The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
Travelling Fellowship 2010

Church Crime:
Good Practice Techniques from the
United States of America

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It is no use saying, 'We are doing our best.' You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary.

Winston Churchill
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Statistics
Date of Arrival in USA : 7th April 2010
Date of Departure from USA : 20th May 2010
Number of Churches visited : 62
Largest Congregation : 20,000
Smallest Congregation : 45
Miles travelled : 7,890
Flights : 9
Number of States visited : 6
Number of times got in car on wrong side : 2

Introduction

There are a lot of differences in the way that churches operate in the USA when compared with the way that churches work in the UK. However, the one thing that is similar is crime and the effect that it has on congregations when a crime occurs. A major difference is the risk of gun crime in American churches yet most of the churches I visited did not really consider the risk. The exceptions were the so called ‘Mega’ churches. The ‘Mega’ churches I visited had attendance on Sunday from 1,000 to 20,000. They tended to fear the ‘active gunman’\(^1\) and had put various schemes in place to combat this threat.

\(^1\) Active gunman is a disgruntled single gunman who enters a church and shoots as many people as he can find
Church Attendance

There is an interesting difference in the USA when it comes to church attendance. In the last US census, 76% of the population listed their faith as Christian. 68% stated that they attended church on a regular basis (at least once a month). In the latest UK figures, 72% of the UK population listed their faith as Christian, but only 4% attend church on a regular basis. This is an important mindset to understand. If you a Christian in the USA then you go to church as part of your Christianity, if you are a Christian in the UK, then you tend not to go to church.

This finding has an effect on the attitude of the people who are responsible for opening or closing churches during the day.

Good Practice Tip from the USA #1

Open your churches

Almost all the churches I visited in the USA had their doors open during the day. Even the very rural churches were open, as were churches in tourist areas, urban areas and even city areas. When I asked whether they were worried about crime, almost everyone said that they realised it was an issue but the role of the church was to be there for their community so they were open for their community.

This was a cultural attitude.

In the UK the majority of churches are locked. (Approx 60 – 70%) Those who are responsible for the security of churches give the fear of crime as the only reason why they lock their churches. If a church is open and a crime occurs, the response is often to close the doors of the church.

This is a cultural attitude.

If you open your church and be accessible to your community then the risk of crime falls. We know this through research in the UK. The USA attitude is that crime is all part of belonging to a community. Most crime is community crime; most community crime is minor crime. Of course
some American churches suffer from crime but their attitude is to stay open to be available their communities. I do believe that a small part of the reason why church attendance is dropping in the UK is due to the fact that a majority of the churches are closed to their communities the majority of the time. A closed church seems to indicate that Christianity is closed. We need to change the culture of the churches that are locked.

**Good Practice Tip from the USA #2**

Trust & Motivation

There are a very large number of specific church security firms in the USA. I managed to meet with about 20 firms who were involved, one way or another, in church security. The USA has approx 65,000 church buildings interestingly the UK has approx 45,000 church buildings, yet in my 25 years of working with church security I have not come across any security firm that specialises in church security. In order that these firms in the USA survive there must be customers to spend money. A key reason for churches to spend money on security is that they are motivated by their need to keep their community safe. Crimes in churches are not excessive yet these churches, especially the non denominational churches, spend their money on security. It did not seem to me that they spent any more than a church in the UK could afford, indeed many people responsible for church security complained that the elders did not give them enough to do the security that they needed. Churches in the UK are most reluctant to spend money on security as there are always other things that the money can be spent on. They need to be motivated to recognise that security is a vital part of their church and having good security makes people feel safe.

The other vital ingredient to church security in the US is that they trust the people who advise them about security. One of the major issues I have as I run seminars is that the people who attend them do not always trust what I am saying. They base this lack of trust on ‘feelings’ often generated by urban myths and media reports rather than on the research that I base my advice on.
It is clear from my experiences in the US that motivating churches to open and getting them to trust the information and training that I am giving them will develop into a natural willingness to invest in simple, quality security that will benefit the whole community.

Good Practice Tip from the USA #3
Protect your Clergy

I have spent a lot of my time in the USA with clergy and law enforcement officials of one sort or another. Although most clergy have, on rare occasions, suffered from violence of one sort or another, it was not something that they really worried about. The exception were the independent churches who had a high visibility pastor who could be targeted by the ‘active shooter’, but even these pastors did not worry desperately about it. Almost every police officer I worked with and spoke to could not imagine that clergy could be assaulted except in the rarest of occasions and none had any personal experience of it.

