



FROM MANY

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

 ONE

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

A WORD FROM BISHOP DEON

"Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man." -Luke 21:36

Dear Siblings in Christ,

There is a long tradition in the Episcopal Church, and many other faith traditions, of painting the doors of our places of worship bright red. These red doors have their roots in the understanding that Churches were places of sanctuary and refuge. They are a symbol of Christ's deep hospitality grounded in his invitation to "come unto me."

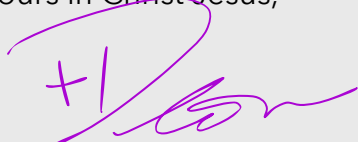
The church's role as a place of sanctuary is especially needed in this season. Across our nation and state, there has been a significant increase in acts of violence that have touched every aspect of our common life. While places of worship have not been immune to the specter of violence, they can be a place of calm in the midst of the storm.

We cannot predict when or where threats to the safety and security of our communities of faith will occur. However, we can be prepared to respond to potential hazards intentionally rather than impulsively.

Jesus in the Gospels often encouraged his disciples to not be afraid and to keep awake in the face of the unknown. As we enter the unknown, we enter it with the understanding that we are to be grounded in prayer, encouraged in hope, and strengthened in being prepared.

As you prepare to offer the sanctuary of Jesus' love in our places of worship, I encourage you to pray for an end to violence and threats to violence. Pray for our nation. Pray for those who feel compelled to resort to violence. Pray that we may come to the place of a lasting peace.

Yours in Christ Jesus,



The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson
XI Bishop of Missouri





CREATE A SAFER CHURCH. TODAY!

"Each community of faith that makes up the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri is unique. We serve Christ in a variety of contexts and a diversity of communities, each having their own unique needs. Yet the safety and security of the people of God who gather in our places of worship has been and continues to be a unifying priority.

We are one church in multiple locations, and as members of the household of the Diocese of Missouri, our building facilities are not only a place of worship but also a sanctuary where we come together in fellowship, prayer, and spiritual growth. To ensure that these spaces remain safe and welcoming for everyone, it is important that we continually address safety within each context for ministry across the Diocese.

You know your community. You know the context in which you live, and move, and have your being. You know the joys and concerns of your community of faith. The recommendations offered here are intended to be broad suggestions around safety and sanctuary. We encourage you to develop the procedures and protocols that best suit the needs of your community and that offer a sense of hospitality.

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. -BCP 832



BE PREPARED

CREATING SAFER COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

GETTING STARTED

Starting a safety and security program for your place of worship doesn't have to be complicated or costly, doing what you can is important. There are many things you can do right now that are low cost or no cost to ensure a sense of safety and sanctuary for all who gather for worship and fellowship.

SAFETY WITHIN THE BUILDING

Each community of faith is committed to ensuring that facilities are safe and secure for all who enter. Implement regular checks on the building's infrastructure, such as electrical systems, fire alarms, and emergency exits, to ensure everything functions properly. Encourage all members to familiarize themselves with the location of emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits. In the event of an emergency, evacuating the building in an orderly and timely fashion helps keep everyone safe.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Our places of worship are open to all and our doors serve as visible reminders of sanctuary, yet it is important to remain vigilant. Reminding members of the community of faith that if they notice any suspicious activity or feel unsafe at any point, please inform one of our staff or safety team members immediately. It is also recommended that families, particularly those with young children, remain attentive during large gatherings.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

In light of ongoing health concerns, especially during flu seasons or other contagious illnesses, invite members to take appropriate measures to protect themselves and others. Encourage members to get vaccinated as a precaution, stay home if they are feeling unwell, and take advantage of virtual services if they are provided. Hand sanitizers should be available at multiple locations within the place of worship, and encourage their frequent use.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Safety goes beyond physical health—it also includes emotional and spiritual well-being. Prayer and pastoral leadership should be available for anyone needing support, guidance, or counseling. Striving to maintain a nurturing and safe environment where everyone feels respected and valued should be the priority. Bullying, harassment, or any form of inappropriate behavior should not be tolerated.

BE PREPARED

QUESTIONS WE SHOULD BE ASKING AT THIS TIME

DO WE HAVE AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TEAM?

