



Active Shooters and Self-defense

In the wake of the horrific mass shooting at a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, citizens are taking proactive steps to defend themselves. It almost goes without saying now, after yet another church attack, that radicals with murder on their minds consider churchgoers good targets because they appear defenseless — much like kids in schools. But while some church leaders have acknowledged the necessity of armed self-defense, others have not yet taken that step. They should.



The *Post Star* reported on November 7 about a pastor at the True Bethel Baptist Church in Buffalo, New York, who noted the lack of preparation to this point and posted on social media about new training that will be given by SWAT team instructors from the City of Buffalo police department. Pastor Darius Pridgen, who is also president of the City Common Council, told WGRZ, “You’re potentially talking about two to three thousand people who are gathered on a Sunday morning, who have no idea about what they would do if there was an active shooter.... And not just churches, I’m concerned about, in our areas but any places where large groups of people gather. Our community centers ... is there a protocol set up in our community centers where our children are? It might sound rather facetious, but grocery stores and other places.... We don’t know what’s next.”

“Active shooter” training is becoming much more common for not only people in law enforcement, but also for private citizens who might find themselves in such situations. Even the left-wing *Washington Post* ran an article on November 6 entitled “How to protect yourself during a mass shooting,” written by security expert Ed Hinman, who told readers that when they’re out in public, “Before settling into your seat or spot, ask yourself: If there’s an attack, what will I do? It only takes a moment to answer this question before you sit back, relax and enjoy your outing. Think of it as making regular deposits in a survival bank and then, if an emergency arises, being able to make a potentially lifesaving withdrawal.”

Active shooter training has changed throughout the years. Past training advised people to “shelter in place,” meaning that potential victims should try to hide if a shooter enters a building. Some high-profile and tragic shootings, such as the Columbine and Sandy Hook school shootings, showed that such an action resulted in a target-rich environment, with the shooter having entire rooms filled with defenseless victims. As Hinman warned in the *Washington Post*, “If you’re caught by surprise in a kill zone, getting down is beneficial if the shooter is firing from a position level to yours. But whatever you do, don’t stay down for long. As soon as it’s possible, ‘move off the X,’ as we say in personal security. Hiding under a table or desk offers little protection and provides the shooter a static human target to shoot.... Targets moving through the kill zone, however, are harder to hit. And targets that have evacuated the kill zone altogether are much harder to hit.”

Of course, the *Washington Post* article did not advocate that private citizens carry firearms to help in an active shooter situation. However, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton came down decidedly on the pro-gun side of the argument, giving NPR some of his reasoning: “It is a way of protecting innocent people



Written by [Patrick Krey](#) on November 8, 2017

and innocent lives. I mean, first responders in a rural community are sometimes 20 to 30 minutes away. And even in urban settings, they can be five, six, seven minutes away. And obviously with an automatic weapon, it's difficult unless you have somebody in the church that can defend, either paid professionals, which — a church I go to in the Dallas area has security that they pay. But they are a big church, and they can afford it. But some churches may not have those resources, and so they might have to train their own people and be prepared if somebody like this comes in to harm their people.”

The truth of the situation can be highlighted by posing a question: How else could mass shootings be stopped? The recent terror attacks in France, which has strict gun control, should point out the foolishness of the idea that banning guns will keep them out of the hands of bad people: the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* publication by AK-47-wielding attackers, the Lille train shooting, the November 13 attacks on restaurants, a soccer stadium, and a concert hall that killed more than a 130 people used “assault rifles and explosives” — both illegal — the Jewish grocery store killings, etc. Locking the doors of churches will only cause bad people to turn to explosives to create havoc or be creative in finding ways to enter places of worship, such as using a truck to ram through closed doors, in much the same way that terrorists have been using trucks around the world to ram and kill innocents. (Should we ban trucks too?) Guns will never go away: Anyone with access to a file, a saw, metal, and a place to heat the metal can make a gun, and nowadays the bulk of a gun can literally be ordered up on a three-D printer. As well, the preponderance of illegal drugs should make a mockery out of any bans: Illegal drugs have never even come close to going away.

Some American legislators have recognized these hard truths and done something about them. ArkansasMatters.com reported on November 6 about a law in Arkansas that allows churches to arm parishioners for active shooter situations. The law was passed in response to an armed burglary that occurred at Third Baptist Church in 2011. Three armed suspects rushed into the church and demanded cash and cellphones from parishioners. Thankfully, the incident ended without anyone being shot, but Arkansas legislators decided to change state laws prohibiting firearm possession in church. Republican Representative Charlie Collins, who was the man responsible for the law change, told ArkansasMatters.com that armed churchgoers can only help when it comes to dealing with active shooter situations: “In the eyes of someone who may be considering some horrific opportunity to kill people, it allows locations to at least leave a question mark whether their location is in fact gun free or not.”

Amen.

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