



# **ADVICE TO CHURCH WARDENS**



## **HOW TO IMPLEMENT A CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY**

**Sussex Police Heritage Crime**





## **FOREWORD**

### **BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF CONSTABLE OF SUSSEX POLICE**

Crime against church property is rising. We recognise the public have placed their trust in Sussex Police to make the county an even safer place. We want to keep communities safe – and feeling safe, and we want to prevent and respond to harm.

Yet we cannot do this alone. Church Wardens are already playing a vital part in preventing crime against religious sites and to further support them we have published this guide.

It is important to modernise and to use new technology, where affordable, to protect our religious and historic heritage. This guide sets out to raise awareness of the principles of threat, harm and risk and details resources that can be used to combat these aspects of crime.

Sussex Police is prioritising areas where communities face the greatest challenges, investigating the most harmful crimes and continuing to be accessible when communities need us.

Please continue to help us, to ask for advice, to encourage an awareness in the community of the problems faced by your diocese in protecting its treasured locations and possessions.

I commend this guide to you – and thank you for your good work.

Jo Shiner  
DCC



# SUSSEX POLICE

## ADVICE TO CHURCH WARDENS

### HOW TO IMPLEMENT A CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

**It is a sad fact that crime against churches is increasing. Crimes 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. When offences are committed frequently, they can become 'acceptable' and apathy can develop. People in the local community may say – 'Oh dear, more lead stolen, or more stained glass broken – oh well, what can we do?'

We should do everything within our power to prevent this 'shoulder-shrugging'. We need to raise community awareness of the constant threats of robbery, theft and vandalism – the destruction of our heritage. Tell people how they can help you.

As a **church warden** you have responsibility to care for church property - so please read and use this document. The advice it contains can be applied to most crimes faced by churches. The majority of ideas cost very little - others may require limited but cost-effective expenditure.

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.

***PCSO Daryl Holter – Sussex Police Heritage Crime Officer***



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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 provide helpful advice to help deter these crimes from happening.**

In dealing with any risk of crime, it is important to consider the purpose of the building and its effectiveness in achieving that purpose. An isolated church, miles from any sizeable centre of habitation, may once have served as a venue for services and to provide a peaceful sanctuary for casual visitors.

It is necessary now to examine its present-day religious and heritage 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 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 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 casual vandalism or theft.

The purpose of this document is not to create a fortress.

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.

**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 to ensure it is more identifiable.**

**The most basic step, however, is to understand the type of crimes that can be committed and how they can be prevented.**



## **CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY**

**We need to develop an overall crime prevention strategy for churches and their contents. For this reason church councils are advised to appoint sub-committees to ensure that no one person is left to deal with all these matters.**

### **Risk analysis – step one**

The first task of the sub-committee should be to use this document to be aware of the risks the church may be subjected to. Then formulate a Crime Prevention Policy for approval by your full committee.

### **Crime Prevention Policy – step two**

The policy will address issues rather than specific action. Will the church be locked or unlocked? Will valuables will be put in safe keeping or left out? The answers to these questions will form part of this policy, together with many other factors.

Once the policy is approved, the committee should work through this document and produce a number of recommendations to conform to the overall policy.

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/PCSO.

Crime risks managed in this manner leave people in no doubt about 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. 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 by calling 999 or non-emergency matters via Sussex Police by reporting online or calling 101.**
- (d) Maintaining contact with your insurance company when necessary.**

## THE PROBLEMS FACING A CHURCH WARDEN

The most important first step in managing the crime risk is to become fully acquainted with the problem as it relates to your church or churches. This includes developing an appreciation of the following factors:

- 1. Crime trends and threats.** Learning about similar offences and crime trends in the locality. Make contact with your local neighbourhood watch, Sussex Police Countrywatch or local community groups including those on social media.
- 2. Prevalence and timing.** 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 market value of items under threat.** The marketable nature of property belonging to your church; i.e. 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. Talk to your insurance company. Be careful of people who say they are -experts-. Check their credentials.
- 4. Easy crime or hard crime?** 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 stolen, if they have plenty of time to steal them.
- 5. Device reality.** 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. Opportunity and temptation.** 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. Many opportunists do this 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. Destructive potential.** The vulnerability of items to criminal damage and arson. The likelihood of children throwing stones at windows may depend on the availability of suitable 'ammunition'. Arson is more likely when combustible items are left lying about or when intruders find matches, cans of fuel for lawn mowers etc.

