



CHURCHES

A CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

This document has been designed to assist readers in managing the crime risk facing their churches. It is a sad fact that crime against churches is increasing. There are many reasons for this including a general decline in decent moral standards and the fact that criminals are no longer inhibited by superstitious fears connected with churches or by the consequences of sacrilege.

It is gratifying to note, however, that a crime committed against a church, place of worship or its contents continues to affect the very core of our society. Churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike feel a sense of outrage and it is on that factor that we can base our response to this particular area of crime. When offences are committed frequently, they can become "acceptable" and apathy can develop. It is incumbent on us all to do everything within our power to prevent this.

Please therefore, use this document. The advice and principles it contains can be applied to most crime problems faced by churches. The majority of ideas cost very little, others may require limited expenditure. You will also find that, in addition to individual responsibility, the community surrounding your church should be made aware of how they can help to protect that property and the environment.

It is pleasing to note the enthusiasm with which those connected with security in churches are dealing with these problems. Crime is not a matter solely for the Police or for any one particular agency. It is the duty of us all, as citizens, to combat crime and only by working closely together will we finally contain the problem.

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INTRODUCTION

This document offers advice and guidance on how to reduce crime in churches and places of worship. It is invaluable to every person who has a responsibility for such buildings. Its aim is to give cost-effective advice commensurate with the risks and to stimulate ideas with an awareness of the means by which crime risks can be managed.

In dealing with any crime risk, it is important to consider the purpose of the building and its effectiveness in achieving that purpose. An isolated church, miles from any real centre of habitation, may once have served as a venue for services and to provide sanctuary for casual visitors. It is necessary now to examine its present day value in meeting these objectives. An absence of casual visitors would point to a need to enhance security, perhaps even to the extent of locking the doors when not in use.

There is no doubt that a church which is used and cared for imparts a strong message to any would-be criminal. Each item of shiny brassware, each row of bright kneelers or neatly stacked books indicates activity, presence and interest in the church which extends to other areas - "If the parishioners take this much trouble over their church, in what other ways are they protecting their heritage?" Every indication of use throughout the week as a place of worship or as a meeting place by the parishioners who gather together there on Sundays will serve to reinforce this message. A church that is constantly used and seems to be used is far less likely to be the victim of a casual vandalism or theft.

It is hoped that by now the reader is fully aware that the purpose of this document is not to create a fortress out of your church. The siege mentality is both negative and restrictive on normal use and certainly provides little in terms of witness to the Christian faith. However, the use of locks and bolts in a positive sense and as part of an overall risk management strategy is essential to protect the heritage that in many cases has been passed down to us through generations of faithful worshippers.

The circumstances of each church or place of worship vary and there is probably some information contained within this document which does not apply to your particular church. You may also have a problem that is not covered and which needs individual attention or advice. Your local Police Crime Reduction Advisor should be consulted in these cases. He or she will be only too willing to make a personal visit to your premises. Their services are free.

This document is organised in sections dealing with the perimeter, the grounds and the church interior itself. There is also advice on what to do in the event of break-ins and the most effective means of marking property in order to render it more identifiable. The most basic step, however, is for the reader to appreciate the type of crime problems envisaged and how they can so easily be committed against the property for which you have responsibility.

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

It will be apparent on reading this document that there are many considerations to be dealt with in establishing an overall crime prevention strategy for churches and their contents. For this reason Church Councils are advised to appoint sub-committees in order to ensure that no one person is left to deal with all these matters. Apart from the complexity of these issues, the burden of responsibility is not one that should be borne alone.

The first task of the sub-committee should be to obtain an appreciation of the risks the church may be subjected to. The following chapter of this document will help in this respect. It will then be necessary to formulate a Crime Prevention Policy for approval by the full committee.

The policy will address issues rather than specific action. Matters such as whether the church will be locked or unlocked, and whether valuables will be put in safe keeping or left out, will form part of this policy, together with other factors.

Once approved, the committee should work through this document and produce a number of recommendations to conform to the overall policy. A Risk Management Questionnaire is attached with further copies available from your Crime Reduction Advisor. These will prove invaluable in helping members to understand the principles of Crime Prevention as they apply to the particular circumstances of their church. Implementation of the recommendations should be co-ordinated by one member of the sub-committee, and one member should also be appointed to liaise with the local Neighbourhood Constable.

Crime risks managed in this manner leave people in no doubt as to the aims of the Council and the manner in which various issues will be addressed.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Wherever possible, one individual should have overall responsibility for security of the building. This will assist co-ordination by putting aims and objectives into practice. The following may be considered to be that person's responsibilities:

- (a) Reviewing practical aspects of security precautions.
- (b) Maintaining contact with various members of the group to provide co-ordination of effort including the Crime Reduction Advisor when necessary.
- (c) Reporting any matters of note to the local Police. (It is important not to take any initiative away from individuals who need to report immediate matters via the emergency 999 or non emergency matters via the 101 telephone systems).
Maintain a contact and have the mobile number of the local Neighbourhood Constable to hand.
- (d) Maintaining contact with the insurance company as and when necessary.

