



ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH SAFETY TEAM EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

**St. Philip Neri
Catholic Church**
A SPIRIT OF CARING AND GIVING

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August 2024

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

Contained within this brochure are instructions for you and your family in the event of an emergency at St. Philip Neri (SPN). There is also valuable information to help you protect yourself from crime and other threats. Please read and review this information and determine what is appropriate to discuss with your children.

Safety is a physical and emotional sense of well-being... and security is the mechanism through which it is achieved. We want all on our campus to be able to pray and celebrate the sacraments without fear from harm. How do we accomplish this from a safety standpoint while still maintaining the sanctity of the Mass?

The Parish Safety Team (PST):

In August of 2016 the St. Philip Neri Parish Safety Team was established in order to formulate safety policies, create standard operating procedures, establish beneficial relationships with public service agencies and provide a group of motivated, skilled and trained parishioners to safeguard and protect our parish.

The team is made up of volunteer church members who have a law enforcement, military, emergency medical, fire service, security, nursing and management/leadership background. The team is also made up of individuals with unrelated backgrounds who simply have a strong desire to serve the parish in this way. The team works with SPN ministries, such as our greeters, ushers and nurses, all contributing to the safety of our parish.





During the past eight years the PST has:

- Established Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency Operating Plans for both the Church and Child Development Center
- Provided School Resource Officers (SRO's) and training for the various educational activities on campus
- Completed certification in first aid, AED, CPR and bleeding control procedures
- Created a medical aid station within the church building
- Installed trauma kits and AED's in each campus building
- Upgraded our fire safety posture
- Enacted Physical Security Upgrades, along with our property and facility committee, such as closed circuit video monitoring systems, access control for doors, entrance/ exit signage, intruder specific door locks throughout the campus and tighter access key/card control
- Attended and hosted Active Shooter seminars presented by the FMPD as have many ushers and church staff
- Participated in Active Shooter training on our campus and elsewhere conducted for statewide law enforcement agencies and select PST members
- Provided coverage for each weekend Mass and other church events
- Established campus wide secure radio communications
- Provided Executive Protection for visiting officials
- Attended Improvised Explosive Device training conducted by an agent of the Department of Homeland Security
- Attended Executive Protection training conducted by an agent of the United States Secret Service

Finally, designated Parish Safety Team officers have become employees of Karl de la Guerra, Inc. (dba KDI Protective Services) a South Carolina licensed security agency headquartered in Ballantyne. As such, these team officers are now licensed through the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and approved by the Diocese to perform security duties on our property and throughout the state while on official business of Saint Philip Neri. Per state law, these select state licensed Safety Team officers have the same authority on our campus as a deputy sheriff. Safety Team officers can be identified by the Whole Armor of God lapel pin, and in the event of an actual emergency, by a sash that reads "security". The safety team is trained, staffed and equipped to serve the needs of our parish.



IF THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

- Remain calm and follow the instructions of PST officers and ushers. Begin evacuating the church using the nearest exit away from the fire. Walk quickly, but do not run. Panic worsens the situation, creates injuries and impedes the flow of people out of the building
- Assist disabled persons in your area
- If you encounter smoke, take short breaths through your nose and crawl along the floor to the nearest exit
- Feel all closed doors with the back of your hand before opening. If the door is hot, do not open it. If the door is cool, open it slowly, keeping behind the door in case you have to quickly close it to protect yourself from smoke or fire
- Proceed outdoors. The PST will sweep the building once evacuated if possible
- Get away from the building and beyond designated fire lanes. Go to your designated assembly area (if possible) which is the Parish Center/Child Development Center if the fire is in the church, or any safe building on campus if the fire is elsewhere
- Do not go to your automobile or attempt to move it from the parking lot. This could hinder access by emergency vehicles
- Do not congregate near building exits, driveways, or roadways
- Do not reenter the building until an “all clear” is issued by the incident coordinator (Note: The “all clear” is only issued by the Fire Department.)



TORNADO OR OTHER WEATHER EMERGENCY

The PST will monitor weather conditions when possible severe weather is in the forecast and prepare to move people to safety or to take cover depending on the circumstances. The National Weather Service has developed a method of identifying storm conditions that foster the development of tornadoes. The classification and definitions of storm conditions are:

A **“Tornado Watch”** indicates that weather conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes. The “watch areas” are usually large geographic areas, covering many counties or even states that could be affected by severe weather conditions including tornadoes.

