

Addressing an Active Shooter Situation: A Presentation & Discussion

Little Vine Primitive Baptist Church | February 24, 2019

Williamson County Sherriff's Department Recommendation

- Create a security team – with background checks before choosing members.
- Establish/adopt a protocol.
- Limit access to the church and worship area during the service.
- Establish training curriculum that accommodates armed and unarmed responses.

How to prepare your church for an Active Shooter Situation

It's a situation no one wants to think about, but recent events have pushed it to the forefront of your mind. What would we do if a mass shooting happened at our church? How can your members, children, and visitors be best prepared for an active shooter?

As churches, our ministry to embrace anyone in need makes us vulnerable. How do we keep our doors open to all, while protecting those inside? Here is a three-step approach to protect your congregation from active shooters:

1. Plan
2. Practice
3. Prevent

How to prepare your church for an Active Shooter Situation

- 1. Plan** First form your emergency response team. Ideally your team should include individuals with medical and law enforcement training. Next, educate your team on responses to an active shooter situation that result in the least amount of loss. Run. Hide. Fight. is the recommended course of action. Meet with local first responders and learn how they will respond to a shooting in your building. Make it easy for first responders to assist you. Provide local law enforcement with building blueprints and emergency contact information for the pastor and emergency response team members. Report any threats to the safety of your church, including restraining orders your church may have in place. Make your active shooter emergency action plan using the information you have learned and with additional church Emergency Planning resources.

How to prepare your church for an Active Shooter Situation

- 2. Practice** You have a crisis response plan. Now, it's time to practice. First, rehearse with your emergency response team. Next, hold a safety drill and train your entire congregation.

How to prepare your church for an Active Shooter Situation

3. **Prevent** Creating a plan and practicing safety drills with your congregation are the fundamental steps you can do to protect your members if an active shooter targets your church. However, there are some things you can do to prevent an incident from happening altogether:
- **Train Your Staff** — Train your church staff, especially greeters, to recognize signs of a person who is agitated, angry, intoxicated, or shows aggressive or threatening body language. Create guidelines on how to approach and, if needed, deny access to such individuals.
 - **Create Barriers** — Create layers of protection that can stop or stall a violent person before they reach your congregation. These steps can include monitored surveillance of your church parking lot and closing sanctuary and church doors after the service has started. Those who come late are met at the door and guided to seats by church greeters.
 - **Prepare Your Building** — Optimize your building for efficient evacuation and secure lockdown. Make exits accessible and clearly marked.
 - **Hire Armed Security** — Determine if your church needs armed security. Contract with a professional security provider. Do not allow untrained, nonprofessional, armed church members to ensure the safety of your church.

