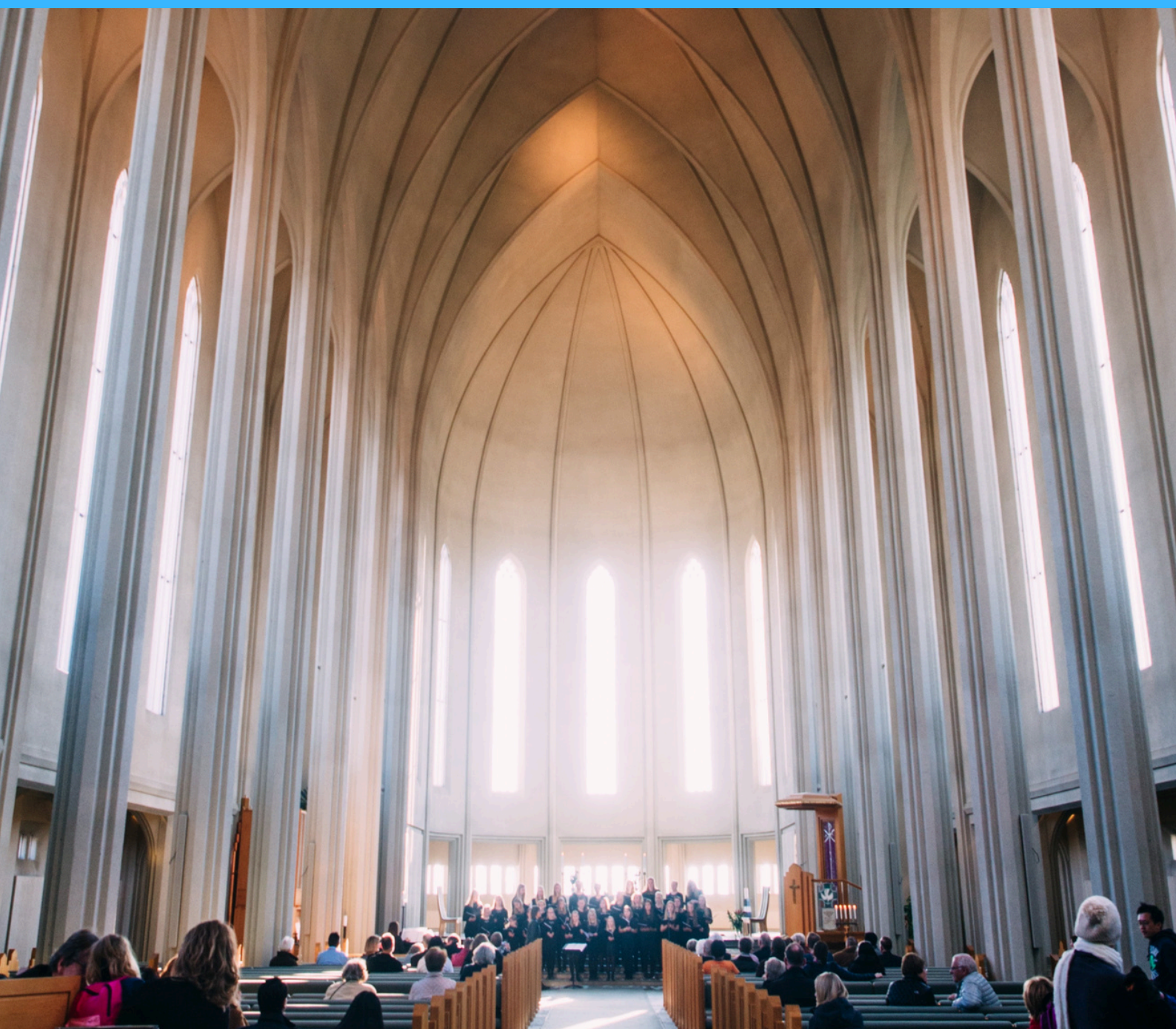


# QUICK GUIDE ON KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE DURING CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Supporting Guidance Produced by Enhancing Faith Institutions (EFI)





# Situational Awareness

Christmas is a time of wonder, family, community, and faith. However, Christmas special events and services lead to extra visitors and decorations that your church needs to plan for. In order to keep everyone safe you need to consider some precautions that might be necessary. The measures you take to ensure the safety of your church and visitors will be proportionate to the size of your event and/or service.

Christmas is a time when most churches will make arrangements for events or gatherings at their places of worship, or at least respond to the traditional fundraising appeals for charities or good causes.

