

Church Security



Key Points to Consider

- Lock your church at night
- Store small valuable items away when not being used
- Photograph all property
- Empty the offertory box daily
- Fit an intruder alarm /CCTV
- Engage with neighbouring residents to be your ears and eyes

The design and function of a church or place of worship makes general security more complicated but there is a great deal can be done at modest expense.

Today, criminals have become specialists, often with a good knowledge of church furnishings and their value, including art or church antiques. The rise in value and the increase in demand for these items have made church property a desirable target.

This information applies to churches of all faiths.



The following measures can be taken to reduce the risk of theft.

Interior Top 10 tips

1	Lock your church at night. Also lock your gates if possible
2	Store small valuable items in a locked vestry, cupboard or safe when not in use during the week.
3	Altar ware and valuables – wooden or base metal substitutes should be displayed and the originals locked away. They can be returned for services and events. Valuables which are not in regular use should be deposited in the bank or kept off-site.
4	Consideration should be given to discreetly chaining antique furniture and other valuables to floors or walls. This may not deter the determined thief but may be sufficient to prevent the opportunist criminal.
5	Wall hangings and paintings should be secured to the walls, ideally using non return security screws. This removes the ability for offenders to just lift off or unscrew items to steal.
6	Keys should be kept by a responsible person in a secure place away from the church.
7	The vestry should be secured by at least two good quality locks, fitted 1/3 rd up and 1/3 rd down on the door, this will increase the resistance of the door to leverage. All locks should conform to BS 3621, or higher, specification. Windows should have robust bars fitted.
8	All property should be photographed and an up to date inventory kept. This must be stored in a safe place away from the church. All photographs must have a ruler or 50p coin in the picture to indicate size.
9	The offertory box should be properly secured and emptied daily. A notice should be displayed on the box indicating this.
10	Vulnerable stained glass windows can be protected externally by black powder coated stainless steel window guards.

The Exterior

Hedges can be very effective barriers and difficult to penetrate. Choose something like hawthorn, privet, holly, yew, laurel etc.

Roof and rainwater downpipes pipes

Lead roof coverings are often the main targets for thieves.

There are many products you can consider to protect your roof covering including the following:

- Security marking with an approved DNA liquid
- Specialist roof alarm systems
- Replacement of lead with alternative materials
- Lead Security Fixings

If your church's roof lead is marked with a forensic security product i.e. Smartwater or Selecta DNA, please mark large areas of lead and display the appropriate signage clearly and prominently. Keep signs in highly visible, well lit areas.

Historic England are now more flexible when it comes to replacing roof coverings and will often approve a faux product that looks and ages the same but has nil scrap value. Stating this could prevent an attempt.

Lighting

The use of effective security lighting is very important, particularly for isolated buildings or vulnerable areas. Your Designing Out Crime Officer can advise on the type of lighting . The installation of dusk to dawn sensors is recommended.

External doors

All doors should be substantially made with strong hinges and effective frames.

Locks should, in all cases, be 5 lever mortice deadlocks that meet BS3621.

Cellars

Cellar entrance doors should be properly secured in a similar fashion to the main entrance door with approved five lever locks or a close coupled padlock on a hasp and staple.

Gates

Gates should be fit for purpose, easy to open and close and one hinge should be fitted upside down to prevent gates being lifted off. Engraving the Church's name on the gates can also act as a deterrent.

Intruder Alarms and CCTV

The presence of an alarm system or CCTV is very often sufficient to deter the would-be criminal even before beginning to plan the crime.

An alarm substantially reduces the time available to the criminal to commit the crime.

Alarm systems or CCTV can be designed to the requirements of individual buildings and surrounding grounds. When sourcing an alarm then use a company that is NSI or SSAIB accredited.

[National Security Inspectorate \(NSI\)](#) 

[Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board \(SSAIB\)](#) 

Suspicious Activity

Any suspicious activity in or around the church should be reported to the police. For non emergency reports use call 101 if however a crime is in progress please report using 999. For all reports relating to potential lead theft please quote Operation Einstein.

Security Checks

Regular or daily internal and external security checks should be implemented by the church warden or a nominated member of the parish. All criminal damage or attempted theft should be reported.

Self-Assessment

Complete the following self-assessment questions to check your churches security.