For some churches in the US the Pastors are employed on 5 year contracts. Halfway through my visit I came across the term ‘Clergy Killers’. It was a very emotive term but did not mean people who literally kill clergy but rather the people in a congregation who decide to get rid of their pastor before the term of their contract. These are often people who are office holders in the church, they are often older people, and they have often belonged to a church for a long period of time. Every church has potential ‘Clergy Killers’ in their congregation. Normally, however, they restrict their activities to just ‘moaning’ in private about the pastor. There are a significant number of ‘Clergy Killers’ who take the next step and take active actions to get their pastors dismissed, even if the majority of the congregation like the pastor. In the US the stress and pressure that this causes to the Pastor, their families and the congregation eventually means that the Pastor cannot cope anymore and resigns. A Pastor who resigns has no income, no benefits, no home and often, no hope of getting another job quickly. 2,000 pastors a year leave their churches early due to ‘Clergy Killers’. It is a shocking statistic and, apart from the obvious personal cost to the pastor, the cost to Insurance companies who have to cover sickness benefits etc is absolutely huge.
The UK has ‘Clergy Killers’. Every parish I have known have them, and I believe the every church has the potential for them. Most of the time they remain merely an outspoken part of the congregation that clergy have had to deal as part of normal parish life. However, I believe that ‘Clergy Killers’ in churches in the UK who decide to take active steps to get rid of their clergy are a different breed that that in the US. Clergy on a contract in the US just resign and move on, they know they were moving anyway, so for most the effect of this is short term. In the UK I believe that due to the nature of clergy appointments the ‘clergy killers’ increase the pressure and stress on clergy very early on in order to get the clergy to leave. This can go beyond whispering campaigns and dividing congregations, sometimes ending up with anonymous abusive letters and even physical attacks on the clergy car or home. Many clergy I have known have got to a stage where they say ‘I can’t cope’, often they are moved by the Bishop, and the ‘Clergy Killers’ win. Most senior clergy and the ‘Clergy Killers’ themselves do not realise that they are committing a criminal offence.

I learnt that early intervention is vital and often, once spoken to, the ‘Clergy Killers’ will be apologetic and will return to a less active role. Those that choose not to stop, or who deny the charge repeatedly despite the evidence often escalate things to a degree where the police can get involved. Harassment is a very common, often unrecognised part of church life and, just have we have done with child abuse, we must take action to stop it. If we do not then clergy, their families and their congregations will continue to be shattered by this. We can do this!

**Good Practice Tip from the USA #4**

Communication is the key to reducing crime.

A fairly recent development in the USA is the introduction of a national communication and training network. This is run by an organisation called The Institute for Church Safety & Risk Management (ICSARM). They are creating ‘Roundtables’ all over the country which are gatherings of churches in geographical areas who meet and exchange views in relation to church security. As the majority of churches in the US are independent this is an excellent opportunity for them to find solutions to common crime problems. Also, ICSARM sends out a weekly newsletter with security advice and details of church crimes that have recently happened. The churches who received these e mail
newsletters were really interesting in seeing the crime details as it allowed them to reassess their own security in the light of crimes that have happened elsewhere.

As a result of this I shall be introducing an email newsletter with similar ideas as by reminding people of crimes that are occurring and giving advice is a great way of keeping National Churchwatch in the church community’s mind so that if they have any issues they can contact us for the free advice and seminars that we lead. The response to church crime needs to be multiagency including both the Insurance industry (Ecclesiastical Insurance) and statutory authorities. National Churchwatch needs to be the one stop shop for communicating with churches to alert them to crime trends and solutions.

**Final Good Practice Tip from the USA**

Never run with scissors in your pocket

**Executive Summary**

The trip to the USA was excellent. Every day I learnt something new or met very interesting people. Within the six weeks I was away were a few ‘golden’ days and contacts who gave me information that will change the way I work. The information will also change the way that National Churchwatch will operate in the UK, which in turn will, hopefully reduce crime in churches and prevent clergy and others from suffering from violence.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust says on it’s website that you should apply for a grant for the following reasons;

- The Fellowship experience will give you new or enhanced knowledge and greater credibility.
- You will gain a new vision of life and/or work through the experiences you engage in.
- You will return with a greater belief in your own abilities to achieve, and greater confidence.

