal is to keep all people safe and healthy, to the best of our ability, but without becoming slaves to fear. Ideally, this list of questions will help you work toward sound preparedness; and sound preparedness will alleviate a great deal of fear.

Gun violence headlines the news and stirs emotion, but statistically is a far less likely emergency than health issues (heart attacks during a sermon) or fires, especially in our older buildings. We have a responsibility to work on preventive measures and developing capabilities and plans to keep folks safe.

The First Step is to form a team of people willing to discuss and work on the issues. Some Sessions have *Safety Committees*. Some congregations form *Safety Teams*. The Second Step would be to work through the list below to improve prevention and preparedness for health safety and security emergencies.

Health

- Do you have **First Aid Kits**? Are they well stocked? Are they up to date or ancient?
- Have Elders, Deacons, Ushers and Security Team received **First Aid and CPR Training**?
Red Cross can help with that.
- Do you have **AED units** with **signage** marking their location? Are the batteries up to date?
- AED units may be operated by an untrained person; however, **AED training** is available, valuable and recommended.
- Do you have **physicians, nurses, EMTs** in the congregation?
- Do you have a spare **wheelchair, walker, crutches, blanket** readily available?

Safety

- Does your building have a **Fire Alarm** that notifies either a 3rd party or Fire Dept.?
- Does your building have **Smoke Alarms**? Are they battery operated, electric or both?
- Who is responsible for **changing batteries**? Are they changed annually?
- Does your building have **Carbon Monoxide Detectors**? You might benefit from having them in rooms located near parking lot areas, and in the kitchen if you have a gas stove or water heater.
- Do you have **Fire Extinguishers** with signs clearly marking their presence?
- **Do people know** where the extinguishers are? If not, point them out to everyone on a Sunday.
- Do people know how to **use a Fire extinguisher**? If not, many fire departments offer training.
- Does your building have **fire suppression**? Elide balls or sprinklers?

- In a fire when a quick exit is needed, elderly may be carried up/down staircases by two people in **Emergency Evacuation Blankets**. “Moving blankets” work well for this purpose. They should be marked and permanently stored near the staircase where they would be used.
- Plan **Annual Fire Drills**. Loud alarms startle some people into inaction. A drill trains people to respond well, that is, *decently and in order*.
- If you plan a fire drill, are you aware of folks with **special needs, autism, alzheimer’s, or dementia**, that may not be mentally or emotionally equipped to handle a drill? Will a buddy system help them or do other plans need to be made?
- Do you have **Floor Plan Maps** at doors noting fire exits?
- Do you have **LIGHTED Exit Signs**?
- Do you have **Emergency Lighting** not dependent on electricity? (These may be Nickel Cadmium battery operated lights permanently plugged into key outlets to “light the way” or they may be tied to fire alarm)
- Do office personnel and pastor have **flashlights** available? Are the **batteries** good?
- Do you have a **Knox Box** for Police and Fire Depts.? This is a security box mounted at one or more doors to allow quick access by Emergency Personnel.
- Have you ever had a **Fire Dept. walkthrough** and inspection seeking their input and educating them on the floor plan of the building?
- Do you have your **furnace inspected** annually?
- Do you have **Crash Bars** on all emergency exits? Some old buildings have doors that open inward instead of outward. Can that be changed/updated for safety?
- Do you have **Kitchen Safety Rules** posted and explained to all kitchen users particularly regarding children in the kitchen?
- Do you have a Fire Extinguisher in the kitchen? Are all **extinguishers regularly checked for charge**?
- Are all of your **exits clear** for emergencies? Never block an exit that may be used for emergency evacuation.
- Do you have a **door that may be MISTAKEN for an exit**, but is not? Mark it as “**NOT AN EXIT**.”
- Do you have **cones** to mark unsafe areas? Signs for spills?
- Do you have multiple people responsible for making sure all **candles** on the property are properly extinguished?

Security

Security steps can be controversial because churches want to be welcoming to people, not fortresses. Discernment should be exercised by Sessions, Security committees and Security Teams as they consider these issues. There are creative ways to implement both security and welcome. Use this list for discussion.

Churches with **Pre-Schools** have State-mandated health, safety and security requirements that must be followed.

DURING THE BUSINESS WEEK

- Are the **doors locked**?
- Do you have a **doorbell**? There are doorbells that can buzz a handset rather than sound.
- Do you have a **remote-control lock** so that people can be buzzed in?
- Do you have **security cameras**? Are the cameras at entrances and along property walls?
Who monitors them? Are they easily monitored? Technology now allows doorbells and camera monitoring via smart phone.
- Do you have **motion detector alarms** or **motion triggered lights**?
- Do you have **burglar alarms**?
- Do you have **exterior signage** that may act as a crime deterrent?
- Do you have **Keycard access** or use Keys? If you use **keys**, how do you control who has them?