**Summary.** 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 lightning 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, gravestones, York stone slabs, flag stones, stone carvings and ornaments are regularly subjected to wilful damage or theft.

## 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 criminal's first impression.** 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 wellbeing within your community. These factors contribute to crime prevention and encourage passers-by to be more vigilant.
- 2. Psychological barriers.** Although it is not feasible to totally secure a perimeter, people 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. Vehicle access.** Is it possible to prevent vehicles getting close to church buildings? This helps to deter criminals planning to carry away heavy objects such as safes, lead from roofs or items of furniture.
- 4. Neighbourhood watchfulness.** 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. Tell your community to help keep a look out.

Encourage people to contact the police immediately if they see any suspicious activity.

### Hedges

Hedges should be thick and difficult to penetrate. Choose something like blackthorn, hawthorn, hedging rose, holly or berberis as these have the added advantage of thorns. Privet, yew, laurel etc. can also be 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, where possible, be self-closing. Double gates and those wide enough to allow access by vehicles should be locked when not in use and at night. Locking mechanisms should be well maintained and any padlocks close-shackled to prevent attack by bolt cutters. Similarly any chains should be substantial, and preferably 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 expensive and often includes a conflict of interest. A pristine, lawn-like appearance presents a well-cared for façade which has advantages. However, other parishes may wish to see some natural growth and habitats for wildlife 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 – will help. 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 heritage 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. Only biodegradable rubbish should be disposed of in this manner as compost. 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. A remedy to this is prior knowledge of the circumstances and extra vigilance, although regular general care of the churchyard helps.

### 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. Where possible, branches should, be cut from the main trunk to a height of at least five feet from the ground to maintain maximum vision and discourage climbing activities.



## Sheds and outbuildings

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

- **Wooden sheds** should not be used to store items of value such as power tools, lawnmowers or heaters.
- **Outbuildings** should always be kept locked with an approved security class padlock and windows obscured to conceal contents.
- **Other tools** such as spades, ladders, wheelbarrows and wheelie bins 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 provide access to roofs and windows. These items should **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 raw bolted to a solid brick-built wall. Wheelie bins can be used as a ladder or a means of conveyance, please ensure you either lock them away or lock them together or securely.
- **Fuel for lawnmowers**, etc. should not be kept on church property. As previously described, offences of arson are far more likely when opportunist intruders actually find, in situ, the means to commit them.



## THE CHURCH BUILDING - EXTERIOR

**Please be mindful of church buildings, check if they are listed, scheduled or protected before you fix any items to those buildings or structures - if you're unsure check with your Diocesan Advisory Committee.**

### Roof and fall pipes

Access to the roof is often relatively easy due to large cast-iron fall pipes and purpose built, fixed iron ladders. 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, 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 note:



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

### **Cellars**

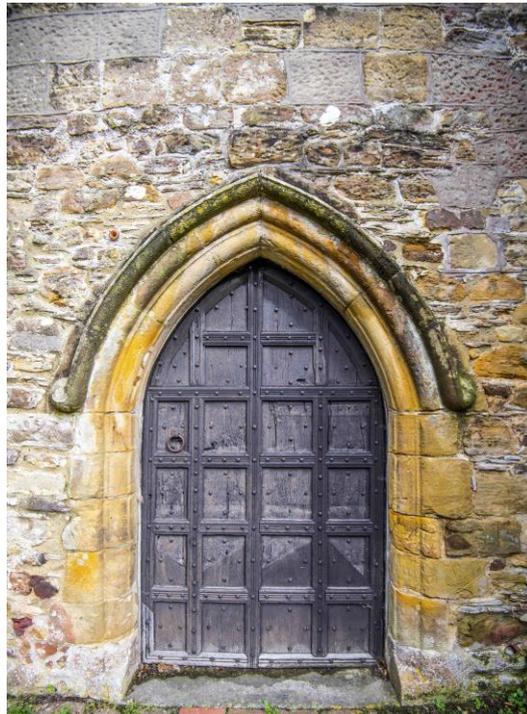
Wherever, possible, access to cellars should only be via one entrance and this should be within the church building. All other entrances should be permanently sealed - either bricked up or covered with metal plates fixed internally.

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

### **External doors**

Doors offer the preferred means of entry to a criminal. Every other means, (windows, through the roof, etc.) are alternatives when a door is not an option. Please note that, with other forced entries, the criminal is more likely to leave forensic evidence which can be used to effect a later arrest.

