

Old St. Paul's Historic Church Christmas Eve Service Scenario

Revision 1, December 2019

Setting: The noon Christmas Eve worship service in the historic church. The service has started with all doors closed and 275 people in attendance. Team 1 & 2 are on duty for the service with 2 members from team 1 inside the church and 2 team members outside, at the front doors. Two members from team 2 are across the road directing traffic, as needed for late arrivals, and 1 team member is located on the north side of the church. The fourth member from team 2 is in the security office watching the cameras. The weather outside is sunny and 48 degrees.

Event: The traffic is moderate on Conover-Startown Road, mostly following the speed limit of 45 mph. Some vehicles slow as they approach the church seeing people in high visibility vest and cones in the center of the road. A dark colored Ford Explorer, approaching the church from the south slows to about 20 mph at the intersection of 7th street. The vehicle continues toward the church when an SST team member in the front of the church notices a person in the back window with what appears to be an automatic pistol in their hand. Before he can react, the backseat passenger starts to fire at the church as the car rolls by. The SST member on north side of the church reacts by pulling his gun and returns fire at the vehicle. The vehicle then speeds up and continues north on Conover-Startown Rd.

Event Actions:

- The SST member from Team 2, who fired the shots, at the vehicle looks to his left and sees 4 people on the ground.
- 2 different SST members immediately call 911 to report incident.
- The Team 2 leader checks on people who have been injured and finds all 4 people in front of the church wounded.
- SST Team 2 Leader communicates to all members on location that he needs, medical assistance and the trauma medical bags. He continues to help the wounded outside and 2 other team members run across the road to help him.
- The 2 Team 1 members inside the church keep all worshipers inside and report that 2 people are wounded on the inside the church. Nurses in the congregation are attending to the wounded with the trauma bag located on the inside.
- The SST Team member watching cameras responds to the historic church with 2 trauma bags and the AED.

- Sirens are heard 4 minutes after the event with fire, police and medical personnel arriving on site. Conover-Startown Rd. is blocked off to traffic and police must clear the street for first responders.
- SST members inform EMT of the wounds inside and outside church. Additional ambulances are called.
- Inside the church we have the pastor wounded along with one congregation member. Outside the church we have the Team 1 Leader wounded, 1 bystander and 2 ushers also wounded.
- EMT's and nurses are caring for all wounded and the SST members back off trauma care.
- SST members on site provide Newton Police with vehicle description and exit route. They provide detailed account of events along with partial description of shooter.
- Police allow the congregation to depart the historic church. The police set up an interview section and interview each person as they exit the church.
- 6 people are transported to Catawba Valley Medical with gunshot wounds, by ambulance.
- Area is cordoned off as crime scene and no one is allowed back inside.
- Shell casings are spotted on road way and 25 bullet holes are identified on the church exterior and front door.
- The SST member who fired shots at the vehicle expended 5 rounds and his weapon is confiscated by police as evidence.
- Crime scene investigators are on site and will be there for 4 additional hours.
- SST members, Council and other members of the congregation remain on site at the main church facility.

Results of Action:

- Six (6) members and visitors, at the event, were wounded.
 1. The Pastor had a flesh wound to his right arm, he is treated and released.
 2. A congregation member was wounded in left wrist, breaking several bones. They were treated at the ER and scheduled for surgery. They stayed overnight at hospital for observation.
 3. 1 OSP usher had a flesh wound to their right leg and was treated and released.
 4. Another usher was shot in left hip area, requiring surgery, followed by a 5 day hospital stay, rehab and home care.
 5. The late arriving bystander had 2 wounds, 1 wound in the left thigh, breaking a bone and a flesh wound to the right thigh area. The left thigh required surgery and a 3 day hospital stay. They will be in a cast for 8 weeks and then 4 weeks of rehab.

6. The SST Team 1 Leader had 3 gunshot wounds to the chest and was in critical condition upon arrival at the ER. He is taken immediately into an operating room, where passed away.
- Numerous congregation members were in shock and were treated by EMT.

Aftermath:

- Five people are recovering from wounds and 1 SST member is dead
- Police determine that the event was gang initiation related. The shooter is believed to be no older than 16. No suspects are in custody.
- Congregation has to deal with onslaught of news media.
- The front side of the historic church is riddled with bullet holes.
- Services and opening for visitation is suspended at historic church indefinitely.
- Months pass before some members return for worship, which causes worship attendance to drop, measurable.
- Visitors and new membership decline, drastically.

Facts & Liability:

- Gun fire damage to historic church: pulpit, pews, signs, front siding, candle lanterns, and front doors. The cost to repair is estimated to be at least \$10,000.00. There is liability insurance on this building. The building closed indefinitely.
- Possibility of 2 law suits from people wounded during event. There is liability insurance on this building. Church is not incorporated which increases liability responsibility to congregation.
- The Church is in the local and national news for a week. This gives bad publicity for the church.
- At least 5 families stop coming to services because of event.
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SST debrief reveals:

1. Event happened so fast that SST members did not have time to respond.
2. Bullets did not penetrate log walls, saving many more people from being wounded. The 2 people inside that were wounded came from bullets penetrating the front door.
3. The SST member who returned gun fire did hit the vehicle several times.

4. The 2 Team members inside took control and stopped a panic situation inside the church.
5. Some of the radio communication between members was garbled due to excitement in their voices.
6. Quick thinking by SST member in the office saved lives by getting trauma bags to the location quickly. However this person should have remained on station to capture the events on camera. A catch 22.
7. Two nurses in the congregation saved several lives by controlling the bleeding effectively.
8. In this situation the SST could not be proactive only reactive.
9. Only 3 SST members outside the church were armed with a handgun.
10. One SST team member dead! Rest in Peace.

