

Our ref: 45260099351



Insp 4779 Chris Thoday
Elmbridge Borough
Commander
September 26

Ref: Crime Prevention Advice for Places of Worship

Dear all,

I am writing to make you aware that there have been **three burglaries affecting churches and religious premises within East Surrey during the past 30 days.**

Places of worship play a vital role in our communities and are often kept open to the public as a welcoming environment and safe space for residents. Unfortunately, this can make them attractive targets for criminals seeking to steal money, valuable items, and other property.

While Surrey remains a safe county, we would encourage all places of worship to review their security arrangements and consider the following crime prevention measures:

Physical Security

- Ensure all doors, windows, and access points are secured with appropriate locks when buildings are unattended.
- Consider installing or upgrading intruder alarms and ensure systems are tested and maintained.
- Ensure exterior lighting covers entrances, pathways, car parks, and vulnerable areas around the building.
- Trim vegetation and remove concealment opportunities around windows and doors.

Protecting Valuables

- Avoid leaving cash on the premises overnight wherever possible.
- Use a secure safe that is appropriately fixed to the building structure.

- Keep valuable items, historic artefacts, audio-visual equipment, and portable electronic devices securely stored when not in use.
- Record serial numbers and photograph valuable items to assist identification and recovery.
- Consider property marking schemes such as forensic marking or UV marking products.

Community Vigilance

- Encourage staff, volunteers, congregation members, and local residents to report suspicious behaviour.
- Ensure someone checks the building regularly, particularly during quieter periods.
- Share information with neighbouring places of worship and community groups where appropriate.

CCTV and Security Systems

- Review CCTV coverage to ensure entrances, exits, and vulnerable locations are monitored.
- Check that cameras are functioning correctly and images are of sufficient quality to identify offenders.
- Ensure recordings are retained for an appropriate period and can be readily accessed if required.

Reporting Suspicious Activity

Please report any suspicious activity, attempted break-ins, suspicious vehicles, or individuals acting unusually around your premises.

- In an emergency, or if a crime is in progress, call **999**.
- For non-emergency matters, contact Surrey Police via **101** or report online through the Surrey Police website.

We recognise the important role that churches and faith communities play in supporting local residents. By taking a few simple precautions and remaining vigilant, we can work together to reduce opportunities for crime and protect these valued community assets.

Please share this advice with trustees, wardens, volunteers, staff, and anyone involved in the management and security of your premises.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Thoday

Inspector Christopher Thoday
Borough Commander
Surrey Police