Large items stolen from churches are usually removed via a door. It is equally important 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 be thief-resistant mortice deadlocks to British Standards. Many old locks currently fitted to churches doors are inadequate, with relatively simple internal mechanisms. If you wish to retain use of ancient locks, additional secure mortice locks should be fitted.

### **Keys**

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, an up to date register of key holders and to ensure that these are always kept in the possession of named, responsible people.

### **Windows**

As well as doors, windows are also a 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. Windows are also regularly subject to damage, either accidental, (stones thrown up by grasscutters, etc.) or criminal. Stained-glass windows have substantial retail value and are increasingly being the specific target of thefts.



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

- The value of the windows themselves.
- The likelihood of damage - including proximity to public roads and current frequency of damage.
- The level of positive natural surveillance (NB. Positive surveillance by residents etc. as opposed to casual passers-by).
- The value of property within the church building. It is a fact that the majority of break-ins of this type are committed 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.

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 and will probably not offer the same level of protection or deterrence. It may be possible to put transparent plastic panels over the outsides of valuable windows to stop stone-throwing from damaging them.

### **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 photo-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 to protect as many vulnerable areas as possible at minimum cost.

Remember 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, thus reducing running costs.

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:

- Once inside a church, which is likely to be visited overnight, a criminal has ample time in which to commit his crime.
- 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 total security within the building needs to be a very high standard to protect 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 such as human guard patrols.

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 not 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:

- Install a modern safe set securely fixed into either a substantial brick wall or, much better still the floor.
- 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 bell 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:

- 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.
- Empty the wall box on a regular basis. Do not allow more than a few pounds to accumulate. Consider placing foam material in the box, this can cover up the noise of coinage.
- Fix a sign to the effect the box is emptied regularly.
- Never use a wooden box, regardless of whether it is chained, screwed or bolted into position.
- 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:

- The presence of an alarm system is often sufficient to deter the would-be criminal even before they begin to plan the crime.
- An alarm substantially reduces the time available to the criminal to commit the crime.

- 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.
- A good quality alarm system is surprisingly cheap and very cost effective. Often the cost is less than that of other security devices.
- 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.

### **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.



## **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 returned to you after being stolen. Photographs and descriptions are simply insufficient, and many church wardens have travelled long distances expecting to identify recovered items only to be disappointed. 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:

### **Ultraviolet marker pens**

This uses a cheap ultraviolet, fibre tip pen, obtainable from most large stationers. The mark is invisible to the naked eye until viewed under an ultraviolet 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 and therefore will not take steps to remove it. It also does not affect 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.

### **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 backup of the SD card containing the entry should also be retained for safety. Wherever possible, hallmarks and other identification mark should be photographed.

### **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 and photograph 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. 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 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, as in some cases they can make people feel uncomfortable. It is important to word your message sensitively in a manner not likely to cause offence.

Please see the below example:

**This church and all property within it are 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 to ensure that decision makers are aware of the alternatives and consequences.

The following advice is given to assist your decision:

- 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.
- Isolated churches are more vulnerable than those with natural surveillance.
- Churches which are left unlocked have a lesser risk of damage if an 'official' is present at all times.
- Thefts of property are less likely if valuables are removed and secure inner areas are maintained.
- Income from offertory boxes is substantially reduced in locked churches.

The options available, considering 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 using 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.

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. Try to get people involved.

### **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.

**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 acting.



## **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE CASE OF BURGLARY OR THEFT**

### **Confronting the Criminal**

**DO NOT** confront criminals whom you disturb. The reasons for this are twofold:

1. You may put your safety and/or the safety of others at risk.
2. You may exceed your legal powers and unlawfully detain a person.

### **If you see criminal activity**

Use the nearest available telephone either landline or mobile - dial 999. 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, contact Sussex Police (Full details are available on the Sussex Police website - [www.sussex.police.uk](http://www.sussex.police.uk)). Do nothing else until the arrival of an officer. Try not to move or touch areas have been disturbed, for forensics.

### **Remember – do not touch or clean anything so we can preserve the scene of the crime.**

Do not even try to establish what has been stolen until the Police Officer says it is fine to enter the church. After the 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 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.

They will also be 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 find out if anybody saw or heard anything suspicious.

The police will do their best to recover your property and bring the criminals to justice.  
To help protect your property, please take the above steps to prevent your property from being stolen.

I wish you every success.

**Daryl Holter**

**Crime Prevention Tactical Advisor  
& Sussex Heritage Police Officer**



Design and photography by David E P Dennis LCGI RAF

from a concept developed by Essex Police.