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Lockdown and Direct Attack

Policy and Procedure

Discussion Paper

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**Introduction**

The attack on the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre on 15 March, and the attacks on churches in Sri Lanka during Easter demonstrated how vulnerable churches, regardless of faith, are to direct attack and the deadly consequences of such attacks.

The attacks on the Al Noor Mosque and the Linwood Islamic Centre resulted in schools and office buildings across the city, and beyond, going into a lockdown condition. Whilst our parishes have health and safety policies and procedures they are not likely to include lockdown conditions nor will they include any policy or procedure relating to a direct attack.

The purpose of this paper, is to present, in Part One, a discussion on the process of initiating a lockdown condition on church buildings and, in Part Two, an analysis of the consequences of a direct attack on any of our church buildings and suggested policies and procedures for such situations.

Lockdown conditions for Diocesan schools are not considered here as they may or will be covered by the requirements of the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the police and security authorities.

**PART ONE – LOCKDOWN**

**Lockdown Defined**

Lockdown is defined as a state of isolation or restricted access instituted as a security measure. It goes beyond merely locking entrance doors to prevent anyone from entering or exiting a building without permission or authorisation. It has two major intents:

1. ensuring that individuals within the building or on the grounds of the building are protected from any potential threat to their safety, and
2. to keep the streets in the area of the threat, clear of innocent individuals and traffic so that the emergency services can respond effectively to the situation.

**Why Lock Downs Occur**

A lockdown that prevents some from entering a building may occur because:

1. an armed person wants to enter the building,
2. an armed person is in the area but not seeking entry into the building,
3. a disturbance is taking place that is aimed specifically at the building,
4. a disturbance is taking place in the general area but is not aim specifically at the building,
5. an individual in the area is trying to evade the police,
6. a vicious loose animal is in the area, or
7. a hazardous material spill has occurred in the area.

**Planning for a Lockdown**

In instructing parishes to plan for a lock down it must be emphasised that the greatest threat to their security is the thought that there is no threat. This thought may be in the minds of those who are farthest away from the Christchurch and those whose building are not occupied daily.

What must be impressed upon all parishes is that it is imperative to create and practice a lockdown plan before it is needed. By doing so reduces the disorganisation, confusion, fear, panic, and potential injuries that may occur during a live event.

Under the major heading of create a plan and practice a plan, there are a number of steps:

1. Create a Plan
   1. Create a detailed site map
   2. Conduct a walk-through
   3. Evaluate the communication system
   4. Enlist professional help
   5. Equip the building
   6. Keep updated roll lists
2. Practice the Plan
   1. External threat
   2. Internal threat

**Creating a Plan**

1. Create a detailed site map. Diagram the church premises to include rooms, exits, cupboards, toilets, doors and windows. A thorough map is critical; the staff, responding emergency services, will use it in an emergency. It may be advisable to provide a copy to the police or the police may ask for one to be provided.
2. Conduct a walk through. Evaluate all doors and windows to ensure that they function properly and are not easily defeated when locked. Ensure interior doors can be locked from inside and without a key. It is advisable to have all lock cores on the same tumbler system thus allowing for one master key to open all doors. It is possible to continue the regular level of restricted access to various parts of a building with different core locks for different door and have a master key that opens them all. A master key can be provided to the local police. Consider the most appropriate / ideal place to have as the lockdown area. Remember that the lockdown could last for several hours and under those conditions access to toilets will be necessary.
3. Evaluate the communication system. Depending on the extent of the church site, consider installing a public address system that can be heard inside the main building, the exterior, and any outbuildings. Ensure that everyone who are regularly on site can be communicated with by cell phone so that they can be in constant contact with outside authorities to give and receive essential information. Access to a portable radio that can be tuned to the local radio stations is also a means of staying connected during a lockdown.
4. Enlist professional help. The Diocese will liaise with the police and seek their advice on what additional steps may be necessary for lockdown situations. However, in addition to that advice, parishes should invite their local police to directly evaluate and advise on their plans.
5. Equip the building. Place laminated cards with emergency procedures in every building on the site for reference in case a lockdown occurs. Consider stocking rooms with useful items such as bottled water, torches, and first aid kits.
6. Keep updated roll list. Document who will be on site on particular days of the week and maintain an accurate register of who is visiting the site at any point in time.