THE PROBLEM

As stated, the most important first step in managing the crime risk is to become fully acquainted with the problem as it relates to specific churches. This includes developing an appreciation of the following factors:

1. Similar offences and crime trends in the locality. The Neighbourhood Constable responsible for the area will be able to assist with this information. A liaison should be established and maintained to ensure that you are updated on a regular basis and also if a series of crimes appears to threaten your area.
2. The fact that certain crimes are more prevalent at particular times of the year. For instance, criminal damage is more frequent during school holidays when children tend to have more time to themselves.
3. The marketable nature of property belonging to your church; ie. How much, in cash terms, the property may realise in open sale. It may not be appreciated that an item has any value whatsoever. For instance, old plain wooden chests which may be in an advanced state of decay often retain very high value as antiques.
4. The ease with which property may be stolen. For instance, heavy bells properly hung in a tower are more difficult to steal than portable altar crosses. Even heavy safes can be removed by healthy, fit criminals, given ample time to work.
5. The vulnerability of security devices. Many older safes are easily forced open in situ. Locks generally need to be substantial and even then are only as effective as the doors and frames to which they are attached.
6. The types of activities undertaken by thieves. Most will be prepared to search all nooks and crannies for keys which are invariably "hidden" in churches. In fact many opportunists do this as a matter of course on the assumption that every locked door conceals something of value. Additionally, thieves will quickly and efficiently force locks to gain access or climb over internal partitions.
7. The vulnerability of items to criminal damage and arson. The likelihood of children throwing stones at windows will, in many cases, depend on the availability of suitable "ammunition". Arson is more likely when combustible items are left lying about or when intruders find cans of fuel for lawnmowers etc...

The above list represents only a few useful points and is intended to provide food for thought concerning other areas. The most common recorded offences committed against churches are burglary, theft and criminal damage.

The type of Church property attacked in each case can vary enormously. Lead from roofs is always a favourite as is copper sheeting and lightening conductors. Popular items inside include silver and brassware as well as furniture and electrical items such as vacuum cleaners and heaters. Outside the church, flowers laid on graves are stolen and gravestones and ornaments are regularly subjected to wilful damage.

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE - THE PERIMETER

The perimeter of your churchyard is an important item within the total security package you decide upon. Factors to be specifically considered are as follows:

1. The first impression afforded by hedges, gates, etc is vitally important. A well cared for appearance is not only daunting to the opportunist thief but also engenders a feeling of pride and well being within your community. These factors themselves contribute to crime prevention and encourage passers by to be more vigilant.
2. Although it is not normally feasible to totally secure a perimeter, persons can be encouraged to use only designated entrances and footpaths by maintaining a substantial perimeter barrier. Not only does this make for a more orderly churchyard, but attention is more likely to be drawn to people in unpaved areas. Certainly, any person "up to no good" will feel more ill at ease.
3. It is usually possible, however, to prevent access by vehicles. This is essential to criminals needing to carry away heavy objects such as safes, lead from roofs or items of furniture.
4. Natural surveillance by passers by and local residents serves to prevent crime and should be facilitated wherever possible by ensuring hedges, walls, etc.. are no more than four feet above the level of adjoining roads and paths.

Hedges

Hedges should be thick and difficult to penetrate. Choose something like hawthorn, hedging rose, holly or berborous as these have the added advantage of thorns. Privet, yew, laurel etc... are, however, also effective. They should be regularly trimmed and maintained at a height which will allow vision from adjoining properties and roads.

Walls

Stone or brick walls should be regularly inspected and maintained. Damage should be repaired and any graffiti removed as soon as possible. Any damage that is left for long periods indicates that nobody cares and encourages more of the same.

Gates

Gates should be properly maintained at all times and, wherever possible, be self-closing. Double gates and those wide enough to allow access by vehicles should be locked when not in use and certainly at night. Locking mechanisms should be well maintained and any padlocks close-shackled to prevent attack by bolt croppers. Similarly any chains should be substantial, and perferably of high tensile steel. It is equally important that gates cannot be removed from their hinges. Many are manufactured to prevent this but otherwise you should burr over the top of the hinge pin or weld on a piece of metal.

THE CHURCHYARD

General Maintenance

The maintenance of churchyards can be very expensive to some parishes and here there often exists a conflict of interests. A pristine, lawn-like appearance certainly presents a well-cared for façade which has certain advantages. However, other parishes may wish to see some growth for reasons of conservation, aesthetics or expense. Whatever the case in your church, it is important to give the impression of use. Properly maintaining footpaths and ensuring that gravestones are visible, assist. Some parishes have fenced off areas for grazing by sheep, while others obtain assistance from local councils who also have an avid interest in maintaining areas of high profile in the community.