A **“Tornado Warning”** is an alert issued by the National Weather Service after a tornado has been detected by radar or sighted by weather watchers or by the public. The National Weather Service provides the approximate time of detection, the location of the storm and the direction of movement. A tornado can move from 25 to 40 miles per hour so prompt emergency action must be taken.

Should a tornado develop which threatens our area, PST officers will initiate actions to notify and protect all staff and church members in the facility. It should be remembered that a Tornado Watch can cover a large area so the degree of risk may be uncertain. The PST Leader will continue to monitor the weather and determine if evacuation is necessary. If a funnel cloud develops in our area or a Tornado Warning is sounded via the Civil Defense Sirens, the team leader will advise the celebrant of the immediate threat.

THE PST LEADER WILL APPROACH THE CELEBRANT AND ADVISE THAT WE NEED TO TAKE COVER.

- The PST will move people to the designated tornado shelter immediately, which during the Mass is our basement. Crowded, yes, but underground. Move quickly, but do not run
- If a funnel cloud appears without warning and is about to strike the church, leaving no time to move downstairs, clergy, staff, parishioners and guests should take cover under the pews, covering children
- Do not use elevators
- Assist disabled personnel in your area



EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF THE CHURCH

All Parish Safety Team (PST) officers know the emergency evacuation routes from the church, and the designated assembly area on our campus.

The designated assembly area for all evacuation emergencies is the Parish Center/ Child Development Center. Should this designated assembly area be deemed unsafe, an alternate assembly area will be located in the ministry building.

IF A BUILDING EVACUATION IS INITIATED:

- Remain calm
- Follow the instructions of the PST
- Close the door when an office/classroom space is vacated
- Use stairwells (do not use elevator) for evacuation. Be alert for clergy, staff, parishioners and guests, as well as emergency services personnel, who might also be using the stairwells
- Once outside stay on or near the sidewalks as you move to the Parish Center/Child Development Center. Do not impede the movement of emergency vehicles. Account for family members
- Children, if in the toddler room or participating in the Children's Liturgy of the Word, will be escorted by their teachers to the Child Development Center to reunite with their parents. They will be taken out through the basement doors, the closest and safest exit, and then escorted by teachers and a PST officer. The time it takes you to get to your child downstairs while trying to navigate the crowd leaving church may take too long. They need to be evacuated immediately
- Assist the elderly or those with limited mobility
- Do not return to your area until the "all clear" signal is given



MEDICAL ALERT

In the event we have a parishioner become ill during Mass those around the victim should gain the attention of an usher or Safety Team officer. At this time a code will be passed over our radio network and team members will come to the aid of the stricken. The PST will be joined by a member of our nurses' ministry and evaluate if the victim is safe to move. If so, they will transport the victim to the Medical Aid Station, located in the family room, for private care. EMS will be called if requested or necessary. If the patient cannot be moved, for example someone suffering from a severe fracture, spinal cord injury or other issue, they will be treated in place. We ask that parishioners remain quiet and provide assistance as needed. A medical alert is by far our most common event. If you recognize that a medical alert is taking place, and you are a medical professional, please identify yourself to a member of the Safety Team.

BOMB THREAT

If the reason for the evacuation is a bomb threat proceed out the nearest exit and assemble in the Parish Center/Child Development Center. In this particular type of evacuation, it is important to get away from the windows in the church as quickly as possible once outside. The threat from a bomb occurs in the pressure wave that is released during detonation. Do not use the perimeter sidewalks for this event, but rather a route furthest from the church windows and doors. Because of the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices placed in a package, bag, knapsack, briefcase or other container, the PST reminds the parish that all bags are subject to inspection. This is done for your safety and the safety of the entire parish. Please refrain from bringing bags into church other than those needed for infants or other approved uses. If you see a bag/package/object that has been abandoned, please inform the PST.



