

risk alert



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Who would steal from us?

By their very nature, religious institutions tend to be trusting. Indeed, it is very difficult to imagine anyone trying to steal from the tithes or offerings given in good faith. As such, it is very common for religious institutions to have very few or no real security measures to ensure that the money they receive from attendees stays secure and makes it to its proper destination. Time and again, religious institutions pay for this assumption of safety.



- Recently, in New York, as a lone volunteer was organizing offering envelopes after the service, a man approached with a gun and demanded the money from the collection plates. The thief escaped without apprehension.

Better safe than sorry

Of course, a vast majority of your community would never even consider stealing from your house of worship. Still, every house of worship needs to put a few security measures in place to keep temptation away from those who would take advantage of an easy source of money. A good start is included in the following steps:

- **Keep it secret** - Never advertise where you count the money from offerings or tithes nor divulge where you store them. Only those that perform these duties need to know.
- **Double count** - Have two separate and unrelated people make separate counts of the money for verification purposes and to guard against embezzlement.
- **Make detailed records** - Keep track of the amount you receive at every service and make detailed records to be kept for reference.
- **Don't leave it alone** - Never entrust only one person to count, transport or store the money from offerings. This prevents temptation for a lone person to steal, helps keep suspicion from the money handlers if offerings were to be stolen and provides security if someone were to try to hold up the counters or transporters for the money.
- **Seal it** - Empty offerings immediately after counting into a single, large moneybag that is locked and sealed with a numbered, tamper-evident band.
- **Lock it up** - Always store money in a safe. If one is not available, keep it in a locked cabinet in a locked room (the "two-lock" system).
- **Alarm system** - Have an alarm system, at minimum, around the area in which offerings are kept.

(Over)

Keep the holidays happy

Be especially careful during holidays or other high-giving times. With the likely increase in offering amounts, the likelihood of theft also increases. To guard against this, have separate offering bags for occasions with more than one service in a day. If it is practical, count and deposit your offerings in the bank right after service. If that is not possible, never leave an offering bag in a room without counting it and locking it in a safe.

Ask the experts

Whenever considering a security plan, consult with local law enforcement. Local law enforcement can assist in the formation of a financial security plan for your place of worship.

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and look in the Safety Resources section.**