Having an emergency preparedness team allows for clear, efficient, and timely responses to emergencies that might arise within the community of faith. Identify trained medical professionals, current or former law enforcement officers, and members with military or security backgrounds to serve as a part of the preparedness team.

Invite the preparedness team to conduct an emergency audit involving different scenarios: a medical emergency, building lockdown procedures, evacuation plan, active shooter response, and including but not limited to suspicious object response.

DO WE HAVE AN ASSIGNED BUILDING COORDINATOR?

A building coordinator is a volunteer trained to know the floor plans of each building and the emergency evacuation procedures for any emergency—medical, fire, tornado, etc. The building coordinator may be involved in long-range planning.

ARE EMERGENCY CONTACTS VISIBLE WITH CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES?

In many communities of faith, the ordained or elected leaders are often looked to in an emergency. While the leadership of the community of faith needs to direct the response to an emergency they cannot bear the burden of the entire community alone. Ensuring that ushers, greeters, ministry leaders, and other personnel within the community of faith are a part of the team's approach to responding to emergencies.

In an emergency, determine who will call 911, who will talk to authorities, and who will talk to the media. Assign backups for each role. Emergency contact information, along with a list of the different roles of those engaged in responding to the emergency, should be quickly accessible and noticeably posted at all major entrances and exits to the facilities.

IS THERE ACCESS TO TWO-WAY RADIOS IF PHONE SERVICE IS INTERRUPTED?

Two-way radios eliminate spotty cell service and scrambling to locate a list of internal phone numbers. Ushers, daycare workers, and office staff equipped with two-way radios can relay information quickly throughout your building.





BE PREPARED

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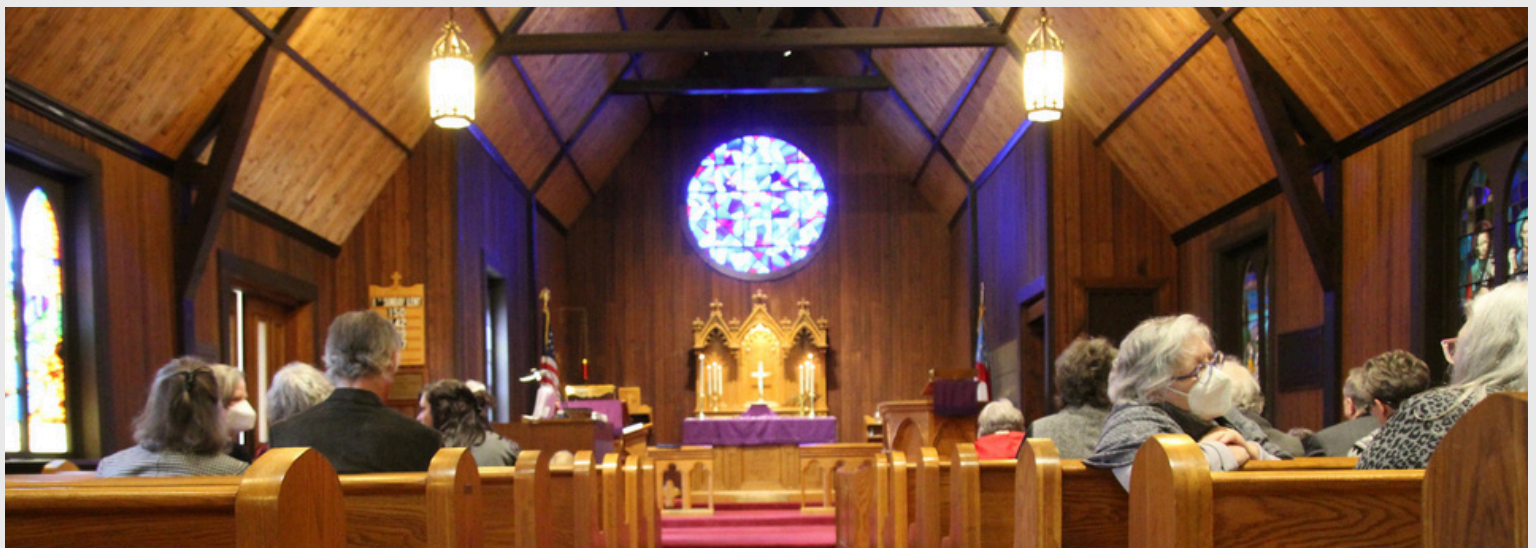
IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY. DO WE HAVE A SINGLE ENTRANCE OR EXIT IDENTIFIED?