CRIME

PLEASE FOLLOW THE APPROPRIATE SAFETY GUIDELINES TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM CRIME:

- Invest in a home security system
- Be aware of your surroundings. Are you being watched or followed?
- Stay off your cell phone until you are in a safe, secure area. Do not walk and text
- Closely observe the vehicles parked next to yours for occupants
- Park in a busy, well-lit area at night
- Don't leave valuables in plain sight in your vehicle
- Lock your car doors when exiting your vehicle
- Look in your backseat before unlocking and entering your car
- Lock your doors immediately once inside your vehicle
- Do not get back out of your car if you see a flyer on the windshield or back window
- If followed from church do not go home. Pull into a public space, go inside and call police. Stay with other people. Follow police instructions
- Carpool with a friend and walk in groups if possible
- If approached and threatened with a weapon drop your wallet/purse and run away
- If physically attacked fight back and target vulnerable areas of the assailant
- Avoid getting in an assailant's vehicle at all costs

Members of the Parish Safety Team are available to all parish members, visitors, staff and others if you have concerns for your personal safety.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

The likelihood of an active shooter at St. Philip Neri is statistically remote. It is, nonetheless, a real threat and a response plan must be in place. We are all familiar with what occurred in Charleston, SC, Sutherland Springs, TX and Pittsburgh, PA. The goal of the PST is to prevent an active shooter from gaining access to the gathering area and subsequently the church/sanctuary. Our procedures are designed to maintain a defensive position to hold off an active shooter until police arrive. Parishioners are reminded that per state law and Diocesan policy, concealed weapons are not permitted on our campus except by authorized personnel, who have been granted permission by a church official. Active and retired Law Enforcement Officers should identify themselves to the PST.

AN ACTIVE SHOOTER ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THE CHURCH:

- Our best defense for an active shooter attempting to enter the church is to prevent them from getting inside the church/sanctuary
- If a possible armed intruder is spotted moving towards the church, or you hear shots fired, **take cover and get on the floor under your pew covering children.** The PST is equipped and trained to deal with this threat
- Police will be called and PST officers will assume assigned positions to intercept the threat
- Once the threat is eliminated return to your seats keeping hands open and exposed
- **Police will treat you as a possible threat until they have secured the church.** Do not ask them questions or move suddenly. Follow their instructions exactly

AN ACTIVE SHOOTER ALREADY IN THE CHURCH:

A shooter in the middle of the congregation while Mass is underway will, unfortunately, only be identified when a gun is displayed or they initiate an assault on another person with a weapon.

IF ANY WEAPON IS DISPLAYED OR SHOOTING STARTS INSIDE THE CHURCH:

- PST officers will shout “Get Down” as they move towards the threat. Parishioners should get on the floor, under the pews as much as possible
- **Do not run for the exits.** This prevents the PST from moving towards the threat, exposes your back to the shooter and injures people in the panic
- **Those seated/standing around the shooter should immediately swarm and overpower the shooter. Move the gun in a safe direction and wrestle the shooter to the floor.**



OUR CHILDREN

All members of the Parish Safety Team have undergone background checks by the State Law Enforcement Division and have completed mandated Safe-Haven training for church volunteers that interact with children. Please help us protect our most valuable and vulnerable members by understanding the policy below and by following these guidelines.

In all instances children are given priority in an emergency event. They are protected first, they are treated first, they take priority in an evacuation and they will have a PST officer in their proximity whenever they move or wherever they congregate. While other PST members may move to certain positions in an emergency, the officer assigned to our children never leaves them during an emergency. For child-specific events, such as First Communion, the number of on-duty PST officers increases significantly.

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES:

- Keep up with your children. Even if your children are self-sufficient you should know their whereabouts at all times
- Do not let your young children use the restrooms alone. We see this all too often as we observe Mass. Please accompany them
- During the school year the Children's Liturgy of the Word is held downstairs during regular Mass. Don't enter through the basement doors or prop them open. This creates a serious security risk as it breaches our locked perimeter, creating a possible entrance for intruders
- Have your children memorize your cell phone number
- Acquaint your children with our specialized door locks in the event of an intruder
- Drive slowly in our parking lots and watch out for children
- If your child has a special medical condition, please advise us of this in a medical event



REUNIFICATION IF WE HAVE A MASS CASUALTY EVENT

Once the scene is secured, first responders will work with church officials and victims on a variety of matters. This will include transporting the injured, interviewing witnesses, and initiating the investigation. Remember, if the mass casualty event is the result of an active shooter or other crime, the church or other affected location will be a crime scene. Help us preserve evidence if possible. The PST will provide assistance to victims, their families and public service personnel.

