Tools for Averting Predators

Reflections From a Chief of Police

In his career in law enforcement in the state of California, John Schaefer has been the Chief of Police for the City of Placentia and the City of San Marino. He also served as the City Manager for San Marino. John now serves on a pastoral team in Fullerton. He brings these thoughts for church leaders on working with the police.

1. Make It Easy for the Cops
Today’s public safety personnel are busy. Given the workload placed on public safety, anything you can do to make their job easier is greatly appreciated.

Collect the 5 W’s and H—Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Police reports are supposed to include these elements. Assemble this information before the police arrive and it will make things go smoother.

Give just the facts. Like Sergeant Joe Friday in Dragnet, the police are interested in the facts. Do not give conjecture, opinion or who you don’t trust. Tell them what you actually know, saw or heard. If you are not an eyewitness, have those people present for the police to talk with.
Provide pertinent data to be included in police reports. List the names of key people—last name, first name, middle initial, date of birth, address and phone number. Include a detailed description of stolen property. Reporting a stolen electric keyboard is of little help, but Yamaha, P 125 Digital Piano, black, serial number YP-123456, value $600 is of great value.

2. Make It Hard for the Crooks
Ideally your systems and security are so wonderful that the cops never have a reason to visit you. While this ideal is unlikely, you have the ability to control crime with simple things. Lock your doors to vacant areas. Close windows in unused rooms. Do not leave money visible on counters where it is practically screaming to be stolen. This saves you the embarrassment of explaining to a police officer how you were victimized because of your own carelessness or lack of diligence.

3. One Point of Contact
Develop one person, or at the most two people, who are the point of contact for local law enforcement. These individuals build helpful relationships and become familiar with the needs of your local police department. They can effectively collect the needed information before law enforcement arrives on the scene. Again, this makes everyone’s job much easier.

4. The Police are the Public
From about the year 1825, Sir Robert Peel created the modern police force, and in tribute to him officers in London are called “bobbies” and “peelers.” He had nine principles of policing. Peel’s Principle #7 says The Police are the Public and the Public are the Police. We all have a responsibility to police our communities and churches. Safety begins with each person. Develop the idea that everyone has a responsibility in the process. This is as simple as graciously confronting an unknown person you see walking down a hall. Most people don’t do this and regrettably wind up giving a statement like, “I saw that guy, and he looked out of place, and I can’t believe he stole …” If a stranger is at your church for a legitimate purpose, they will appreciate your question of “Can I help you?”
5. **Absence of Crime**
The goal is the absence of crime, not to have police deal with crime. Your goal should be to prevent bad things from happening. This is much easier and healthier than having to deal with crime in a reactive manner. Further, it is less expensive to invest in crime prevention than crime reaction.

6. **Broken Windows**
In criminology there is the *Broken Windows Theory*.³ It asserts that visible signs of crime, anti-social behavior, and civil disorder create an urban environment that encourages further crime and disorder, including serious crimes. By taking care of little things, like graffiti, litter or disrepair, you communicate a value of watchfulness that prevents worse things from happening.

7. **Relationships with Law Enforcement and EMS**
Cops are people! Dealings with police go better when you have a relationship that precedes a 911 situation. Your church has the biblical mandate to care for all people. If there is an area officer assigned to your church’s neighborhood, get to know her or him. This is the *Power of Loose Connections*.⁴ The interactions we have with law enforcement in emergency or non-emergency situations can develop into secondary dealings that are ultimately much more meaningful.
Predators in the Church
Workshop & e-Book Series with 38 Tools

A predator brings devastation to your church and the lives of your congregants. In over 300 total pages, Predators in the Church is a 5 e-book series that will help you change your thinking about predators and take steps to prevent them.

- The Introduction to Wolf Thinking presents an overview of the working concepts and the prevalence of predators.

- The Case of the Wolf at WheatFields is an insider’s perspective as Executive Pastor Dan Black at WheatFields discovers a predator.

- The Case of the Active Shooter walks through national news about the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, along with tools for church safety.

- The Case of the Child Molester presents national news about an incident at NewSpring Church of South Carolina with tools to avert child predators.

- The Case of the Church Embezzler documents national news stories from six churches of all sizes along with tools to prevent fraud.

May this material help avoid the painful tragedy of a predator in your church. Do all that you can to protect your people from the wolf. Learn more at XPastor.org.

Author of the series is David Fletcher. For 35 years, Fletch led churches from 1,000-8,000 members, single and multisite, churches with camps, schools, apartments and cafés. His other books include People Patterns and Smart Money for Church Salaries.

Fletch founded XPastor in 2003 and is a principal resource for executive leaders in a complex church world. As a global tool for churches of all sizes, the mission of XPastor is to “equip, coach and lead you who lead and manage the church.”