Rubbish Tips

Many churches have rubbish tips and these should, wherever possible, be out of sight. They should also be regularly cleared to ensure tidiness and that rubbish is not allowed to spill over. Only biodegradable rubbish should be disposed of in this manner. Plastic and non vegetable matter should be disposed of via the local authority waste disposal service.

Gravestones

To guard against the theft of gravestones, memorial containers, etc.. relatives should be encouraged to have each item inscribed, preferably personalised to the name of the deceased.

Vandalism to graves may be deterred by visiting at the times when it is most likely to occur. Most offences of this type are committed by youngsters and are initially borne of mischievous behaviour than wicked intent. Evenings and school holidays are therefore the times to be especially vigilant. Sometimes a particular grudge exists which leads to the sad situation whereby graves are desecrated. The only remedy to this is prior knowledge of the circumstances and extra vigilance, although regular general care of the churchyard certainly assists.

Trees

Trees can obstruct natural surveillance and can also be used as cover by criminals, as well as encouraging the churchyard to be used as a play area by children. Branches should, therefore be cut from the main trunk to a height of at least five feet from the ground in order to maintain maximum vision and discourage climbing activities.

Sheds & Outbuildings

Particular factors to be considered in respect of sheds are as follows:

- (a) Wooden sheds should not be used to store items of value such as power tools, lawnmowers or heaters.
- (b) Outbuildings should always be kept locked with an approved security class padlock and windows obscured to conceal contents.
- (c) Other tools such as spades and ladders can often be used by the criminal. A spade makes an effective lever with which to prize off doors or lids from chests, and ladders, of course, provide access to roofs and windows. These items should always be locked away. Where this is not possible in the case of ladders, they should be stored on their side, locked to secure fixtures with close shackle padlocks and heavy duty chains, or rawbolted to a solid brick built wall.
- (d) Fuel for lawnmowers, etc... should not be kept on church property. As previously described, offences of arson are far more likely when intruders actually find, in situ, the means to commit them.

THE CHURCHES OF THE METROPOLIS.—No. VI.



THE NEW CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS CHARTERHOUSE.

THE CHURCH BUILDING - EXTERIOR

Roof & Fall pipes

Access to the roof is often relatively easy due to large cast-iron fall pipes and purpose built, fixed iron ladders. Measures can be taken to prevent this. Anti-climb paint can be applied to fall pipes starting not less than eight feet above ground level. This type of paint does not dry and is very slippery. Non impale anti climb devices can also be fitted to fall pipes above this height. Ensure you advertise the fact that you have used anti-climb paint on your fall pipes, it is required by law and will be a good deterrent. Roof materials can also be painted or coated with a bituminous compound which will deter theft. Fixed ladders should have the first rung well above the height of an average person and a section of at least five feet should be protected by a padlocked, hinged metal cover.

One of the most common crimes associated with churches is the theft of lead flashing from the roof. Unless regular checks are made of the roof, you may never know (until it rains) that it has been stolen. If replacement or repair is necessary, look to other materials that have no resale value and will do the job as efficiently, if not better. Low level roofs can also present problems. Non impale roller devices can be fitted to deter the criminal or vandal and deny access. These must be fitted well out of reach to prevent accidental injury. The same applies to parapets - again anti-climb paint can be used. In respect of anti-climb paint, there are a few points to bear n mind:

1. Prior to treatment, all surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned to remove all loose rust, scale and dirt.
2. If it is used on an absorbent material, eg. Brick, stone or concrete a sealer should first be applied.
3. The paint should be applied at least an eighth of an inch thick.
4. Periodic renewal may be required in an area where dust and leaves blow.

Cellars

Wherever, possible, access to cellars should only be via one entrance and this should be within the church building. All other entrances should be permantly sealed - either bricked up or covered with metal plates fixed internally.

Where this is not possible, flaps and doors should be secured internally by means of bars and padlocks. Any retained entrance to a cellar should be given special attention with good quality frames and five lever deadlocks.

External Doors

Being the natural entrances to your church building, doors offer the preferred means of entry to the criminal. Every other means, (windows, through the roof, etc..) is an alternative which is only considered when a door is not an option. It is also relevant to note that, with other forced entries, the criminal is more likely to leave forensic evidence which can be used to effect a later capture.

The effectiveness of a door does not stop at preventing unlawful entry. Large items stolen from churches are invariably removed via a door. It is equally important, therefore, to ensure that, when locked, they cannot be opened from the inside. Mortice deadlocks are the most effective means of ensuring this.