I can say, with this experience, that the trip has met all of those expectations and more.
1. Introduction

My trip to the United States was intended to be a research trip to learn any good practice techniques that may be applied in the UK in relation to church crime. It became much more than that. The trip has fundamentally changed my attitude to how I do my job, it has been very much a personal odyssey with good times and more difficult times, but the main result of my trip has been to be determined to succeed in doing, as Churchill said above, what is necessary rather than just trying my best. I hope that this trip will ultimately change the way churches in the UK operate and this will lead to a revival in interest in them.

Church Crime has been around every since the Christians began building churches. People often say to me that crime in churches did not use to happen when they were young. Trying to be polite I often say, "Nonsense, churches have always been the target of crime, the difference is the motivation for committing the offences, and the fact that we have real time reporting of offences so we are much more aware that the offences are occurring."

The problem is that everyone has an opinion of church crime and they think they know the best way to tackle church crime, they are basing their opinions on urban myths and guesses and not on evidence. I can guess the best way to deal with a mugging, but it is better to have studies and evidence of what actually works. Often it is the exact opposite of what people think is the best way to deal with crime that actually works. A good example of this is whether churches should be locked during the day or not. We know, through some excellent studies that approx 60 - 70% of the UK’s 16,000 churches are only open when they have a service. When we asked, “Why do you close your doors?” Almost all answered “Because we are afraid if we open we will suffer from crime and a locked church is safer than an open church.”

After looking in detail at this claim, we found that, in fact, if you open your church during the day, you will actually have about half the risk of crime than if you lock your church. There is solid evidence why this is so, yet people still do not believe that evidence.
We know, through a very detailed independent academic study, that 12% of clergy experienced some form of violence in the previous 12 months, yet constantly I am told by experienced clergy that that cannot be the case as they have been clergy for many years and they have not had any problems. It is a classic case of I have not experienced it, therefore it does not happen. This is despite six members of the clergy being stabbed to death in recent years.

The church in the UK is dying. I feel sure that a small part of this is the fact that most churches are not accessible for their communities, nor to the thousands of visitors that would visit if the churches were open. Churches are closed, ergo people think the Christian Church is closed. This attitude must change to enable us to, in a small way, to begin to successfully resuscitate the Church.

However, I realised that a fundamental part of convincing churches that the advice that I give is effective is the need to get them to trust my organisation. I needed further evidence and new ideas to use to convince the relevant people that churches need to be open and churchworkers need to be safe.

Whilst researching various ideas I stumbled across the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust site. It was clear to me that this was an opportunity to go to a modernised Christian state that has a huge variety of churches and law enforcement agencies, and to learn what I could about best practice with a view to developing a UK national training programme that encourages churches to open and to keep people safe. My target is to change the face of the UK from a majority of churches being closed to their communities to a majority being open.

I am eternally grateful to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for giving me the opportunity to go to the USA and learn about how they deal with Church Crime.

I hope that this will change the face of churches in the UK.
2. Personal Background

When I joined the Royal Air Force Police in 1982 at the age of 17 years old I could hardly have imagined that I would end up at the age of 44 years old being the National Churchwatch Co-ordinator, travelling to the United States of America to see how they deal with crime in Places of Worship. Having been in the RAF Police for a few years I decided that I wanted to join the civilian police force and became a Police Constable with the Hampshire Constabulary working in various departments including Basingstoke Street Crime Squad and in Andover as a police motorcyclist.

I am a great believer that God has a sense of humour and will put opportunities your way if He wants you to do something for Him, so in 1991 I was offered the job as a Virger in Wells Cathedral in Somerset which involved keeping good order in church. The fact that they offered me a large rent free house in Vicars Close, which is the oldest inhabited street (c1347) in Europe, definitely helped me make the decision. It was a wonderful place for my wife and I to raise our six children.

I expected that working in a Cathedral would be an easy life but actually the cathedral initially had a fairly high rate of crime. In the first year I arrested 54 people, which was far more that I had arrested in my last year as a police officer! It opened my eyes to the type and amount of crime that occurred in Places of Worship. I dealt with drug users, thieves, violent offenders, mentally ill people and tourists.

