



National Churchwatch

Protecting Church Communities

National Churchwatch Guidance Notes

Dealing with Anti-Christian Hate Crime



Helping Faith Communities to Worship Safely

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Dealing with Anti-Christian Hate Crime

An escalating problem

“It is not a nice thought that there are people in the community that hate Christians. Hate is such a strong word. Anti-Christian Hate crime is where anyone shows hostility or prejudice against any Christian or a Christian building. This can be any action such as name calling, vandalism or violence. It is very important that any incidents are recorded so that the police are able to direct resources to assisting Christians to work and worship in safety.”

Nick Tolson

Director, National Churchwatch



Introduction

The first obvious point to note is that you are far more likely to suffer from criminal damage, theft or burglary than from a hate crime attack. There is, however, strong evidence of a growing number of violent attacks against churchworkers from people who are drunk, suffering from a mental illness or taking drugs. As well as this, there is also evidence that around the country there are a growing number of Anti-Christian Hate Crimes being committed. The good news is that the security advice below, as well as lowering the risk of a hate crime attack, will have a significant effect on the amount of more common crimes committed against churches.

Having your Church Open during the day

There is no evidence that churches that are open for their communities are at any higher risk of crime than churches that are closed. In fact, a small survey a few years ago suggested that churches that are open during daylight hours actually have less crime than those who lock their doors. We do know that open churches are used by their community and add to community cohesion, crime reduction and community pride.



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What is Anti-Christian Hate Crime?

The key part of Hate Crime law is that the action must be motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's Christianity or perceived Christianity.

Common forms of Anti-Christian Hate Crime are;

- Physical Attacks such as assaults on churchworkers, criminal damage to churches, offensive graffiti and arson of church buildings;
- Threat of attack which can include offensive letters, e mails, or abusive telephone calls. It can also include unfounded, malicious complaints;
- Disturbing worship, verbal abuse, insults or harassment, taunting, offensive leaflets or posters, offensive gestures, bullying in the workplace.

It seems that much of the Anti-Christian Hate Crime is down to pure ignorance. Some people have a basic misunderstanding of what a Christian does or how they should behave. Offenders have sometimes had a bad experience whilst a child in a church environment or school which leads them behave in an unacceptable manner.

Why should I report Anti-Christian Hate Crime?

Anti-Christian Hate Crimes are sometimes difficult to understand and create an atmosphere of fear in Christians and other people who attend churches. These sorts of hate crime will often affect the way that a church wants to operate. Some churches feel that they have to stay shut when they would rather be open for their community. The people who are committing the crime against you or your church may be committing crime against other Christians or other people and by reporting the crime you may be able to prevent these incidents from happening elsewhere. It also assists the police to understand the extent of hate crime in your local area so they can better allocate resources to tackle the crime.

Reporting Hate Crime makes a difference.



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How do I report Anti-Christian Hate Crime?

1. *In an emergency*

If a crime is being committed or if it has been committed and the offenders are nearby then call 999 or 112 immediately. Do not delay, give the police a chance to catch the offenders in the act;

2. *Contacting your local police*

You may wish to contact your local police by ringing 101 (the non-emergency number) or by visiting your local police station

3. *Make the report online*

The True Vision Website is run by the National Police Chiefs Council (www.report-it.org.uk) and is a very effective way to report crime. You can fill out a simple reporting form and they will do the rest, ensuring your local police force is notified of the incident. There is also advice about hate crime in general.

4. *Third Party Reporting Centres*

There are several local agencies such as the Stop Hate UK, a national body part funded by the police and working closely with others. The True Vision website has a list of organisations who may be able to help

Summary

It is important that all instances of Anti-Christian Hate Crime are reported as soon as possible. Christians sometimes struggle with the concept of hate crime against them but if it is not reported then other people may suffer. Ultimately anything that is preventing you from worshipping in the way that you want to or preventing you from opening your church for your community needs to be dealt with.



RACIST & RELIGIOUS HARASSMENT

VERBAL ABUSE
DAMAGE
BULLYING
ASSAULT
HARASSMENT
GRAFFITI

DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE...

REPORT IT!

TRUE
VISION

THE POLICE DON'T TOLERATE HATE CRIME
WHY SHOULD YOU?

YOU CAN REPORT HATE CRIME IN A NUMBER OF WAYS
IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS DIAL 999
FILLING OUT A SELF REPORTING FORM
REPORTING ON LINE www.crucial-issues.org.uk
CONTACTING YOUR LOCAL POLICE STATION



About the Author



Nick Tolson is the UK's leading expert in Personal Safety for Churchworkers and Church security. He is the Director of National Churchwatch and is the Christian Representative on the Places of Worship Security Panel of the Counter Extremism Directorate at the Home Office.

Nick is the author of *"The Complete Security Book for Churches"*, (*"The Pocket Book of Personal Safety for Clergy"*) and *"ClergySafe"*. He has written many national newspaper articles, on TV & radio and is a regular contributor to Security Professional Magazine.

In 2007 Nick published *"The Clergy Lifestyle Theory"*, an academic work looking at the reasons for violence against clergy and some essential recommendations for dealing with it. It is now being used as a good example of the practical application of criminological theory by Universities around the UK.

Nick is a Fellow of the Winston Churchill Trust and spent time in the United States of America studying how they deal with crime in Places of Worship.

As a former police officer Nick has assisted Dioceses and other church organisations in investigating issues such as hate letters, e mail abuse and other sensitive crimes that often involve church members. He gives advice on conflict management and methods of dealing with internal issues that are potentially criminal.



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