What to do during an Active Shooter Situation

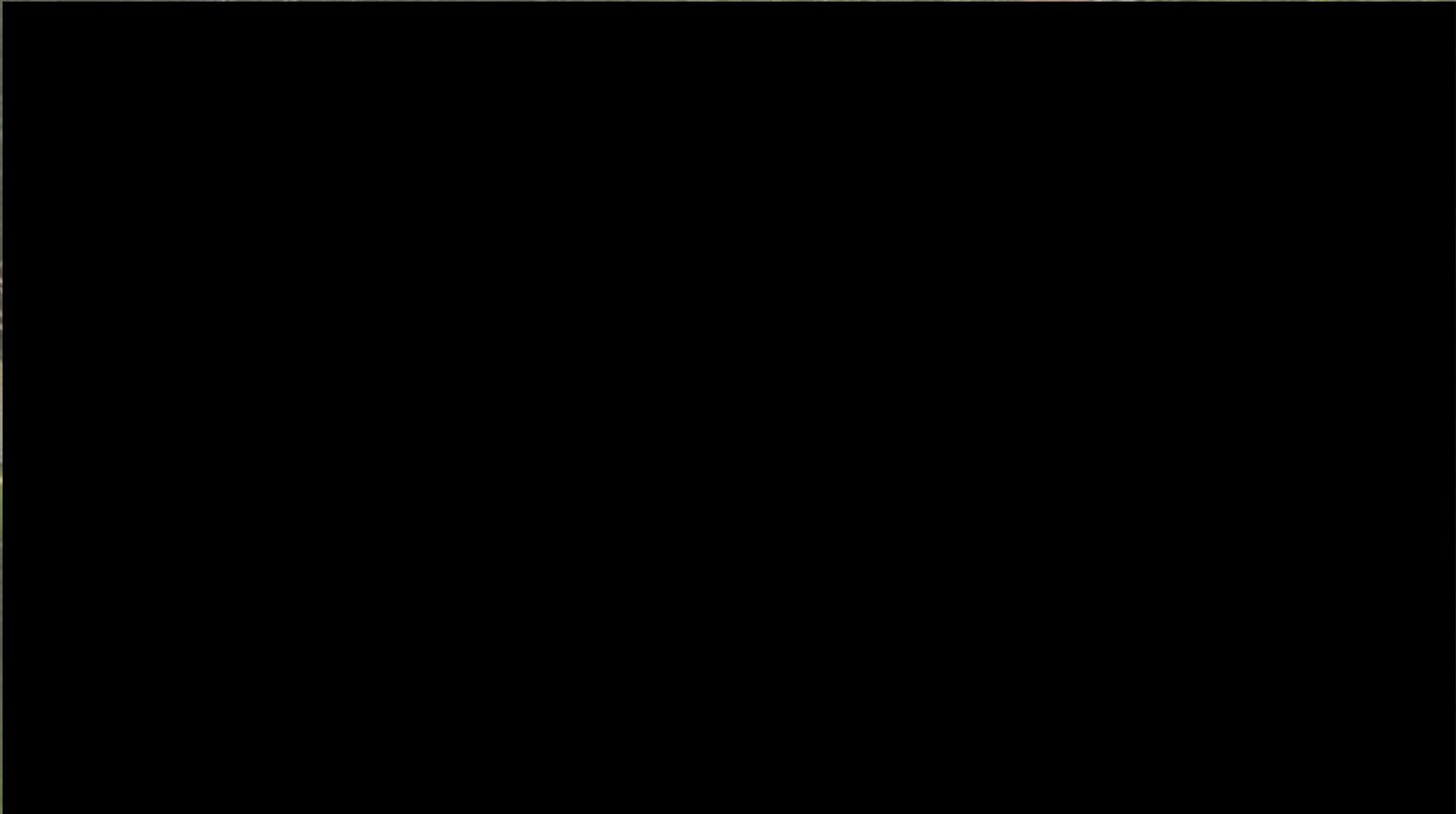
It's a moment that no one ever expects but should... what to do in an active shooter situation. It's a stressful time as thoughts of escape, prayers, and reflections of your loved ones fill your head. There is no single response that fits all active shooter situations but knowing what to do can make a difference.

1. Respond Immediately. Denial of the situation only delays reaction time. Leave your personal belongings behind. There's nothing in one's purse or briefcase that's more important than one's life. Items can be replaced. Life cannot.
2. **RUN! HIDE! FIGHT!** Visualize possible escape routes as you move toward exits. Move as quickly and quietly as you can. Follow the instructions of your trained church safety officer, deacons or a first responder. Getting yourself out of harm's way must be your first priority. If you not able to run, then HIDE. Lock and barricade doors with heavy furniture or other items. Turn off lights and cover windows. Remain hidden until identifiable law enforcement gives an all clear sign.
3. Remain calm. Keeping a clear head in a moment of crisis might protect you and others from alerting the shooter to your presence. When first responders arrive on-site keep your hands visible at all times and follow all instructions given.

