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## Our Opinion: Sanctuary prepares to preserve safety

By [News Tribune](#)

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Sanctuary has a dual meaning.

It is a sacred place in a religious building where people gather to worship. It also means a place of safety and protection.

Sadly, the safety associated with houses of worship has been violated in recent incidents.

Those violations create a dilemma. How do religious officials preserve the inviting, welcoming atmosphere as well as the safety of a sanctuary?

That quandary was the focus of a faith-based, security training exercise held recently at Concord Baptist Church.

The exercise, "Intruder Awareness/ Response & Conflict Management," was sponsored by the Missouri Department of Homeland Security and facilitated by the consulting firm, Strategos International.

"We have an obligation to protect our sheep from the wolves," said Cole County Sheriff Greg White, who is both a law enforcement officer and religious leader.

Amplifying his observation was department Capt. John Wheeler, who added: "This type of training stresses the need for using an educated approach in identifying vulnerabilities within our churches and approaching them in a manner that is consistent with our principles or beliefs."

Aspects of the training included site lockdown and initiatives to protect both worshippers and children attending Sunday school classes.

Strategos President Vaughn Baker told participants he hopes they never need to implement what they learned during the training.

Like much of the preparation and planning being conducted to secure property and people, both in communities and our country, we share his hopes.

While we hope for the best, we must prepare for the worst.

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Kudos to Concord Baptist for taking initiative to protect the flock! We all hope that nothing bad will happen at a sanctuary, but most churches' "safety plan" is to trust that god will keep them safe, which history has shown to be ineffective. I'm all for faith, but "faith without works is dead", so I definitely appreciate the works that these church leaders are taking to help ensure the safety of attendees.

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Hope the Westboro Baptists have done the same planning...

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