All doors should be substantially made with strong hinges and effective frames. The strength of a door is only as good as its frame and hinges. Any slight movement in the door structure or in the hinge fittings renders the door insecure and should be rectified immediately. Again, good maintenance not only improves physical security but also acts as a deterrent.

Locks should, in all cases, be thief-resistant mortice deadlocks to British Standard. Many old locks currently fitted to churches doors are inadequate, with relatively simple internal mechanisms which will not defeat the prolific criminal. Where you wish to retain use of ancient locks, additional secure mortice locks should be fitted.

Keys should NEVER be left in locks, even while the church is occupied, and neither should they be hidden to allow access by those "in the know". This has never been effective, particularly with the modern criminal who is willing to put a good deal of work into planning and committing his or her next crime. The answer is to have as few keys as possible and to ensure that these are ALWAYS kept in the possession of named, responsible people.

Windows

Windows are the most common point of entry for criminals who need to break into churches. The removal of a lead framed window is effected very easily and noiselessly and has the added advantage that glass can be removed cleanly with no remaining sharp edges to cause further complication.

Windows are also regularly subject to damage, either accidental, (stones thrown up by grasscutters, etc..) or criminal.

It should also be remembered that many stained glass windows have substantial retail value and are increasingly being the specific target of thefts.

It is important therefore to consider protection and the extent of this will depend upon a number of factors, examples being:

- (a) The value of the windows themselves.
- (b) The likelihood of damage - including proximity to public roads and current frequency of damage.
- (c) The level of positive natural surveillance (NB. Positive surveillance by residents etc.. as opposed to casual passers-by)
- (d) The value of property within the church building. It is a fact that the majority of break-ins of this type are committed in order to steal particular items of value which criminals know will be on the premises. If there are no items of value therefore, the chances of a break-in are considerably reduced.

As indicated, the above list is not exhaustive and considerable thought should be given to whether you need to protect all or some of the windows in your church.

Protection against burglary takes the form of welded mesh or expanded metal grilles on iron frames, fitted to the window and bolted securely or built into the masonry.

Another alternative is to use additional internal barriers of laminated or toughened glass set into similar well secured frames. These are more aesthetically pleasing than grilles but are more expensive will probably not offer the same level of protection or deterrence.

External Lighting

External lighting of the church not only improves the appearance of your community but also acts as an excellent deterrent to the criminal. No thief likes to be bathed in light and the more light available, the longer period it is switched on and the greater the likelihood of natural surveillance, then the more effective will be its deterrent value.

The cheapest form of lighting for these purposes is high pressure sodium units which take a little time to "warm up" when first switched on. It is possible to fit electronic timers but these require adjustment throughout the year according to daylight changes and in the event of power failures. An alternative is the installation of phot-electric switches which operate automatically and ensure operation regardless of "lighting up" times.

Many churches have already installed lighting of this type and have found that ground based units are most effective. The problem is that these are accessible and are vulnerable themselves to theft or damage. They should therefore be firmly fixed into the ground and protected from damage by metal grilles. It also helps if the fittings are of the industrial type. They are not particularly aesthetically pleasing which limits their marketable value. Remember, they can always be covered from behind to hide their appearance.

Automatic Detectors

Another form of switching is the Passive Infrared (PIR) automatic sensor which detects the presence of any person approaching the church. These are very cheap to purchase and install, and are well within the price range of the vast majority of parishes.

The great advantage is that they only operate when approached by an individual, suddenly bathing the area in light and indicating the presence of anybody in the vicinity. Additionally, connections can be made to adjoining properties from the same sensor switch, thereby operating lights (or alarm buzzers) remotely.

The actual siting of sensors and lights is most important, deserving much consideration in order to protect as many vulnerable areas as possible at minimum cost.

It should be remembered that lamps used for these purposes need to light up instantly, which renders sodium lamps inappropriate. However, switches may be set to allow lights to remain operative for predetermined, limited periods which reduces running costs.

As indicated, the use of lighting is an important issue in effective security of a building and considerable thought needs to be given. Permanent lighting and sensor switching can be used in conjunction with each other to afford different types of cost effective protection.



THE CHURCH BUILDING - INTERIOR

Overarching security considerations in this case are:

1. Once inside a church which is likely to be visited overnight, a criminal has ample time in which to commit his crime.
2. Because most churches are fairly remote from neighbouring occupied premises (25 metres is sufficient on a windy night) and also have thick, soundproof walls, the criminal is able to work unencumbered by the need to remain silent.

These two factors alone indicate that any security within the building would need to be of a very high standard indeed to protect, absolutely, the property stored there. This would involve large safe areas and alarm systems which are not only outside the financial ability of most parishes but may also be totally inappropriate.

