
[Five Pillars of Church Safety Series: Pillar Three - Preserve](#)

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I remember reading a newspaper article about a church that had been entered after hours three times in less than a month. Thieves took cash, equipment, and made a mess of the place each time. I was struck by what the pastor was quoted as saying after the third event. He remarked, "I guess we'll just have to start locking the church at night." As the new slang expression goes, "I think we should think?"

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After discussing the first two pillars, which are prepare and protect, we turn now to the third pillar, preserve. It may be best summarized as, "Recognizing the threats to resources and facilities and taking intentional steps to preserve them for generations to come."

No one would argue, protecting people should be the number one priority for any church. People are the backbone, the heart, and the soul of any organization, especially the church. Having said that, the next most important focus should be on protecting facilities and resources.

As I interact with churches, I find there to be a significant drop-off between plans for protecting people and those for protecting facilities and resources. While many churches have child safety or a transportation program in place, very few have intentional, regular facility inspection and maintenance guidelines. And that's a problem. Many fires, thefts, break-ins, and missing or destroyed equipment can be prevented. But it takes an intentional effort. Let's consider these areas of concern:

Facility Inspection and Maintenance

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With so many volunteers from so many groups using your facility, it is bound to happen that people put things in places, or break something, or create a hazard and not think twice about it. The only way to keep on top of hazards is to inspect regularly.

The first step is a daily walk-around. At the end of the day someone should be responsible for checking the facility for open windows, unlocked doors, water leaks, and general hazards. Anything noted should either be corrected on the spot or marked as a hazard until it can be fixed.

Beyond that, a monthly inspection should also take place. This is a little more in depth than the daily check. Looking at the boiler room, storage areas, custodian closet, general use areas, and out-of-the-way locations should take place. Again, if possible, corrections should be made immediately. If not, the hazard should be marked and a committed, trained maintenance staff or person should fix the problem as soon as possible. It's amazing how many full blown flooding situations or fires started as a small problem and grew into a major issue simply because it remained undetected or not properly maintained.

Property Security

I believe most churches have too many doors open during the day. And as a result people can come into the facility undetected or the chances of a door being left unlocked increases.

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Years ago,

there just wasn't a big market for choir robes, hymnals, or pipe organs. However, in the last decade, much has changed. There is much more sound equipment, computers, instruments, cameras, and electronics in general available and exposed. And would-be thieves know this. They see churches as open and inviting with a gold mine inside.

Locking doors and windows is a good start to prevent theft. However,

seriously considering a monitored alarm system and cameras may not be as wild of an idea as you may think. The quality of the systems and the reasonable pricing is within reach for most churches. To stop and think how much valuable (sometimes even priceless) equipment and resources are in your facility, several thousand dollars invested to protect them seems like a good bargain. Further, such systems can also detect fires, water problems, and can even summons help in an emergency. Property and lives can be saved by having such a system.

Contents and Property Evaluations

Though you may have done your job trying to protect your facility and resources,

sometimes accidents still happen. An electrical problem may start a fire. A storm may come and level the church building. How will you be able to make a good, honest accounting of what you had? The answer is a contents and property evaluation.

At least annually, a complete inventory should be conducted at your church. You will never be able to think of everything after the fact. As a result, you will not be able to collect what is due from your insurance provider. Some churches will do a video inventory while others will get a person to spend the time writing an inventory down. However it is completed, it is a good strategy. A little side note as to what to do with the inventory: keep a copy off-site. Some people have done an inventory and made a copy and yet kept both copies in the church building. If it burns down or is destroyed, the inventory will be of little value.

By taking the time to ask the question, Are our facilities and resources safe? you can begin the process of making sure that they are. There is a great deal of history and memories there. In addition, valuable records and the equipment

needed to do ministry, if lost, can seriously disrupt your ministry.

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Take the time. Ãfâ€šÃ,Â Start the process, and preserve what God has given you.