The job also put me in very close contact with members of the clergy and I began to understand how clergy worked, not just the isolated cathedral clergy, but your typical clergy from parishes who visited the cathedral every day. Once they found out my background they often sat and discussed security and personal safety issues with me. I found myself giving security and personal safety advice. The more they spoke to me the more I realised that there was a hidden problem that needed a solution of some sort. Using the connections I had gained in the local
Diocese, I made some enquiries and found that there was no sort of organised training or advice, other than the usual general advice the police give, that churches and clergy needed in order to open their churches to the community or to keep themselves safe.

Churches are special. They want to welcome everyone into their buildings especially if they are thieves, paedophiles, gang members and the like. They want them to come in and learn about the love of God and change their ways. The trouble was we need them to behave appropriately when they are in the buildings! That was the problem that the statutory and non statutory authorities didn’t seem to understand, and did not seem to have a solution.

Eventually, to cut a long story short, after starting training and links between churches I made a proposal to Ecclesiastical Insurance that they should sponsor me to teach security and personal safety to churches and churchworkers all over the UK. They accepted.

National Churchwatch came into being in April 2000, and I became the full time National Churchwatch Co-ordinator. Since then I have run over 500 seminars involving 25,000 people in every part of the United Kingdom. I have also travelled in Europe, to Australia and now to the USA in relation to Churchwatch. I have worked with Parliament, the House of Lords and all the major Christian denominations and Faiths. In 2009 I was proud to have been awarded the runner up UK’s Personal Safety Champion by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

All services by National Churchwatch are provided free of charge in the UK.

Contact details

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Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance
3. The Problem

**Closed Churches** – About 60 - 70% of churches in the UK only open their doors when they are holding a service. Out of the 44.5 million people on the last census who called themselves ‘Christian’ only 1.5 million attend a church more than 3 times a year.

**Is it possible that the two are connected?**

If a church is locked to their community most of the time, then what connection does the local community have to that church? The answer is ‘not a lot’. When National Churchwatch asks churches why they are closed the answer is always the same, “we are afraid that if we open we will suffer from crime.” When we press further, the person replying usually says “Well, we tried it once and someone came in and damaged (or stole) some of our property” When you ask for details they are usually vague on the details or it is often a very small incident. The result is that the church is closed as the mistaken belief is that it is ‘safer’ to be closed.

The UK has a wonderful Christian heritage which is exceptional in the world. This is being recognised by tourism groups and many churches are being encouraged to open as part of a heritage trail or similar. Huge numbers of tourists visit towns and walk through villages all over the country, yet when they reach the church often it is closed. Why do tourists want to visit churches, it is because the vast majority think themselves as Christian and enjoy looking at churches, even if they do not attend church. A closed church just reinforces the point that there is no point in bothering to attend church.

It does not matter which denomination a church belongs to. Often, the ‘free’ churches do not bother to open as they feel that their church is too plain and people will not be interested in visiting. The point is being missed here. Churches are places of peace and quiet where people can be away from their busy lives for a few minutes. It does not really matter what denomination they are, if a church looks welcoming and invites people in during the day to spend a few quiet moments, then people begin to appreciate the importance of the church to their community. It is true that churches are ‘one of the only organisations that are there to benefit those who do not belong to it’. When a church is locked, nobody benefits.
Personal Safety – Personal Safety is a vital part of how churches operate in the UK, yet it is often a most neglected or ignored part. When asking churches and clergy about the security of their churches they will often mention personal safety as a concern. When pressed, they have done little or nothing to actually deal with the issue. In a way, this is more disappointing than those who decide to lock the church and they then feel it is a problem they do not have to worry about.

When a violent assault happens in a church the effect can be devastating, not only on the victim, but on their family, the congregation, their friends and the community in general. The fear of crime shoots through the ceiling and people feel unsafe. When the victim is a member of the clergy, this fear of crime is exasperated exponentially.

We have had six members of the clergy murdered in recent times. A significant number are put into hospital through violent assaults. There are also a large number of hidden victims. These are the clergy who move on, go sick through stress, or leave the priesthood altogether through harassment, bullying and intimidation from within their congregations. If these incidents happened in a business, school or other organisation then there would be internal or police action to deal with the offenders. Yet often the church does little, perhaps offering some pastoral support, but not tackling the root cause.