Levels of security inside the building should be decided on realistically, having regard to the value of property to be protected. The effects of its being permanently lost to the parish, (regardless of any insurance cover), and the availability of alternative means of storing property.

Items of exceptional value

The term "exceptional value" relates not only to the actual marketable value but also its value to the community. Included in such items are the obvious medieval chalices of silver or gold as well as pictures, illuminated bibles and also some parish records. Such items should NEVER be stored in an unoccupied church building unless you are prepared to spend considerable amounts on additional security measures.

Alternatives for storage include local and national museums, diocesan records offices or bank vaults. Copies can be made if the wish is to retain a daily connection with the item or if it is needed for daily use. It is always possible to "borrow" the actual items back for special occasions, exhibitions, etc.. This may appear inconvenient and even "second best" but the regrettable fact is that, if your treasure has not already been stolen, an attempt will almost certainly be made within the next few years if you continue to store it in an unoccupied church.

It is advisable to store such items at the home of the incumbent or church warden unless these buildings too have equivalent security precautions. Remember that homes, are at times, unoccupied and the responsibility for safe storage should not be placed in this way on one person. Those intent upon keeping such items in churches against the foregoing advice should, as a minimum:

- (a) Install a modern safe set securely fixed into either a substantial brick wall or, much better still the floor.
- (b) Install an approved alarm system to protect the area in which the safe is situated and have it connected to a central monitoring station by a professional alarm installer. A bells only system is insufficient under these circumstances. A list of (ACPO) approved alarm installers is available from your local Police Crime Reduction Advisor.

Safes

Safes vary in price and effectiveness and it is especially important to differentiate between those produced with the sole purpose of protecting documents against fire and those which are designed to protect property from theft. The former can generally be opened in situ and offers little protection for your valuables.

The most effective safe is one set into and firmly fixed in a brick wall or in the floor. This is because it cannot be attacked via the sides or back and, additionally cannot be carried away. The lock should be either a combination lock, or a key and combination set. The combination number should be periodically altered to avoid compromise and should NEVER be based upon well known numbers such as postcodes, telephone numbers or dates of birth, as is frequently the case.

As few people as possible should have access to the safe keys and combination, and care should be taken when the safe is opened to ensure nobody can read the combination and also to ensure the contents cannot then be stolen by leaving it unlocked, even for a moment.

Where the property to be stored is too large for a wall or floor safe, the free standing type is necessary. A common misconception is that these are too heavy to be carried away when, in fact thieves are prepared and have the ability to do this with relative ease. It is therefore important that these are bolted to the floor and also to the walls wherever possible. Remember, walls provide excellent protection to the rear and sides of a safe.

A safe over one ton in weight is probably incapable of being moved any substantial distance by criminals and it may, therefore be unnecessary to additionally bolt it to the floor or walls. However, this rarely involves little additional expense and greatly enhances security.

It is important that it should not be within a public area of the church where it will attract attention. A vestry or similar area not open to the public is better and some churches have created a secure area which should be kept locked at all times when not in use.

Offertory Boxes

Theft from offertory boxes is probably the most common crime within churches but is also one of the easiest to prevent. The person who steals from offertory boxes generally acts on impulse because the opportunity is presented. The following advice is given to protect your gifts:

1. Wherever possible install a metal wall box with a flush fitting heavy metal front. The box should be firmly bolted and grouted into the masonry.
2. Empty the wall box on a regular basis. Do not allow more than a few pounds to accumulate.
3. Fix a sign to the effect the box is emptied regularly.
4. NEVER use a wooden box, regardless of whether it is chained, screwed or bolted into position.
5. NEVER leave the key inside the church - the criminal WILL find it.



Parish Registers and Records

Generally speaking, churches are unsuitable for the storage of ancient documents. Apart from the crime prevention considerations, there is the question of preservation against decay, wear and damage. The "Parochial Registers and Records Measure" passed by general Synod in 1978, requires all documents completed over one hundred years ago, to be deposited in the Diocesan Records Office unless exacting standards of storage and care can be met. (It should be noted that most safes will not meet these standards)

Crime prevention advice is even more restrictive and PCCs are strongly recommended to examine the need to retain any completed document within the parish. Copies will often prove adequate for reference and the Diocesan Records Office Staff will always assist in setting up displays of original material when required.

Intruder Alarms

Intruder alarms are often dismissed out of hand as being too expensive, too much trouble and inappropriate for use in a church. It is strongly suggested that this option be considered in detail, for the following reasons:

- (a) The presence of an alarm system is often sufficient to deter the would be criminal even before he/she begins to plan the crime.
- (b) An alarm substantially reduces the time available to the criminal to commit the crime.
- (c) There are circumstances in which it would prove difficult to adequately protect a building by physical security alone. In these cases an alarm can be the only effective deterrent.
- (d) A good quality alarm system is surprisingly cheap and very cost effective. Often the cost is less than that of other security devices.
- (e) Systems can be designed to the requirements of individual buildings or areas within to reduce the instances of false calls and minimise cost.