Church Self-Assessment

Church Self-Assessment				
Name of Property	Date Assessment Carried out	Names of assessors		
Question	Advice	Y	N	Action
General Security				
Has any one person been designated to be responsible for security?	Consider making this a role for one of the team.			
Are fences, hedges and gates in a good state of repair?	Look at the perimeter to see if security improvements can be made. Where possible restrict vehicle access to the property.			
Are all external doors fitted with good quality robust locks?	Where practical and possible 5 lever mortice locks should be fitted to British Standard BS3621 or BS 8621. Fitting locks to UPVC, wooden or metal doors are a specialist field and it is recommended that specialist advice is sought from a locksmith. www.locksmiths.co.uk/			
Are opening windows fitted with locks?	Window design varies considerably and specialist advice may be required. Secured by Design standards provide good guidance. www.securedbydesign.com.			

<p>Does your property require being lit at night? If so is it adequate?</p>	<p>The type of lighting depends on the location. Dusk to Dawn Lighting is usually recommended.</p> <p>The Designing Out Crime Officer will be able to offer more advice if required.</p>			
<p>Is CCTV used for vulnerable areas?</p>	<p>Consider installing CCTV to provide additional formal surveillance to any vulnerable areas of the property.</p> <p>Consideration must to be given to ensure that lighting does not adversely affect the CCTV system.</p>			
<p>Are all key holders recorded?</p>	<p>Do not leave any keys on the premises. Signage and details of persons to contact in an emergency should be displayed</p>			
<p>Do you have an up to date inventory and photographs of all contents?</p>	<p>It is essential to record details of all items. Photographs are ideal following a theft. Keep them safe, away from the property and up to date.</p>			
<p>If you have an Offertory box, is it emptied daily?</p>	<p>A notice should be displayed to indicate this.</p>			
<p>If you have stained glass windows, are these protected?</p>	<p>Vulnerable stained glass windows can be protected externally by black powder coated stainless steel window guards.</p>			

What access availability do you want to adopt

Are any parts of your building left open when unattended and at night?	Discuss the need for this with your staff, users, or parishioners. Would it be practical to have a key safe? Could you have a mobile phone contact to allow access outside opening times?			
Are there adequate signs?	Signs will set rules, inform people of opening times or how to request entry outside opening times.			
Have you considered a Watch Scheme?	The Local community can be your eyes and ears. Encourage them to report anything suspicious to the police.			

Valuable Items

Do you lock small valuable items in a secure place when not in use during the week?	Is your secure place really secure? Do you need to make improvements? Your Designing Out Crime Officer can advise.			
Are your small valuable items property marked?	Overt marking is preferred as it is visible, however covert marking with a DNA solution can be used for valuables.			
Are valuable personal items identified and registered on the National database "Immobilise"?	Register valuable items at www.immobilise.com a national property database the police can search facility. This is a free service. Once registered the owner of a device can be verified.			

Artifacts				
Do you display original Artefacts?	We recommend that you display wooden or base metal substitutes wherever possible. Originals can always be reinstated when required.			
Antique Furniture				
Do you have antique furniture?	Consider discretely securing valuable furniture to the wall or floor. This may not deter the determined thief but it may slow them down and it will deter the opportunist			
Outbuildings				
Do you have outbuildings?	Each building needs to be assessed individually and the level of security will depend very much on the contents.			
Metal Theft				
Does your property have lead or other metal roofing materials?	This is perhaps the most vulnerable area and desirable to thieves due to its high value.			
Is access to the roof easy and or secluded?	Look carefully at potential access points and take measure to make access more difficult.			
Has all metal been marked with DNA liquid?	Consider marking all metal with DNA liquid. Mark large areas of lead roofing			
Are roof alarms installed?	There are many types of roof alarms available and advice can be obtained from NSI or SSAIB accredited installers.			



Sir Robert Peel created the Metropolitan Police in 1829. He set out nine principles for policing. The First Principle was:

“To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.”



[Click here for further Crime Reduction Advice](#)

More general information can be found at
<https://www.askthe.police.uk/content/@1.htm>

Secured by Design (SBD) tests and assesses the quality security products and crime prevention projects. It supports the principles of ‘designing out crime’ through physical security and processes.

We advise that you look on the SBD website for all of your Security products.

<http://www.securedbydesign.com/>



More Security Products can also be found at:
<http://www.soldsecure.com/>



You can always report intelligence or information anonymously to Crimestoppers

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>



Call us on 101. In an emergency always dial 999