



# *Harford County Sheriff's Office*

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Sheriff

## *Crime Prevention for Churches and Places of Worship*

**Basic access** – All doors should remain locked to the outside. Key control is important. During normal business hours access should be controlled. This can easily be done with a doorbell or intercom to inform the staff of visitors. During services only one entry door that is monitored by a greeter or usher should be used. If more than one door is used both should be monitored. Personal contact to include eye contact should be made with all new visitors. Doors should be marked with the proper height markings. This can be done discretely with tape or paint.

**Cameras** - Churches are encouraged to utilize cameras or CCTV. Remember all CCTV should be recorded, which can provide valuable evidence if a crime occurs.

**Lighting** - (Interior and exterior lighting) Most people are unaware that proper lighting significantly reduces the opportunity of crime. All areas of the building should have proper lighting. Parking lots should remain lit especially during evening services and programs.

**Location** – The address and church name should be visible from roadway. If the church is difficult to locate a directional should be provided to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). An emergency response number should be kept on file with EOC, in the case of after hour problems.

**Visibility** – Make every attempt not to restrict the view either into or out of the church. Try no to place signs or posters on doors or windows. Keep all hedges trimmed back from windows and doorways. Keep the church clean and free of clutter. This eliminates areas for suspects to hide.

**Staff** – All staff should be familiar with what is normal and what is not. Staff should not enter an empty building alone. Nor should staff leave by themselves. If something appears suspicious with the building, contact law enforcement and do not enter. During services the use of greeters and ushers is encouraged. Greeters and ushers should identify any persons that appear to be new to the church and make personal contact with them.

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During the service staff should monitor access points. Also a member of the staff should perform multiple walkthroughs of the building during the service. All staff should have access to cellular or traditional phones. All staff should be familiar with how to help prevent robberies and what to do during and one occurs.

**Tithe and Offering** – Staff should pay especially close attention when a collection is being taken. Once the collection is completed it should be taken by two or more persons and secured. Electronic tithing should be offered as an option to parishioners. At least two people should be involved in any movement or counting of cash. This helps with security and increases accountability. Bank deposits should never be done alone. Deposits should also be done at various times and different travel routes should be utilized.

### **What to do during a robbery:**

**Stay calm** – Let the robber know you intend to cooperate. Don't make sudden movements. Warn the robber of any surprise, such as someone in the back or an expected delivery.

**Do what you are told** – Don't argue or be difficult in an attempt to delay the robber. Keep all communication with the robber short and simple.

**Give it up** – Turn the money or valuables over to the robber.

**Don't try to be a hero** – Whether the robber produces a weapon or not you must assume that he is armed and can hurt you. The robber has the advantage and controls the situation. Do not fight or use a weapon – this will only increase everyone's personal risk.

**Observe** – Observe as much as you can about the robber's physical features and mannerisms. Details such as race, body build, clothing, type of weapon and vehicle details are important.

### **What to do after:**

**Don't follow** – Do not follow or try to chase the robber.

**Call** – As soon as safely possible call 911 do not hang up the phone until law enforcement arrives.

**EMS** - Determine if there is anyone requires medical assistance. If medical attention is required notify the 911 dispatcher.

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**Lock up the doors and protect the scene** - Do not allow anyone other than law enforcement or EMS in the building. Ask parishioners not to talk about the robbery with one another. Ask them to write down what they observed.

**Cooperate** – Cooperate with authorities requests.

*For more information on crime prevention or to obtain a free security survey for your church contact the Harford County Sheriff's Office Community Policing Unit.*

*Darlington Office – 410-638-3713*

*Highland Office – 410-638-3625*

*Joppa Office – 410-612-1670*

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