OTHER SAFETY POLICIES:

Weapons

The Diocese of Charleston forbids the carrying of ANY weapon, including pocketknives, on the grounds of any of their property, including all churches. Exceptions are made for licensed security officers doing work for the Diocese, sworn law enforcement officers, retired law enforcements officers with a valid HR218 license, and military under orders. Parishioners falling into any of these categories need to identify themselves to a PST officer prior to bringing a weapon onto our campus.

Bag Searches

All the property of the Diocese of Charleston is PRIVATE PROPERTY. All are welcome as long as they are here to worship and other lawful purposes. SPN reserves the right to inspect any bags brought onto the property at any time and for any reason.

Gathering Space

The gathering space (foyer) of the church needs to remain clear after Mass starts. This is in compliance with Fire Code and to enable PST officers clear lines of sight into the sanctuary. Please take your seat quickly if Mass has started. Children in arms can be soothed briefly if needed, but in NO CASE will toddlers be allowed to play in the gathering space. The church has a nursery in the basement for the heaviest-attended Masses, two private rooms off the gathering space, two outdoor playgrounds and ample outdoor space for young children who will not sit through Mass.

Driving

The “horseshoe” drive around the front of the buildings is a ONE-WAY street, and clearly marked with multiple arrows on the road and “do not enter” signage at the exit. Please respect this traffic flow pattern. This is for the safety of everyone on our campus. Please remember that the speed limit on campus is 7 mph everywhere.

Parking

Please park only in the designated parking spaces, and ensure your vehicle is parked in only one parking space. Do not park along the curbs, as most are fire zones. Vehicles parked illegally will be towed at the owners’ expense. DO NOT leave any unattended pets in parked cars anywhere on the campus – for any length of time.

Tobacco Policy

Saint Philip Neri is a tobacco-free campus. No smoking, chewing tobacco, or vaping is allowed anywhere on the site, including outdoor spaces on the property.

Christmas & Easter

Christmas and Easter Masses are our heaviest-attended Masses of the year. Many of the Masses will exceed the capacity of the church, and parishioners will need to attend Mass in the Parish Center “overflow” if it is available. There is absolutely no saving of seats during these Masses. Follow the instructions of our PST to ensure the safety of our parishioners and many guests.



SUMMARY

The mission of the Parish Safety Team is to serve the needs of the parish. Since their inception, they have treated dozens of parish members for medical ailments, removed guns from the church, inspected bags, escorted unaccompanied children, removed trespassers from our property, provided coverage for special events such as the Italian Festival, and provided guidance to the church, Child Development Center and Faith Formation regarding safety measures. The PST reports directly to the pastor.

The Parish Safety Team is devoted to the safety and security of our church family and they rely on you to help perform this all-important task. Good security is often inconvenient at times. Remember, that inconvenience could be saving you and your family. Please also remember that if you see something say something! Again, on our campus, PST officers maintain the same authority as a Deputy Sheriff, including the powers of arrest.

Due to the physical and psychological requirements of the role, as well as the vetting and licensing done, the Parish Safety Team is not a traditional ministry. All cannot serve, but we are constantly looking for people with the skills and dedication to help out. If you are interesting in finding out more, please approach one of our officers.

May God Bless and Protect You.



YOUR PARISH SAFETY TEAM OFFICERS

MCPO Edward F. Gallagher IV, USN (ret), KDI Ecumenical Bureau Director

Jay Winters, NRA RSO & Instructor, Commanding Officer

Sal Saldarragia NYPD (ret), Executive Officer & Training Dept. Head

Denny Rodino, USN Veteran, Operations & Administrative Dept. Head

Tony Connot, USMC Veteran, PA-C, Medical Officer & Medical Training Dept. Head

Karl De La Guerra, USAF Veteran, PPS, CLSS, Founder & CEO of KDI



Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the Power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

Isaiah 6:8



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