**Practice the Plan**

1. External Threats – these take place outside of the specific site and the goal is to prevent the external threat from entering any of the buildings on the site.  
   * Communications – alert occupants with a broadcast announcement as to the nature of the threat. Use plain English (no code words) to avoid misinterpretation or confusion. Notify emergency services if necessary by dialling 111.
   * Lockdown – designated individuals should quickly lock all exterior doors and windows. Consider anyone who may be outside the building at this time. A roll call should take place to ensure everyone is accounted for.
   * Instructions – depending on the threat, regular activities may be continued without interruption inside the lockdown area. If there is a potential for real violence individuals should move away from doors and windows and cover windows to avoid detection. Ensure no one leaves the building without authorisation or until the all-clear commanded is given.
2. Internal Threats – these exist when the cause of danger is inside the church site or building. The goal at this time is to seclude individuals in safe, secure areas while the threat is removed.

* Communications – make an announcement as for an outside threat, and then immediately notify the police by dialling 111.
* Lockdown – designated personnel should immediately lock all exterior doors and check that everyone is accounted for. Individuals who are outside should move away from that building where the threat is posed. Seclude individuals within buildings anywhere available, avoiding areas that cannot be locked. Take the roll to ensure who is accounted for. An armed person within a building is likely looking for victims. It is essential not to be seen or heard. Create obstacles between the threat and potential victims by locking doors, covering windows and staying out of sight.
* Instructions – remain in place until an all clear is given. Do not open doors or windows for anyone unless their identity can be confirmed and they are not posing a threat. Let the emergency service find and come to you.
* Coaching – train the staff on the emergency plan and on techniques to remain calm in a crisis. Talk about staying level-headed and the importance of keeping those around them calm in a crisis.

**PART TWO - CONSEQUENCES OF A DIRECT ATTACK CHURCH BUILDINGS**

**Forms of Direct Attack**

A direct attack on any of our church buildings can take a number of forms:

* disruptive protestors
* bomb threats
* active shooters
* hostage situations
* bomb attacks
* arson attacks

In each case the intent of any plan will be to minimise the impact of the attack on individuals.

Whilst the lockdown procedures, mentioned in Part One of this document, will vary depending on the size of the site, the number of buildings and the number of individuals on site at any time, the same cannot be said of a direct attack situation.

**Reason for Direct Attack**

Those carrying out a direct attack will do so for the following reason:

* to cause disruption
* to draw attend to their cause
* to cause damage to the buildings
* to cause damage to individuals

**Timing of an Attack**

An attack that is intended to cause casualties is likely to be carried out when the maximum number of people are present, that is to say, during service times. An attack that is intended to only damage a building, is likely to be carried out when fewer people are around. Someone intent on causing casualties and damaging a building will, again, do so during service times.

**Attack Scenario**

Church buildings, and the way of operating within them, makes it impossible to protect the congregations from any form of direct attack. Churches, by their very nature, are intended to be welcoming places:

* Their doors are wide open and inviting.
* Emergency exit doors are unlocked, with no one watching them and so provide an alternative means of entering the building unnoticed.
* Older church building may only have one other means of exiting.
* Congregations mostly sit with their backs to the main entrance and so are not likely to see any initial action happening.
* Sitting in rows makes it difficult to quickly move to safety.
* Churches that use chairs, for the congregation to sit on, provide less protection than the traditional solid wooden pews.
* There are few places, if any at all, inside the church building in which to hide.
* Children, if present, are likely to be in another area and present an additional potential target.
* The age and physical fitness of the majority of our congregations may prohibit the establishment of core of people who could respond effectively to an incident.

An active shooter (or an attacker with any other form of weapon) will not be identified until they inflict harm on the first casualty.

* Panic and confusion will follow as members of the congregation attempt to avoid harm.
* The general age of the congregations, being older, will mean that it will be difficult for them to move fast enough to avoid being a casualty.
* A planned attack upon a church could see more than one attacker being involved and covering more than one entrance and exit to the building.

Casualties in such circumstances will be unavoidable and will be high.

**Example of Response Policy and Procedures**

The following is presented as an abridged, and slightly New Zealand aligned, example of what other churches have put in place as policy and procedures to deal with direct attacks on a church. It is not intended that these policies and procedures are adopted outright by the Diocese but they do provide an insight as to the extent that others have had to go to protect their congregations and may be the basis for developing our own policies and procedures.

