

## CF View: Church Security

At Christ Fellowship, we believe that church security is both necessary and biblical.

### **Biblical Support for Church Security**

Jesus never specifically addressed church security directly, but there are several biblical passages that support the idea of protecting God's people.

**1 Chronicles 9:17-27** lists Levite tribes who were assigned as gatekeepers. Among other things, they "were assigned to guard the gates of the LORD'S sanctuary (that is, the tabernacle)." (verse 23). Chapter 26 describes similar assignments for the future temple. The key takeaway is the protection of the house of worship.

**Nehemiah 4** describes a situation where the Jews who returned from exile were rebuilding the temple. When faced with possible attack from hostile neighbors, this was their response: "So we prayed to our God and stationed a guard to protect against them..." (verse 9). Those people were stationed with "swords, spears, and bows," (verse 13). The key takeaway is that God's people both prayed and prepared for potential attack.

**Proverbs 21:31**: "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD." The key takeaway here is to recognize that even though we do the preparation, we still trust God for the outcome.

**Mark 3:7-10** tells a story of Jesus preaching to a crowd by the lake. "Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him." (verse 9). The key takeaway is that even though Jesus was God incarnate, he still had contingency plans in case something went wrong.

**Luke 22:36**: "He [*Jesus*] said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.'" The key takeaway is that even though Jesus taught his disciples to turn the other cheek in one situation, he counseled them to defend themselves in another.

### **Conclusion:**

Having armed security at a church can be a contentious issue. There are many who believe that doing so reflects a lack of trust for God's protection, a leaning too heavily toward conforming to the world, or even an outright contradiction to Jesus' teachings about passive responses. At Christ Fellowship, we respect people's opinions on this matter, but we believe that there is enough biblical support to warrant an active response toward protecting the congregation.

## **Christ Fellowship's Response**

Based on the available information, the biblical support, and the prayerful deliberation of the elders and pastors, Christ Fellowship decided that it was prudent and necessary to create the Safety Ministry. The Safety Ministry consists of two teams: the Medical Response Team, and the Security Team.

### **Safety Ministry**

Security at a church is very different than security at most secular locations. Many of the people we might be tempted to turn away are the very people we want to welcome in! Therefore, while we want to take reasonable measures to protect our church family, this cannot supersede, or even materially impact our ability to minister to the broken and hurting who come through our doors seeking solace and/or spiritual counsel.

First and foremost, the Safety Ministry is just that: a ministry. Like greeters, most Security Team members are highly visible: greeting people, opening doors, answering questions, helping first-time guests navigate the building, etc. We strive to present a friendly and welcoming demeanor, as "gentle as a dove."

### **Medical Response Team**

The Medical Response Team is a group of trained medical professionals, who are ready to respond to any medical emergency. Christ Fellowship maintains a fully-stock medical trauma bag and has automated external defibrillators (AEDs) distributed through the church. In the event of a medical emergency, we will immediately call 911; the Medical Response Team will stabilize and treat the patient(s) until EMTs arrive.

### **Security Team**

While being as gentle as doves, Security Team members must also remain as shrewd as snakes. Which means that Security Team members are always looking for things that don't look right. This can be as innocuous as a failure to engage when greeted, or as obvious as a trench coat in the summer.

When noticing someone who doesn't look right, Security Team members are trained to practice "aggressive friendliness." This may look like walking up to the person with a smiling face and an outstretched hand, saying, "Hi, my name is Jon. I've not seen you here before, can I help you find something?" If the Security Team member still thinks that the person is suspicious, they will radio the rest of the team, who will maintain discreet observation as the person moves through the church. If the person then takes some suspicious action, the team will directly intervene.

### **Security Team Requirements**

There are two levels within the Security Team: unarmed and armed.

- Unarmed team members are strongly encouraged to be licensed through Texas DPS as *Non-Commissioned Security Officers*, which requires six hours of training and passing a test.
- Armed team members are required to be licensed through Texas DPS as *Personal Protection Officers*, which requires an additional sixty hours of training, two tests, and a firearms qualification.

Texas DPS licensing has annual requirements for continuing education and recertification, with the armed level also requiring firearms requalification.

Beyond the state minimum requirements, Christ Fellowship has chosen to offer continuing education at least once per month, with firearms training and qualification three times per year. This ministry is different than most, with the potential to confront very serious, even life-threatening situations. Therefore, we feel that we must ensure that our Safety Team members are ready, willing, and able to take on the very serious responsibility of protecting our congregation.

### **Additional Security Measures**

In addition to fielding a team of volunteers, Christ Fellowship has invested in other personnel and physical security measures:

#### **Cameras**

Christ Fellowship has almost 100 surveillance cameras mounted throughout the church. These cameras can be monitored in real-time from our security station, and recordings are kept in case we need to review them later.

#### **Uniformed Officers**

Christ Fellowship purposely made the decision to have security team members in plain clothes, with their firearms concealed. There are several reasons for this:

- Some of the people to whom we are trying to minister can feel uncomfortable or intimidated by a uniformed officer; especially if that officer tries to approach and engage with them.
- For some people, having too many uniformed officers can be off-putting. It is too incongruous to their internal expectation of what “church” should look like.
- Too many uniformed officers can actually make people feel less safe. They wonder why there’s the need for so much security.

However, uniformed officers can serve as a visual deterrent for someone with ill intent. Therefore, Christ Fellowship has a uniformed police officer on Sunday mornings and some special services/events, and a uniformed security officer on Wednesday nights.

#### **Locked Doors**

For safety and security reasons there are doors that remain locked during church office and service hours. Specifically, the church offices and our children’s area. Our children’s area has two levels of locked interior doors. These doors remain open during active times of drop-off and pick-up but are otherwise locked.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When are there security people at the church?**

The Security Team currently supports Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, and large church events, e.g., VBS, 21 Days, Women's Conferences. Our goal is to expand security to smaller events, as volunteers and resources allow.

### **Does Promiseland have bulletproof windows?**

Not at the present time. As financial resources allow, this is a future consideration.

As with other CF View papers, please contact any Christ Fellowship elder or pastor with your questions.