Clergy in the UK do not receive any organised form of training in conflict management. They are expected to know how to deal with these issues right from the moment they are ordained. Many clergy who have been involved in violent incidents have been injured or worse, simply because they have no idea how to respond, and which techniques work and which do not. Put simply, they have to make it up as they go along, which is a very dangerous thing to do when you are at risk of significant bodily harm or worse.

Personal Safety of churchworkers and the security of churches are intertwined. You cannot have one without the other. Churches should be open for their communities but they should be safe places for people to work, visit and worship. When security and/or personal safety is
ignored the risk of a significant incident rises and the church is at risk of becoming a place which is seen to be ‘bad’ rather than seen to be a community asset.

4. Church Crime : Good Practice Techniques from the USA

i) Open your churches

Almost all the churches I visited in the USA had their doors open during the day. Even the very rural churches were open, as were churches in tourist areas, urban areas and even city areas. When I asked whether they were worried about crime, almost everyone said that they realised it was an issue but the role of the church was to be there for their community so they were open for their community.

This was a cultural attitude.

In the UK the majority of churches are locked. *(Approx 60 – 70%)* Those who are responsible for the security of churches give the fear of crime as the only reason why they lock their churches. If a church is open and a crime occurs, the response is often to close the doors of the church.

This is a cultural attitude.

If you open your church and be accessible to your community then the risk of crime falls. We know this through research in the UK. The USA attitude is that crime is all part of belonging to a community. Most crime is community crime; most community crime is minor crime. Of course some American churches suffer from crime but their attitude is to stay open to be available their communities. I do believe that a small part of the reason why church attendance is dropping in the UK is due to the fact that a majority of the churches are closed to their communities the majority of the time. A closed church seems to indicate that Christianity is closed. We need to change the culture of the churches that are locked.
The solution to this problem is complex. However, it is not insurmountable. It needs people to change their minds and take some risks. It was clear to me that churches in the USA start off from the basis that their church is there for their community. They suffer from the same sorts of issues that we do (plus the additional issue of the general availability of guns), yet they open. It seems that in the UK a significant proportion of people who are responsible for the security of churches are older people. These are less likely to accept risk and change so there is this deep in-built distrust of people who try and get churches to open. It seems that the solution is in convincing the senior members of the church, such as Archdeacons and Bishops, that opening is a good thing. If encouragement is coming from the top down then the attitudes of the ‘troops’ will start to change.

ii) Trust & Motivation

There are a very large number of specific church security firms in the USA. I managed to meet with about 20 firms who were involved, one way or another, in church security. The USA has approx 65,000 church buildings interestingly the UK has approx 45,000 church buildings, yet in my 25 years of working with church security I have not come across any security firm that specialises in church security. In order that these firms in the USA survive there must be customers to spend money. A key reason for churches to spend money on security is that they are motivated by their need to keep their community safe. Crimes in churches are not excessive yet these churches, especially the non denominational churches, spend their money on security. It did not seem to me that they spent any more than a church in the UK could afford, indeed many people responsible for church security complained that the elders did not give them enough to do the security that they needed. Churches in the UK are most reluctant to spend money on security as there are always other things that the money can be
spent on. They need to be motivated to recognise that security is a vital part of their church and having good security makes people feel safe.

The other vital ingredient to church security in the US is that they trust the people who advise them about security. One of the major issues I have as I run seminars is that the people who attend them do not always trust what I am saying. They base this lack of trust on ‘feelings’ often generated by urban myths and media reports rather than on the research that I base my advice on.

It is clear from my experiences in the US that motivating churches to open and getting them to trust the information and training that I am giving them will develop into a natural willingness to invest in simple, quality security that will benefit the whole community.

Seeing the Americans in action with regard to motivation is an interesting experience. I attended a conference where the speaker was talking about creating an ethos within non profit making organisations. His argument was that everyone in an organisation needs to agree to be engaged with the ethos otherwise they end up undermining their colleagues and the organisation itself. Sometimes this occurs unintentionally. He then went on to explain how his charity start every morning doing pom pom training and at the end of every day having a group hug and a self congratulate session. I don’t think the Church of England is quite ready for that! However, I did identify with the creating an ethos idea.