**General Security Policy and Procedures**

**Policy:**

* The security and safety of people attending church service and events will be taken seriously
* A designated person will be responsible for the execution the general security policy and procedures.

**Procedure:**

* At major events there should be an opening announcement as to what to do in the event of any emergency.
* Prior to allowing people to enter the building it should be checked for suspicious packages.
* Exit doors should be clearly marked, unlocked and pointed out to those attending the event.
* Ushers should be aware of the emergency procedures and have practiced them in advance.
* Ushers at entrances should be observant of who is entering the building and what packages or bags they may be carrying.
* If necessary and appropriate large bags or packages should not be allowed to be brought into the building once people start to enter.

**Active Shooter Policy and Procedures**

**Policy:**

* Active shoot preparation and response will be taken seriously
* A designated person will be responsible for the execution of the response but in an actual event realise that the situation may be so dynamic they may not have the ability to control such actions.

**Procedure:**

* Active shooter response can be a “run, hide, or fight” option.
* The “options” listed below can be executed by anyone.
* Active shooter response, like any other emergencies, has situation specific responses. There is apparent risk in following these recommendations.

**Evacuate “Run”**

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the building. Be sure to:

1. Have an escape route and plan in mind
2. Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
3. Leave your belongings behind
4. Help others to escape if possible
5. Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
6. Keep your hands visible and follow the instructions of the police
7. Do not attempt to move wounded people
8. Call 111 when you are safe.

**Lockdown “Hide Out”**

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Your hiding place should:

1. Be out of the active shooters view
2. Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (e.g. an office with a closed and locked door)
3. Not trap you or restrict your options for movement
4. To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place, lock the door, blockade it with heavy furniture, and cover the windows.

**“Fight”**

Take action against the active shooter as a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger. Attempt to disrupt and / or incapacitate the active shooter by:

1. Acting as aggressively as possible against him or her
2. Throwing items and improvising weapons
3. Yelling
4. Committing to your actions

**Bomb Threat / Suspicious Package Response**

**Policy:**

* Every bomb threat or suspicious package will be taken seriously.
* A designated person will be responsible for the execution of the bomb threat / suspicious package procedures as documents below.

**Procedure:**

1. Upon receipt of a bomb threat all cell phone use shall immediately cease
2. Communication should be limited to landline phones or face to face contact
3. If cells phones are the only option to call the emergency services they should not be used within 100m of the area
4. Upon receipt of a bomb threat or suspicious package the person designated to deal with the threat should be notified.
5. If a suspicious package is found then:
   1. Do not move or handle the package
   2. Ensure the occupant of the area and adjoining areas are evacuated
   3. Notify the emergency service as to the location of the package
6. The designated person shall:
   1. Investigate the situation and determine the need for additional resources
   2. Contact the emergency services
   3. Attempt to determine if the threat requires an immediate evacuation or lockdown.
   4. If applicable ensure the potential area where the bomb or package may be, is evacuated immediately
   5. If an exposure (powder, liquid, or gas) has occurred provide immediate care and decontamination
   6. Isolate the individual to limit the spread of contamination
   7. If the exposure is airborne ensure the ventilation systems are tuned off
   8. Meet with the emergency services to provide vital information
   9. With the assistance of the emergency services determine the next course of action. This may include:
      1. Take no action
      2. Search the church without evacuating
      3. Evacuate the church then search it

**Disturbances**

**Policy:**

* It is the policy of the church to monitor any and all disturbances or potential disturbances to maintain a safe environment
* It is the policy of the church to not allow any demonstrations, no matter how peaceful and non-obstructive, on its property.

**Procedure:**

The designated person shall:

1. Constantly monitor any and all information to determine if an evacuation is the best course of action
2. Ensure 111 has been called
3. If it is felt safe to do so, confront those causing the disturbance to see if it can be resolved
4. Never initiate any physical contact with another unless it is for the safety of themselves or others
5. Take appropriate action to prevent harm should an unruly person initiate contact with another church person
6. Evacuate any affected areas of the church property if necessary
7. Lockdown any affected areas of the church property if necessary
8. If the police are called, meet the police officer and escort them inside
9. If those causing the disturbance start to leave, watch them until they leave the property.