Alarm systems have various means of activation, from making/breaking electronic circuits on doors and windows, to sophisticated but surprisingly inexpensive movement detectors. Warning can be by relaying to central monitoring stations or by audible systems fixed on the premises or in adjacent properties. Alarm systems can sometimes entitle you to a reduction in insurance premiums. Please check with your insurance company before you go ahead as they may wish to make certain stipulations.

Your Crime Reduction Advisor will be pleased to assist you with further advice if you consider an alarm to be an option for your church. Remember to always obtain quotes from at least three alarm companies before considering a system.

Inner Secure Areas

Generally speaking, the public area of any church should be limited to areas that can be viewed from any other part of the church. This means that one "official" is able to view all visitors and also, parties of visitors are within sight of each other at all times.

All other areas should be kept locked, and it is important that security be sufficient to deny access to people who are prepared to force internal doors or climb over partitions.

This creation of internal secure areas provides the opportunity to store items of medium value such as kettles, heaters and vacuum cleaners. Robes and vestments may also be kept there but additional security within these areas may be necessary to hold other valuables such as current parish registers, brassware, etc... It is also possible to alarm these inner areas at little cost.

Where substantial doors with locks cannot be fitted it is better to ensure that NO item of value is kept inside and that the door is not locked. This will prevent the inconvenience and expense of repairing the inevitable break in. A notice marked "Private" will serve to keep out most casual visitors, but be warned that this will attract walk in thieves so again, NO STEALABLE PROPERTY SHOULD BE LEFT INSIDE.



OTHER SECURITY ASPECTS

The foregoing chapters of this document have emphasised the level of crime risk and how this may be managed by implementing, predominately, physical security precautions. This section will deal with other measures that may be taken to enhance security.

Property Marking

Property marking is an internationally accepted means of rendering your property identifiable both to yourself and the police. In the United Kingdom this is effected by using the postcode of the premises to which the property belongs, together with the name or part of the name.

The purpose of marking property in this manner is to ensure that it can be identified and subsequently returned to you having been removed after being stolen. Photographs and descriptions are simply insufficient and many church wardens have travelled long distances expecting to positively identify recovered items only to be dissatisfied. Property marking would have avoided this. Also much property, obviously stolen, has had to be subsequently returned to criminals through lack of evidence of true ownership.

The marking of property also has a strong deterrent effect and it is always advisable to ensure the property bears signs of having been marked. It is also useful to place small notices in the church to the effect that all your property is marked. Casual visitors may not notice these but the potential criminal will.

Property marking is a quick, do it yourself task, costing you very little. The following methods may be used:

Ultra Violet Marker Pens

This utilises a cheap ultra-violet, fibre tip pen, obtainable from most large stationers or free from your local Crime Reduction Advisor. The mark is invisible to the naked eye until viewed under an ultra violet lamp. The pen can be used on any porous material such as wooden furniture, vestments or books. It can also be used on certain plastics and on unglazed or semi-glazed pottery. It is advisable to mark on the most porous area where it is likely to be handled least and also where it is least likely to be exposed to direct sunlight.

Sunlight has the effect of causing such marks to fade after a period of about eighteen months. It is, therefore advisable to re-mark property so exposed after this period.

The advantage of this type of marking is that the criminal is unable to see it himself and therefore will not take steps to remove it. It also does not effect any resale value and for this reason is suitable for electrical goods and other items you may wish to sell.

The main disadvantage is that it is not visible which limits the deterrent effect. The thief knows he will have no problems in selling it on to innocent purchasers.

Engraving



Marks can be engraved by use of a diamond-tipped pen, other sharp pointed tools or by the use of an electric engraver. A stencil is often used to ensure neatness when the mark can only be placed in an obvious position. Stencils also allow relatively small lettering which is not always the case when performing freehand.

Any metal or plastic items can be marked and the value is not affected if done properly. Glassware can also be engraved but you are advised to consult a professional in this case.

Ceramic Markers

Ceramic or titanium pens can be obtained from specialist stores and are effective on ceramic surfaces. Marks have the appearance of faint pencil marks and are impossible to remove without damaging the ceramic surface.

Permanent Ink Marking

Where appropriate, the use of permanent ink markers is very effective. Ordinary marker pens which have a solvent based ink and are advertised as "Permanent" are ideal for use in marking items where a fairly large visible mark is unimportant, and particularly on items that are porous.

Forensic Marking

This is a fairly new concept which has shown excellent results in crime reduction. It is particularly suitable for marking heavy items such as garden tools, fuel bowsers, roof lead and lightning conductors. Many different types of product are available for a range of items including specialist grease and dyes. Speak to your local Police Crime Reduction Advisor for further assistance and information.

