

**Subject:** Securing Your Church Facilities

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**Date:** 2/1/2012 7:05 AM

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United Methodist Insurance Newsletter

February 2012

## Securing Your Church Facilities

More than one staff member has arrived at their church in the morning, only to pull on the door and find it open. Initially, thought of a break-in or theft might have been a part of their thinking. But after enough incidents, their first thought now is "Okay, who left the door unlocked this time?"

Though every church is unique in how they approach this issue, several key principles can be helpful, regardless of size, location, or type of church.

### COMMUNICATE

The security of the church facility is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, by clearly communicating the responsibility of each member and group is a good first step. Let everyone know what you expect of them. Have policies and find as many ways as possible to communicate to the masses. Approach it from a stewardship issue. Help people know that caring for the facilities and property God has given to their care, is a faithful act of stewardship.

### SHUT IT UP TIGHT

Some churches are fortunate enough to have a full-time custodial staff. Some even have around-the-clock security. But many rely on a small staff and volunteers. Regardless of the size of your church, someone should be responsible for doing a walk-through at the end of the day. Not only are you looking for open doors and windows, but safety concerns. A candle that was not extinguished or a leaky toilet can cause a great deal of damage.



## Join Us for Informative Webinars

### SAFE SANCTUARIES: TIPS, TRENDS & ISSUES IN BACKGROUND SCREENING

February 9

4:00 pm EST

Presenters will be Rev. Joy Melton, Chief Resource Officer of United Methodist Insurance and Chad Stair of Trak-1 Technology.

[Visit our website](#) on the day of the event for login information.

### RECORD KEEPING BASICS FOR JUDICIAL COMPLAINTS

February 29

4:00 pm EST

Presenters will be Rev. Joy Melton, Chief Resource Officer of United Methodist Insurance and Rev. Darryl Stephens, of the

## LIMIT ACCESS

Regardless if you still use the key system or have a security/electronic access system, you will want to find ways to limit access to the facility and the areas within the facility to those who are authorized. Each year a list should be made of those who have a need to get into the church facilities. It is highly recommended that you lock interior doors, into such areas as offices or sound equipment rooms. With more and more technology, it is also wise to seriously consider a monitored alarm system for your facility.

## CHECK IT REGULARLY

Occasionally, someone should be asking "has anything changed that might cause us to want to re-examine who is getting access to the facility?" For instance, if a leader has been asked to resign, or if a staff person has moved on to another church, you would want to make sure that they no longer have access to the facility and that the keys have been collected, or the electronic access codes have been changed.

## HANDLE CONCERNS QUICKLY

When you do come to the church and find a door open when it shouldn't be, find out why. Check to see who was there last. Remind them of the concern and policies. If outside groups use your church, the tendency is to give them a key. But do you really want a church key floating around the community? Alternative methods should be considered, such as charging a fee that will allow a church member or custodian to unlock and lock the facility for the group. If violations persist, then a new method of securing the facility should be considered.

Last, but not least, due to the change in our society and the more frequent loss of property and misuse / abuse of church facilities, leaders should think about what changes they need to make before there is an incident. One church, after two break-ins in the same week, finally got to a place where they were able to say, "Maybe we should re-think our approach." Don't wait for this to happen. Discuss it now, and avoid the losses that could occur by doing things the way they've always been done.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

United Methodist Insurance Service Center  
at 1-800-975-5442.

For Claims please contact United Methodist Insurance  
1-866-597-0631 or [reportclaims@npic.com](mailto:reportclaims@npic.com).

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General Commission on the Status & Role of Women.

[Visit our website](#) on the day of the event for login information.

## About Us

United Methodist Insurance is a non-profit reinsurance company for conferences, local churches, and agencies of The United Methodist Church. We continue to fulfill the General Council on Finance and Administration's Disciplinary responsibility to make property and liability insurance available to the United Methodist Connection in the United States. Today, we provide insurance for a large number of our conferences (their local churches) and general agencies. [Learn more.](#)

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