This may seem obvious, but in an emergency, it's easy to forget about side or back exits. Designate a specific exit and entrance in the event of an evacuation or an emergency. Ensure that those doors are clearly marked. Assign an usher or team member to lock or unlock doors as part of the emergency preparedness plan. During an emergency, any unlocked doors should be actively monitored. All other entrances should be inaccessible from the outside of your church. Ensure that the exit doors remain unlocked from the inside.

HAVE YOU PRACTICED AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION OR LOCKDOWN?

Practice. Practice. Practice. While we do not want to alarm members of the community of faith we do however want as many people prepared in the event of an emergency situation involving a lockdown. As part of a scheduled Sunday special event prior to or after worship, plan to practice your emergency procedure.

Invite local law enforcement, a fire marshal, an ambulance service, or your insurance agent to your campus to identify trouble spots. They'll help you better understand potential risks and offer solutions to help you create a safer church environment.





BE PREPARED

TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE. WE KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE

MEDICAL RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS

Medical response team members are members of the emergency response team who have been trained in medical emergencies.

Responsibilities include the following:

- Providing first aid to those incurring a medical emergency until medical personnel with higher training arrives on scene.
- Conducting a primary assessment of the medical emergency situations and reporting this assessment to appropriate personnel.
- Providing medical assistance and support until professional help arrives.
- Remaining in charge of a medical emergency situation until professional help arrives.
- Medical response team members should immediately identify themselves as such to any personnel responding to the incident.

SAFETY RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS: OFF-DUTY USHERS, GREETERS, & VERGERS

The safety response team members are staff members or volunteers who understand and are prepared to facilitate a safe and effective response to any emergency situation. Safety response team members know the location of approved tornado shelter areas in the building as well as other emergency procedures.

Responsibilities include the following:

- Reporting to the emergency coordinator that their assigned section has been cleared during a building evacuation.
- Lock down/shelter-in-place procedures.
- Other intervention procedures as the situations dictate.
- Coordinating with the building maintenance personnel to minimize safety hazards.
- If available, maintain hand-held radios to coordinate with incident coordinator or other team members. Safety response team members should immediately identify themselves as such to any personnel responding to the incident.

Note: Ensure that Safety Response Team Members have planned with disabled leaders or members a procedure to assist each disabled person in evacuating. Emergency evacuation procedures should be provided to all members (e.g. in member orientations).



BE PREPARED

IMPORTANT "DOS" AND "DON'TS" FOR BUILDING EVACUATION

PREPARING FOR A BUILDING EVACUATION

If a Building Evacuation is initiated:

DO:

- Remain calm.
- Follow the instructions of the building coordinator or emergency response team, if applicable.
- If you occupy an enclosed office, close the door as you leave.
- Use stairwells (do not use elevator) for evacuation. Be alert for other staff, members, and emergency agency personnel who might also be using the stairwells.
- Make sure the church, classrooms, parish halls, and auxiliary spaces are evacuated, or if unable to reach these areas, make emergency personnel aware of where ALL occupants are located.

DON'T:

- Do not return for coats, purses, etc, after all have left the building.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not return to your area until the all-clear signal is given.





CREATE A SAFER CHURCH.

RESOURCES

Additional safety resources are available at the Episcopal Church Foundation vital practices website. Those resources include:

- [Detailed detailed documents for developing a security plan](#)
- [Church Security Handbook](#)
- [Sample Policies and Procedures Manual](#)
- [Sample Emergency Action Plan](#)
- [Sample Security Training Program](#)
- [Fire Safety](#)
- [Sample Safety Survey Checklist](#)



You can find additional resources at the following link:

<https://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/article/1059/security-planning-for-your-faith-community>



BE PREPARED.
SAFER COMMUNITIES.



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