Branding

Branding of wooden or plastic items is a possibility and is very effective. Soldering irons are very effective on plastics and some woods but you are advised to practice first on similar materials.

Photographs / Videos

In addition to marking property you are advised to retain a permanent photographic record of it. This will enable photographs as well as descriptions to be circulated in trade and police publications and also assist in later identification.

Photographing property may be undertaken by a keen amateur or by specialists in this service. Items should be photographed against a neutral background with a ruler alongside to indicate actual size. Each exposure should contain only one item and a back up of the SD card containing the entry should also be retained for safety. Wherever possible, hallmarks and other identification mark should be photographed.

A property record pack is available from your Police Crime Reduction Advisor.

Professional Descriptions

Professional descriptions of furniture and ornaments are also very useful. Initial circulation of stolen property to other police forces rely heavily on accurate descriptions.

Inventories

It is also important that one person has the responsibility of instituting an inventory of all items in your place of worship. Anything of value that can be moved should be included, even those things that you may think are of so little value that no one would steal them. Your knowledge may not be as good as the criminals. Measure items accurately and record all signs of damage such as scratches, dents, splits, tears and any other blemish and imperfection.

It is the meticulous noting of these details that can turn a common item into one that is unique and readily identifiable. These records should be kept in one book which should be stored in a safe place - not at the church. Periodically the items should be positively checked by the responsible person. Any losses should be immediately reported to the Police. Any items purchased or presented to you should immediately be added to the contents of the inventory book.

Substitute Items

Plastic or wooden replicas of valuable items may be made very cheaply and are surprisingly realistic, but it is always advisable to indicate to visitors that these items are copies as it is important to warn off the would be criminal at an early stage.

Wooden replacements which are not intended as replicas are also as effective as their expensive counterpart but far less vulnerable to theft.

Both replicas and cheaper replacements enable the real article to be stored elsewhere and brought out only when needed for special occasions.

Using the Community

Reference has already been made to the fact that crime against churches hit at the heart of the community and that community pride can be engendered by ensuring a well-cared for appearance. These same factors have, in some areas, formed the basis of ensuring the church is regularly watched over by interested members, other parishioners and persons living in the immediate vicinity. Some have formalised this under an official "Churchwatch" scheme whilst others have included it within a "Neighbourhood watch" area.



You are advised to implement such a scheme of this type in your area. Members of the Church Council form a basis and should all be encouraged to pay particular attention to the church - perhaps visiting it at least once every day. Many people living in adjoining properties are ideally suited to keeping "a friendly eye" upon the premises. If you set up a scheme, make sure your local Neighbourhood Constable, Crime Reduction Advisor and local Community Safety Officer at the District Council are aware and know who is co-ordinating this effort. Also ensure you join the "Church E-Mail Family" for quick hot off the press police information about identified crime trends or information which may involve the Church fraternity.

Make sure you display a notice to show any would be criminal that the church is looked after and under the watchful eye of those who care.

The use of notices in Churches

Many church councils would not wish to place notices which warn off would be criminals or which, in some cases, tend to make people feel uncomfortable. It is important therefore to word your message sensitively in a manner not likely to cause offence.

An example of wording which will be less likely to cause offence is:

"This church and all property within it is our inheritance. Much of it has been handed down through many generations. This present generation now seeks to protect it for the future by implementing some discrete security measures. These include marking all of our property to ensure it is readily identifiable and also by retaining a permanent photographic record. Our valuables are no longer left on display whilst the church is unlocked but we hope this does not detract from the enjoyment of your visit. Please help us to preserve this inheritance for future generations."

TO LOCK OR UNLOCK YOUR CHURCH?

Acceptance and implementation of all the foregoing advice in this document will not totally protect your church if it is left open and unattended for long periods in isolated areas. There always remains the fact that not all criminals are deterred by the measures taken and, left to their own devices, will find something to steal or damage.

However, the decision as to whether to keep your church locked or to allow unrestricted access by visitors is a difficult one to make. This is a decision that is properly left to individual parishes, and the only role for Crime Reduction to play in this is to ensure that decision makers are aware of the alternatives and consequences.

The following advice is given to assist your decision:

- (a) Churches should ALWAYS be locked at night. This is an uncompromising piece of advice which is given in the face of all conflicting arguments and is based upon the responsibility of society to seek to protect its heritage.
- (b) Isolated churches are more vulnerable than those with natural surveillance.
- (c) Unlocked churches are more vulnerable to theft and damage than are locked churches.
- (d) Churches which are left unlocked have a lesser risk of damage if an "official" is present at all times.
- (e) Thefts of property are less likely if valuables are removed and secure inner areas are maintained.
- (f) Income from offertory boxes is substantially reduced in locked churches.