The ethos in more than half of the churches in the Church of England is to remain shut for their communities. In order to change that ethos National Churchwatch will have to motivate people. I thought long and hard about the best way to motivate people without scaring them off or criticising them for being closed. Usually the best plan is the simplest one. I am going to start with a change in my

Another open church, Lake Erie, Ohio
job title. At the moment I describe myself as a Church Security Trainer. Sometimes I get little response when I offer free seminars and I wonder if it is because the term church security trainer is not very inspiring. In my experience, churches want to be more active and involved in the community but they are fearful. They need motivation. I am going to become a Church Motivator. Only the people who are responsible for the security of churches can make the decision to open and they need motivating to do so. The need to be interesting and engaging, and (most importantly) to be non critical of their decision not to open, is vital. Seminars need to be exciting and dynamic, yet informative and instructional. The structure needs to be in a format that is easily understood, yet able to get across the information in a way that motivates people to open their churches. I think the best way to motivate people is to show successful examples of churches that are open. To give people the opportunity to hear from these churches (rather than from just me ranting on at the front of the stage!), perhaps in short 2 minute films in the presentation, could be a solution. I intend to revamp the National Churchwatch message and method of delivery.

iii) Protect your Clergy
I have spent a lot of my time in the USA with clergy and law enforcement officials of one sort or another. Although most clergy have, on rare occasions, suffered from violence of one sort or another, it was not something that they really worried about. The exception were the independent churches who had a high visibility pastor who could be targeted by the ‘active shooter’, but even these pastors did not worry desperately about it. Almost every police officer I worked with and spoke to could not imagine that clergy could be assaulted except in the rarest of occasions and none had any personal experience of it.

For some churches in the US the Pastors are employed on 5 year contracts. Halfway through my visit I came across the term ‘Clergy Killers’. It was a very emotive term but did not mean people who literally kill clergy but rather the people in a congregation who decide to get rid of their pastor before the term of their contract. These are often people who are office holders in the church, they are often older people, and they have often belonged to a church for a long period of time. Every church has potential ‘Clergy Killers’ in their congregation. Normally, however, they restrict their activities to just ‘moaning’ in private about the pastor. There are a significant
number of ‘Clergy Killers’ who take the next step and take active actions to get their pastors dismissed, even if the majority of the congregation like the pastor. In the US the stress and pressure that this causes to the Pastor, their families and the congregation eventually means that the Pastor cannot cope anymore and resigns. A Pastor who resigns has no income, no benefits, no home and often, no hope of getting another job quickly. 2,000 pastors a year leave their churches early due to ‘Clergy Killers’. It is a shocking statistic and, apart from the obvious personal cost to the pastor, the cost to Insurance companies who have to cover sickness benefits etc is absolutely huge.

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I learnt that early intervention is vital and often, once spoken to, the ‘Clergy Killers’ will be apologetic and will return to a less active role. Those that choose not to stop, or who deny the charge repeatedly despite the evidence often escalate things to a degree where the police can get involved. Harassment is a very common, often unrecognised part of church life and, just have we have done with child abuse, we must take action to stop it. If we do not then clergy, their families and their congregations will continue to be shattered by this.
In order to tackle this difficult problem I will be developing the ideas and action plans that the Stressed Clergy Association of the USA use. These are good practice techniques that offer support to both the clergy victims and the congregations who are suffering from this problem. I have already produced a guidance note about dealing with harassment and bullying which offers advice and practical assistance to those clergy who are being stalked or similar. I will be expanding this advice to include dealing with the so called ‘clergy killers’. It is an important, yet neglected, part of the life of any Diocese or church. In a way it sits neatly in with the personal safety training that National Churchwatch offers. In our current training we guide clergy on recognising when a difficult situation has become a dangerous situation and then give them advice on how to deal with it. This is vital as knowing what to do can save your life. (As opposed to just guessing and getting it wrong!)

The National Churchwatch training focuses on the immediate self rescue techniques that you employ when violence occurs. This will be expanded to include the experience of the US pastors who have suffered from ‘Clergy Killers’. Although the process of violence is much slower it can have the same massive effect on the life of a clergy victim resulting in them leaving the church or even leaving the priesthood. The personal effect on the clergy victim and their families can be devastating. Using the American model, the clergy can be supported and guided and intervention can occur much earlier than it does now. This saves lives, sometimes literally. In the US the number of heart attacks that clergy suffer has risen incredibly. This has been attributed to a rise in stress and pressure that clergy are put under. As with any illness, if you are supported and know how to deal with things, you feel much less under pressure and are much happier to work through problems.