Any religious holiday can not only create extra concerns for places of worship but can also draw the attention of those that wish to highlight their grievances or take advantage of a large number of people attending events that are usually publicized well in advance.

Being aware of the issues and doing a little detailed planning before the event starts, monitoring some of the precautions that have been put in place during the event, and working with your local Police should reduce and mitigate the risks as far as possible.

It is important not to detract from the goodwill and joy that accompanies these events but making your congregation and guests aware of the protocols you have in place will create reassurance, ensuring that your celebrations are a success.

This information is not meant to be exhaustive - it is only aimed at providing some insight into the types of issues to consider, along with a general approach that could be adopted. You may need to look at more detailed guidance provided by your local faith associations or governing bodies, depending on the nature of the event you intend to hold and the number of staff and volunteers you have available.





# Before the Event

- 1** Identify helpful resources that will help you plan and carry out a safe and secure Christmas event. (e.g., [Quick Guide on Keeping Communities Safe During Festive Events](#), [Incident Management Guide for Churches](#), [10 Security Tips for Churches in Preparation for Religious Events](#), [10 Security Tips for Churches - Preparing for Easter](#))
- 2** Complete risk assessments to identify the precautions you need to take.
- 3** Ensure that your church has an Insurance Policy in place which covers break-ins, thefts, and vandalism.
- 4** Ensure that you have medically trained people in place to quickly respond.
- 5** Decide how you will be handling crowds and bystanders.
- 6** Have in place first aid equipment readily accessible.
- 7** Establish a responsible person or people who will call and direct first responders to the scene.
- 8** Test precautions, providing information and training for any employees and volunteers on what they need to do.
- 9** Test all safety systems, such as fire alarms, and emergency lights.
- 10** If possible, instal video surveillance.





- 11** Document your arrangements and responsibilities for hosting events, perhaps as part of your health and safety policy.
- 12** Keep records of what you have done.
- 13** Consider informing your local police that your event is taking place.
- 14** Ensure that publicity material and tickets remind the attendees of any restrictions or requests relating to their participation.
- 15** Organize safe attendance at the event for vulnerable people or less able by encouraging travel in groups or with volunteers.







# ***Weather***

**Christmas time is ideal in snowy weather. However, weather conditions can also cause accidents.**

- ▶ Check the weather forecast beforehand
- ▶ Have in place a plan to deal with possible issues that might arise.
- ▶ Identify slippery walking surfaces.
- ▶ Clear entry points to the church.



# Decorations

- Ensure that the Christmas lights you are about to install have been subject to appliance safety.
- Follow safety measures before plugging your Christmas lights into the outlets.
- Ensure the safety of the individual/s installing Christmas lights. Look into preventing falls from heights.
- Check that the cables from your Christmas lights do not create a trip hazard.
- Examine the lights regularly during the festive period.
- Avoid leaving the lights on while the church is unattended.
- Place the Christmas tree away from the candles.
- Ensure that the Christmas tree does not block any exits.
- Keep candles away from flammable materials. Never place candles on the Christmas tree.







# During the Event

- 1** Consider placing volunteers in the immediate vicinity to reassure lone attendees and guide your guests to church safely.
- 2** Consider extra lighting around your church.
- 3** Ask staff and volunteers to politely challenge anyone who seems lost or 'out of place'.
- 4** Report suspicious behaviour.
- 5** Consider posting staff or volunteers on entry and exit doors to secure the church in an emergency and help with evacuation if needed. Consider car parking and the outer perimeter.
- 6** Check and communicate fire procedures and evacuation plans.
- 7** Make sure that charity money is handled by nominated people and secured safely.
- 8** For large gatherings, ensure that there is a focal point for information.
- 9** Inform your local police about the event that is taking place at your church.
- 10** Limit access and lock offices and other rooms when unattended.
- 11** Any unlocked door should be monitored.





# After the Event

- 1** Have a closure and exit plan - Ask staff and volunteers to see the guests safely out of the event/service and try to restrict the gathering of crowds in car parks, exposed sites or the roadways to prevent accidents with vehicles.
- 2** Hold a de-brief with your staff and volunteers to identify what went well and what did not.
- 3** Check the security and safety of the church - especially in the areas where candles and naked flames are used.
- 4** Search the venue for anyone still left in the building and for lost property and bags that are unaccounted for.
- 5** Try to cooperate with your local Police as much as possible, especially if your church receives strange communications, threats or warnings in relation to the organization or for a specific event.
- 6** ALWAYS report crime - even if it is vandalism or if it seems relatively minor. It allows the Police to build a threat and risk profile of the area and an accurate record will assist in your risk assessments for the future.







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