The options available, taking into account the above are:

- 1. To leave the church open and unattended at all hours (Not advisable)
- 2. To lock at night and leave unattended during the day.
- 3. To lock at night and provide passing attention during the day, perhaps utilising the attention of local residents or casual visits to the church by members of the congregation.
- 4. To lock at night and provide an attendant (perhaps on a rota system) at all times whilst open.
- 5. To lock at night and encourage ways to make your church subject to regular use.
- 6. A combination of all of the above.

The decision is yours, but please, keep your Neighbourhood Constable informed of what you are doing, and again be warned that leaving the premises open and unattended renders the risk of theft and damage more likely.

Item (5) refers to making more regular use of your church building and there are many official publications in individual dioceses which advise on how this may be effected. The rationale in terms of Crime Reduction is that the more people who use the church on an "official" basis, the less is the risk of attack by the opportunist, walk in criminal.

Examples of ways to encourage greater use include the provision of meeting rooms for local social and voluntary organisations, arranging drop-in centres with refreshments for pensioners and young mothers and shared use of worship facilities with other denominations. Some of these would be expensive but nevertheless should be pursued as long term solutions to the problems of crime as well as maintenance of your church buildings. Additional benefits also accrue to the whole community in encouraging social groups to proliferate. High crime areas throughout the country are characterised by low organisational participation amongst residents.

Special Risks

There may be special risks associated with your building at certain times of the year. For instance, festivals, when precious objects may be in the building and on display. Flower festivals are sometimes a time of particular risk, with special artefacts on display when large numbers of the public are invited. There may, as a result, be more money in your building. If this is the case, and you are unsure as to whether a risk is constituted, get in touch with your local Police Crime Reduction Advisor who will help you. Your biggest asset is constant public surveillance.

Fire Regulations

It is very important not to restrict access to fire doors and free passage to them when you lock parts of your church and leave others open to the public. If you have any doubts contact your local Fire Safety Officer for advice before taking action.



PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE CASE OF BURGLARY OR THEFT

Confrontation of the Criminal

DO NOT confront criminals whom you disturb. The reasons for this are two fold.

1. You may be assaulted - a trapped criminal may well turn to violence in order to effect an escape.
2. You would need to know your legal powers very well in order to avoid the possibility of unlawfully detaining a person.

Action when a criminal is disturbed

Use the nearest available telephone either landline or mobile - dial 999. By doing this you will get a fast response to the situation. If you are in a position to get a description of the offender, do so. Remember, brief simple details are the best. Male or female, approximate age, height, build, colours and style of clothing. Is there anything that stands out about this person? Are there any accomplices? Is there a vehicle being used or parked nearby? If so get the registration number, if you are unable to get this information note the type of vehicle, colour, part of registration number. If it is a van, is there any logo on the side or back? Which direction did either persons or vehicles go?

Actions on discovering a Crime

If you arrive at your church building and find there has been a break in, telephone your nearest 24 hour police station (Full details are available on the Essex Police website - www.essex.police.uk). Do nothing else until the arrival of an Officer. Preserve the scene. This may seem strange, but as far as the police are concerned, it is very important. Sometimes police work can be sophisticated. It may well be that the Scenes of Crime Officer (SOCO) can play their part in the investigation. The initial investigating Officer will advise you on what to do.

REMEMBER: DO NOT TOUCH OR CLEAN ANYTHING, PRESERVE THE SCENE OF THE CRIME. Do not even try to establish what has been stolen until the Police Officer says it is alright to enter the church. After Police have done their work at the scene, everything can then be put right.

What the Police will want to know

The Police will try to establish the exact time and date of the offence and will therefore wish to speak to the last person to leave the premises intact and the person first discovering the theft or break in. They will also draw certain conclusions from other observations made, such as the appearance of vehicle tyre marks etc...

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

They will also be very interested in the method of entry and the manner in which property is removed. Additionally they will require full descriptions of all property stolen, photographs if possible and values. They will also be interested in any form of property marking that you have implemented.

The Police will need to ascertain if anybody saw or heard anything suspicious, not only at the time of the burglary but also during the period that the criminal may have been planning the crime.

There may also be questions relevant to other areas of criminal intelligence or methods which may appear totally unconnected with the enquiry. Please try to ascertain as full an answer as possible for the Officer and keep him or her updated of anything you hear which may be relevant.

The Police will do their best to recover your property and bring the criminals to justice. Their task however, is not easy. The only help they have at their disposal is the empty scene and the goodwill of people who wish to assist. This is the reason I urge you to take the foregoing steps to prevent your property from being stolen.

I wish you every success

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[N O T P R O T E C T I V E L Y M A R K E D]