There is another aspect to this that I have never really considered until I visited the USA. Clergy stress has a huge financial implication. All clergy in the USA have health insurance. If they go
sick with stress (a very common event in the US, about 60% of long term clergy illnesses are caused by stress) then their insurers pay out hundreds of thousands of dollars. Nationally, insurance companies pay out millions of dollars to treat stressed clergy. The insurance companies (and risk management groups) were very interested in preventing clergy stress. If a lot of stress is due to harassment and ‘clergy killers’ then it is in their interest to support any initiative that reduces their risk and any payouts.

Although the UK does not have a private health insurance based system, both the NHS and private health care insurance companies have an interest in reducing clergy stress. I will be looking at recent research to see if the problem of clergy stress is as bad here as in the US. My gut feeling is that it does cost insurance companies a great deal of money so I will look to work with risk management companies and health insurance groups to find ways to reduce their risks. This, in turn, will have many benefits for clergy in general as with support and guidance they will be able to follow their vocations free from the risk of the ‘clergy killers’.

iv) Communication is the key to reducing crime.

A fairly recent development in the USA is the introduction of a national communication and training network. This is run by an organisation called The Institute for Church Safety & Risk Management (ICSARM). They are creating ‘Roundtables’ all over the country which are gatherings of churches in geographical areas who meet and exchange views in relation to church security. As the majority of churches in the US are independent this is an excellent opportunity for them to find solutions to common crime problems. Also, ICSARM sends out a weekly newsletter with security advice and details of church crimes that have recently happened. The churches who received these e-mail newsletters were really interesting in seeing the crime details as it allowed them to reassess their own security in the light of crimes that have happened elsewhere.
As a result of this I shall be introducing an e-mail newsletter with similar ideas as by reminding people of crimes that are occurring and giving advice is a great way of keeping National Churchwatch in the church community’s mind so that if they have any issues they can contact us for the free advice and seminars that we lead. The response to church crime needs to be multiagency including both the Insurance industry (Ecclesiastical Insurance) and statutory authorities. National Churchwatch needs to be the one stop shop for communicating with churches to alert them to crime trends and solutions.

One of the conferences I attended had a talk from a lawyer who was a specialist in non profit charities and the methods of communication for fundraising and other things. When she took to the stage I almost dismissed her as she was very young and obviously newly qualified. However, when she started speaking the ideas and comments that she came out with were absolute gold dust! In order to survive charities have to recognize that they need to be aware of, and work with, the technologies that people who are in their twenties and thirties are using. The idea that a person commits to one charity for a long time is changing. People are willing to support charities but they do not necessarily want to commit to long term support. The Lawyer said that charities need to embrace new lifestyles in order to maximize benefits. The example she used was the fact that many people have mobile phones that can access the internet. (Especially the i phone). People are often willing to assist charities but don’t have time. However, very often, mums have 20 mins whilst they sit in the car park waiting for their child comes out of school. The lawyer suggested that a charity might invite a mum to use that 20 minutes to do some work for the charity, perhaps designing a poster or sending e mails and the like. She talked about creating apps for the i phone which assist the charity and that anyone can download for free. Understanding how your target supporters work is vital, she said.

This struck a chord with me. Almost every church I know has a website. Many more older people are embracing the internet. (The so called ‘grey’ users are the fastest growing group of internet users in the UK) In order to communicate with them National Churchwatch should be looking at how they use the internet. Many of the older people have phones. Although they may not be as advanced as the US with phone internet use, many are. Using the lead of the US I shall be looking at different methods to contact churches and to get them to reduce crime. An example could be a warning system that texts and e mails people when they suffer from a metal theft. It could also give advice on what to do if you have a problem.
The idea of finding supporters who will assist you but who will not necessarily give you many hours commitment is intriguing. Many church people in the UK support what we do but they are often committed to other projects. By designing a so called ‘micro group’ (a small group of volunteers with a small, specific, time managed part of a project to achieve) project could create a large butterfly effect that starts small but covers a huge distance in a short space of time. This is something that I intend to investigate in some detail over the coming months.