One congregation has a **Panic Button** at the pulpit, in the kitchen and in the pastor's office that will summons State Police directly. For more information:

Installed by Vigilant Security of State College
David Burns 814-237-5450 DavidBurns@VigilantSecurityInc.com
2168 Sandy Drive
State College, PA 16803-2282
Telephone: (814) 237-5450

DURING WORSHIP

- Should you **lock SOME or ALL of the church doors** during a worship service?
One congregation keeps all doors locked except the main doors. The main doors are locked after 15 minutes into the worship service to prevent ingress. Egress is always possible for fire safety. After the door is locked 15 minutes into the service, there is a doorbell that vibrates a handset so that latecomers may be admitted by a security team member.
- Are **children protected** with locked doors, so that intruders cannot abduct? Are the doors nearest the nursery and children locked?
- Do you have **radio communication** from the nursery to Safety Team?
- Are the **nursery volunteers** trained in safety procedures?
- Does the nursery have a **panic button**?
- All **locked exit doors must be openable** from the inside for fire safety.
- Do you have a **security team** that works together to monitor the property during worship?

- Have you taken advantage of an **Active Shooter Prevention and Training**? Your insurance company can tell you about available classes. The United Methodist Church offers A.L.I.C.E. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance lists resources **offered by FEMA and Department of Homeland Security** regarding Human caused disasters at houses of worship. (see attached document)
- Have you ever had an “**active shooter**” **drill** or offered training to the congregation for such an event?
- **Domestic dispute** is a leading cause of violent acts. Awareness by the security team of domestic issues is a key to prevention. Knowledge of child custody disputes is a key to prevention. This is a difficult issue because of our responsibility for confidentiality. Is there a balance that may be struck between confidentiality and child protection?
- Do you have **law enforcement** personnel in your congregation?

[This last item concerns extremely delicate issues charged with emotion on all sides. Rather than avoiding the question, facilitate respectful, thoughtful discussion.]

- Should you implement a “**no weapons rule**”?
- Are there trained folks in the congregation with a **concealed carry** permit?

Resources on Human Caused Disasters

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

In response to numerous requests for training materials to assist churches in planning and responding to an active shooter situation and other forms of human caused disasters, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is providing this Resource Guide.

Planning & Training

Free Online Courses:

- **FEMA: Independent Study 360 - Planning for Mass Casualty Incidents: A Guide for Schools, Higher Education and Houses of Worship.** Provides leading practices and resources for preparing for and responding to mass casualty incidents. Also includes a Quick Reference Guide on Violence in Houses of Worship.
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-360>
 - **FEMA: Independent Study 907 - Active Shooter - What You Can Do.** Provides non-law enforcement individuals with recommended actions should they be confronted with an active shooter situation.
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-907>
 - **DHS Webpage: Active Shooter: How to Respond.** Provides fact sheets for private citizens, HR professionals, Active Shooter Workshop participants and First Responders. Also provides links to videos on Active Shooter planning.
<https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
 - **DHS Hometown Security Report Series: Houses of Worship**
A ten-page "how-to" guide that encourages Houses of Worship to "Connect, Plan, Train and Report" to better prepare and mitigate violent risks they face.
<https://www.dhs.gov/publication/houses-worship-hometown-security-reportseries-may-2017?collection=reports>
 - **Armed Intruder Best Practices Video:** Church Mutual Insurance partnered with Alice Training Institute, experts in active shooter civilian response, to create a Best Practices Video and Armed Intruder Resources Kit.
<https://www.churchmutual.com/6421/Armed-Intruder>
- Counsel on planning and training from an ALICE certified instructor available through PDA's HQ. Contact: beth.snyder@pcusa.org
- **Worship Resources After Public Violence.** This collection of prayers, litanies, worship and vesper service outlines, strategies for children's messages, etc. can be found on the PDA homepage at:
<http://pda.pcusa.org/situation/hcd/>

□ **“Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters: A Guide for Pastors and Congregations after Violence and Trauma.”** Written by Laurie Kraus, David Holyan and Bruce Wismer, three pastors who have experienced human-caused trauma in their own congregations and communities and, as members of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance’s National Response Team, have served as disaster responders and Emotional and Spiritual Care counselors to numerous other faith-based groups. Available for online purchase at: <https://www.wjkbooks.com/Products/0664262155/recovering-fromunnatural-disasters.aspx>

□ **“Ministry after Communal Trauma.”** An article based on **“Recovering from Un-Natural Disasters”** appeared in the March 21, 2017 issue of *The Christian Century*. Available to subscribers at: <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/ministry-after-communal-trauma>

□ **“Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence.”** A documentary that frames gun violence as a “disaster” and “public health” issue. All those scarred by gun violence ask, “Why did this happen to us?” *Trigger* looks at those experiences and turns to the bigger question, “What can we do to prevent gun violence?” (51 minutes) Study and Action Guide also available at: <http://pda.pcusa.org/situation/story-productions/#trigger>

□ **“Tapestry: Reweaving the Fabric of Community After Public Violence.”** A documentary that examines the effects of public violence events in congregations and communities. Framed through the lens of PDA National Response Team members who have responded to public violence events and supported communities of faith and their leaders through trauma and the healing process. (21 minutes) Video and downloadable study guide available at: <http://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/video-tapestry/>

□ **The Trauma Pastoral Care Series (Training Videos).** A series of 15 videos intended for pastors caring for those experiencing trauma, or experiencing trauma themselves. Emphasis on human-caused disasters. <http://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resource/Trauma-Pastoral-Care-Series/>