

Active shooter survival guide for churches



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<http://www.journeychristiannews.com/active-shooter-survival-guide-for-churches/>

Police Dispatcher: “911. What’s your emergency?”

Caller: “Someone’s in the church with a gun and they just shot (inaudible), (screaming, crying), “oh my God,” (gunfire), help” ... call disconnected.

Unfortunately, the above example of a shooting in progress, otherwise known as an Active Shooter, is real and recent. Whether in my career as a police officer or in my present experience as a tactical trainer and security consultant to law enforcement, military, security and, sadly, churches, I never imagined that the term Active Shooter would become a common phrase among church members.

I testified as an expert witness in an infamous Asheville, N.C., Active Shooter incident two decades ago. I also watched the media coverage of another workplace shooting of a doctor at a local medical office where I had recently taught a class on workplace violence. Even so, I never thought that I would write an article one day on “How to Survive an Active Shooting at a Church.” But times, people, their problems, and how we, including churches, need to prepare, has changed.

Two sobering facts:

- In 15 years there have been about 1,198 deadly force Incidents at “Houses of Worship” in the U.S.*
- As a result, about 474 people have been killed another 694 injured.*

But we have also learned much about these incidents and those who cause them, which relates to our ability to prevent some of them and survive.

Survival Tips:

- **ACT.** Active Shooter incidents are rapidly evolving with tragic outcomes. You must act. Acting doesn't guarantee you'll survive, but your odds are much better than waiting on the shooter to pass you up or hoping it won't be you that gets shot.
- **ESCAPE.** Leave your belongings, take your family, warn others and run. Statistics show the shooter is committed, prepared and homicidal. So run. Stay low, out of the shooter's line of sight. Placing objects between you and the shooter as you run will help.
- **HIDE.** If you cannot run, hide. Look for a window to escape if possible. If not, lock doors, use heavy objects to barricade doors and shield yourself. Silence phones and children. Stay quiet and hidden until you can escape or until the police tell you to leave.
- **FIGHT.** If you have no other options and the shooter is close, fight for your life and your family. And keep fighting until the shooter is absolutely incapable of threatening you. Once you begin, you must be fierce. Use any weapon in sight to throw, strike or stab. Yell. Realize you may have to kill to live. If you know what you are doing, take the weapon from shooter, but as soon as possible, run.

Police Actions:

- Police response to Active Shooters can be a frightening, dangerous event. Officers will be primarily concerned with locating and eliminating the threat. Their appearance, equipment, weapons, tactics and commands leave little doubt they intend to meet force with measured but final violence. Police will command, yell, shove to the ground, handcuff, point weapons even pepper spray or Taser anyone they perceive as a threat. They may shoot someone they feel is responsible for the Active Shooting. Your behavior/actions are critical.

Response to Police:

- Do not have a firearm, other weapon or anything that can be mistaken for one in your hand when police approach.
- Avoid quick movements. Don't yell or scream at officers.
- Raise hands, spread fingers, and stand still.
- Listen and obey officer's commands exactly.
- Answer questions concerning shooter(s), weapons, location, injured, building layout, etc.

Surviving the event is the most important consideration but unfortunately not the only. In the aftermath of such a tragedy, there will be a long list of considerations and emotions for all involved. Get help. Talk with church leaders, family and professionals. Hopefully, you will never experience such a crisis and need for action. But far better to be over-prepared and underwhelmed than the reverse.

*Source: www.carlchinnministries.com