5. Summary

I am looking forward to implementing much of what is described above. Things will evolve, things will have to be prioritised, but things will happen. I have made many new friends and already we are in contact assisting each other. I have some skills that they do not and vice versa. There is no doubt in my mind that we will be in contact for a long time to come, learning from one another and working together. This can only be a good thing. I hope to change the face of the UK by getting more churches to open. This will not happen overnight. In fact, it may take many years, but things will change. I hope that churches will open again for their communities and become more popular. The experience of the US churches gives me hope that we can do this, it is just a case of changing attitudes, and dealing with the risks in a more informed and acceptable way.

With regard to clergy I would hope that the American experience is once again a lesson to us. They apparently do not have the violence problem we have here, but they have an internal problem that can disrupt a church for many years. We can learn from them. They can learn from our experience of violent attacks on clergy. Although most people don’t think that there is a problem with clergy violence in the US there are several people who are looking in detail at this. In some ways I hope that they find nothing, but my gut feeling makes me think that they will stumble upon some real issues that need to be dealt with. At least we can help them with this.

The ultimate result of the trip is very personal. I have developed my personal skills. On occasion I have been very uncomfortable with people’s beliefs or methods, but it has been fascinating to
see how people with completely different views deal with common issues. Overall, it was a great trip both literally and in terms of personal development.

I once again, thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for this chance.

Nick Tolson
June 2010
ANNEX A

Itinerary

6th April to 11th April New York
12th April to 16th April Washington DC
17th April to 18th April Virginia Beach, Virginia
19th April to 23rd April Atlanta, Georgia
24th April to 2nd May Kissimmee, Florida
3rd May to 10th May Orlando, Florida
11th May to 13th May Nashville, Tennessee
14th May to 15th May Chicago
16th May to 18th May Columbus, Ohio
19th May to 20th May Baltimore

List of people & organisations from the US involved in the research

Very Special Thanks to the following for help above & beyond the call of duty!

Michael Boutot - Church Security Institute
Rev Bob Chancey – Police Chaplain, Virginia Beach Police Department
Rev Randy Kaipe – Stressed Clergy Association (SCA) Salem United Methodist Church, Georgia
Jon Peterson – ISCRIM, Jupiter, Florida
Peter Persuitti - Managing Director, J Arthur Gallagher Inc, Chicago, Illinois
John Klegberg – Columbus, Ohio

The following people were kind enough to let me interview them.

Dennis Durney – Director of Facilities - St Bartholomew’s Church;
Roderick Webster – Senior Vice President - The Church Insurance Company ;
Scott R Konrad – Senior Vice President -Willis of New York;
Steven C Sheinberg – Assistant Director, Civil Rights Division - Anti-defamation league;
Monsignor Tom Leonard – RC - Holy Trinity Church,
Sgt Alberto Santana and Officer Sabrina Laiz – New York Police Department;

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John Firman – Research Director - International Association of chiefs of police (IACP);
Seref Oksel Onder – Captain - Turkish police;
Charles Hoffman – Lt - Prince William Police Department;
William J Sorukas, Jr – US Marshals service;
David Roberts -Senior Program Manager IACP;
Jeffery L Ebersole – Captain, Commander Dulles south station;
Michael Lieberman – Director, Civil Rights Policy Planning Centre, ADL;
Tina Crawford – Vice President - NCG Insurance Agency;
Darryl K Washington CEO - Washington Concepts Inc;
Mike Motafches – Director of Security - Mclean Bible Church ;
Earl D Smith – Chief Operating Officer – The Sanctuary Church;
Peter Taggart – Grace Church, Baltimore
Daron Keller – The falls Church, Virginia
Calvin D Holt – Crime Prevention Expert – Bill Taylor & Associates, Hillard, Ohio
R. Christopher Costin – United HealthCare, Louisville, Kentucky
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Russell Slack – Windermere Ministries, Windermere, Florida
Jack Walston – First Presbyterian Church, Orlando, Florida
Kenneth Miller – ATAC Training consultancy, Virginia Beach, Virginia
Stewart Mathews – First Baptist, Orlando, Florida
Dr Chris Friedman – First Baptist, Orlando, Florida
Major J R Peterson -274 Sqn, CAP, Florida
Pastor Norman Pazda -Grace Church, Baltimore, Maryland
Pastor Peter Taggart -Grace Church, Baltimore, Maryland

There were many other people who I met and talked to along the way who, for one reason or another, I
didn’t make a note of their names! If you are not mentioned above I apologise and thank you anyway
for all the assistance you gave me.