RUN, HIDE, or FIGHT: Active Shooter Protocol

- An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.
- Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims.
- Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.
- If you hear shots fired or if you witness an armed person shooting or threatening people (active shooter): Immediately choose the best way to protect your life. Very quickly, make your best determination of what is occurring and which of the options below will provide the greatest degree of security for you employing the “RUN, HIDE, or FIGHT” protocol.

RUN, HIDE, or FIGHT: Active Shooter Protocol



RUN:

Evacuate if possible

- If there is considerable distance between you and the gunfire/armed person, quickly move away from the sound of the gunfire/armed person. If the gunfire/armed person is in your building and it is safe to do so, run out of the building and move far away until you are in a secure place to hide.
- A moving target is considerably harder to hit. Do not cower in place.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Keep your hands visible to law enforcement.
- Take others with you, but do not stay behind for others who refuse to go.
- Call 911 when it is safe to do so. Do not assume that someone else has reported the incident. The information that you are able to provide law enforcement may be critical, e.g., number of shooters, physical description and identification, number and type(s) of weapons, and location of the shooter.

HIDE:

Hide silently in as safe a place as possible

- If the shooter is in close proximity and you cannot evacuate safely, hide in an area out of the armed person's view.
- Choose a hiding place with thicker walls and fewer windows, if possible (e.g., the restrooms or church office).
- Lock doors and barricade with furniture, if possible. Stay clear of the door.
- Turn off lights.
- Silence phones and turn off other electronics.
- Close windows, shades and blinds, and avoid being seen from outside the room, if possible.
- If you are outdoors and cannot RUN safely, find a place to hide that will provide protection from gunfire such as a brick wall, large trees or buildings.
- Remain in place until you receive an "all clear" signal from law enforcement.

FIGHT:

Take action to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter

- As a last resort, fight. If you cannot evacuate or hide safely and only when your life is in imminent danger, take action.
- Attempt to incapacitate or disrupt the actions of the shooter.
- Act with physical aggression toward the shooter.
- Use items in your area such as fire extinguishers or chairs.
- Throw items (e.g., song books) at the shooter if possible.
- Call 911 when it is safe to do so.

Immediately after an incident:

- Wait for Local Law Enforcement officers to assist you out of the building, if inside.
- When law enforcement arrives, individuals must display empty hands with open palms.
 - Specifically, if you have a weapon per a Concealed Carry license, make sure that it is holstered and not in your hand when law enforcement arrives.

Notes:

- Understand that gunfire may sound artificial. Assume that any popping sound is gunfire.
- If there are two or more persons in the same place when a violent incident begins, you should spread out in the room to avoid offering the aggressor an easy target.
- Be mindful that violent attacks can involve any type of weapon, not just a gun. Knives, blunt objects, physical force or explosives can be just as deadly as a gun. The suggested actions provided here are applicable in any violent encounter.
- Plan ahead: Visualize possible escape routes:
 - front door,
 - back door near kitchen,
 - west side door in overflow room,
 - east side door in sanctuary,
 - and all windows.

Plans for conducting a drill

1. Alert local law enforcement and medical teams that your church will be holding a non-emergency drill.
2. Check in with your designated crisis response team on the day of the drill. Be sure everyone knows what to do and is prepared to handle their portion of the drill.
3. At the appointed time, have a designated person from the crisis response team walk to the front and announce to the congregation that the active shooter drill is now in progress.
4. Explain to the congregation how the church will respond in a real active shooter situation, including:
 - Directing the congregation what to do.
 - Distracting and disarming the active shooter.
 - Calling and reporting the situation to local authorities.
5. Reinforce to your congregants that your church's number one goal in an active shooter situation will be to protect the congregants.
6. Introduce your congregation to the designated crisis team members who will guide them in the event of a real situation. Have them share with congregants what to do in a real active shooter situation, including the Run, Hide, Fight method.
7. Simulate with congregants what to do should an active shooter enter the sanctuary, include ducking down to hide behind pews and following the designated crisis team members on how to evacuate the sanctuary and building.
8. Allow congregants to re-enter the building.



Discussion