

'Confronting Violence' video gives churches tips – and discusses guns



Ryan Neumeyer | Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Law enforcement officials describe churches as "soft targets," compared to some other places where intruders might attempt to commit violence.

"All houses of worship are," said Patrick Shaw of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "You're open and inviting. You allow large populations to come in. You don't necessarily know some of those folks because you get visitors. And so you're vulnerable. And we recognize that."

Shaw's remarks came in a recent webinar, "Confronting Violence in Houses of Worship," offered by the [Insurance Board](#) of the United Church of Christ and [available now via YouTube](#). The 1-hour, 18-minute video, co-presented by the Cleveland law firm [McDonald Hopkins](#), covers a wide range of topics – the most important of which are planning, preparedness, training and awareness, he said.

He described free help churches can get from Homeland Security: site visits to assess churches' vulnerabilities and what they can do about them; resources such as a "[Soft Targets and Crowded Places](#)" guide; even grants to help with security planning, equipment, training and exercises.

"We like to say we're all about prevention and preparedness, because we can't do anything for you the day it happens," said Shaw, who is based in Cleveland, and, like his colleagues around the country, available to consult with churches as one of Homeland Security's "protective security advisors." "The average active-shooter-type situation lasts 3 to 5 minutes. That's not a lot of time to develop an emergency action plan.

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So ... now is the time to at least start thinking about it and start preparing."



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