

Security Update from Pastor Bill As most of you know, we had a perplexing incident occur on Wednesday, November 15. At about 5 PM two of the Oasis clients were standing outside the lower door by Oasis when a man rode up on a bicycle. The man was dressed completely in black with a ski mask and goggles on his face. He asked, "Do you welcome homosexuals here?" One of the Oasis folks responded, "Yeah. Why?" The visitor did not answer, but turned around on his bike and sped away.

Obviously, there are two likely explanations: the man is gay and was looking for a welcoming place, or he was angry. The young men from Oasis were unsettled by the encounter and felt that the second explanation was much more likely, as do we.

Before I go further, let me inform you that we have had no further disturbing incidents of any type.

I consulted with our two retired police officers, Patty Nail and Bob Nesbitt, and they agreed that this was a potential threat to the safety of folks at Oak Grove. Not a giant threat, but it would be prudent to take some precautions. (According to one source, there are on average, three church shootings per year in the US, which is one in every 6 million church services. The majority of these are outgrowths of domestic arguments, not random shootings.) With the encouragement of Patty and Bob, we hired an off-duty police officer to be on the grounds the following Sunday morning. We explained from the pulpit why he was present.

We also instituted a policy of having only one outside door unlocked on Sundays and we stationed folks at the front door to be on the alert. In addition, we encouraged the ushers to be intentionally aware of possible threats and instructed our childcare professional on what to do in case of an emergency.

Both pastors and Bob Nesbitt attended a seminar put on by the Bloomington police on December 14 entitled "Active Shooter Threat in Places of Worship."

The Building and Operations Committee was already in the process of placing cameras at our entrances and these have been installed and are active.

Bob Nesbitt has given both the staff and the ushers security training. Training for the Sunday School teachers on the lower level is also planned.

We are putting together a security team, which will put together a comprehensive security plan for the church.

Volunteers to sit in the church office and monitor the security cameras on Sunday morning are being recruited. (If you would like to volunteer to do this once a month, please let the church office know. We will probably do two shifts — 8 to 10 and 10 to noon. Once this team is in place we will then unlock all the entrances once again on Sunday mornings.

We think the threat is very low. We want to be alert without being unduly anxious. I would ask you to continue to pray for the man who started all of this, that he may know peace and wholeness in his life.

Thanks to all who have been working on this issue and who will continue to provide a welcoming, but secure experience.

--Bill