



## USING VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

By Linda Richardson

It seems that every place you go these days, there are surveillance cameras: cameras in stores, cameras in schools, cameras in malls and office buildings. Like it or not, surveillance cameras scan our every move. But, there is something about surveillance cameras in a church or synagogue that seem, quite frankly, “wrong.” After all, churches are supposed to be open and welcoming environments where people from all walks of life can come for community and spiritual practice.

Sadly, surveillance systems in places of worship are becoming more and more necessary. Although churches hold much in common with any public place, they present several unique security risks. These days,

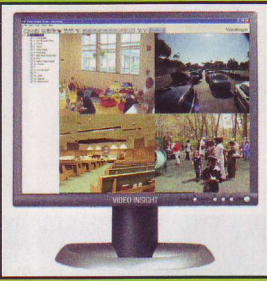
you don't have to be a megachurch to have a significant investment in audio/visual equipment. Almost every church has an expensive sound system, as well as projection systems, and they are a favorite target for thieves. At a recent church burglary in Dallas, security cameras recorded the theft of expensive plasma screens, which were carried away in a laundry cart!

The large amount of cash that is present after each service tempts both amateur and professional thieves. Thieves know that the cash is collected and then may or may not be counted on site. In this situation, security cameras are important in protecting both the cash and administrative and security personnel.

Another unfortunate aspect of our controversial times is the potential risk of crimes against the clergy. Some clergy take positions that may not be popular with the local community. Although rare, in these cases, there is a risk of reprisals against the clergy. At a local large church in Houston, security personnel monitor the sanctuary during the services as well as all entrances and exits. And, it is not just the clergy that are at risk; church staff can also be the target of threats and assaults.

Every church has some additional facilities for daycare and Sunday school. Unfortunately, given the high divorce rate in America, monitoring these environments is especially important. Many churches also

# USING VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS



Before purchasing a security cameras system, your church administration should develop a clear set of realistic goals and specific objectives. These objectives will drive the placement of your security cameras and ensure that your systems assist in maximizing security at your church.

have an affiliated school on its premises. There will come a time in this country when every school will have a security camera system.

Another unique aspect of security in churches and synagogues is the large number of non-members that may attend functions at the church. Many churches rent out their facilities to other groups, such as AA or for concerts and lectures. Local children and adult sports leagues frequently use church gymnasiums. All of these types of activities bring large numbers of strangers to the grounds of the church.

So, what can security camera system do

for your facility?

The best thing about cameras is the deterrence factor they introduce to outsiders who do not belong on your grounds and to members and employees who do. It is assumed that vandalism and other crimes will be less likely to occur if potential perpetrators believe they will be caught, which is often possible through the appropriate application of cameras.

Knowledge of cameras at the church will generally spread through a community. This type of reputation can make outsiders reconsider an unwelcome visit to the facility. Peace of mind of both members and staff

can be quickly enhanced by the installation of CCTV. Many church security camera systems are also monitored by local law enforcement. If an incident does occur, the response time from local police can be greatly reduced.

However, security camera systems are not the panacea for all security problems. They can be used correctly, and they can be used in ways that are not truly effective.

The most effective use of security cameras are for the purposes of viewing and recording key events in many different locations throughout the church. Cameras can be placed in high-traffic areas both inside and outside the building. They can also be placed at all entrances into the buildings and placed to monitor the parking lot and grounds. Detection systems with an alarm can be installed on all entrances and exits to alert the staff of any unauthorized personnel trying to enter or exit the building. The door alarm systems can be integrated into the security camera systems so that when an alarm event occurs, the camera view can be monitored and e-mail

People--They're your greatest assets. Manage them well.



## seekerworks™

### Ministry Management Software

automated follow ups (ticklers) >  
ez check-in™/check-out/scheduling >  
visitor/prospect assimilation >  
attendance/classes/small groups >  
spiritual gifts/volunteers >  
donors/gifts/pledges >  
the works...

Try it FREE  
for 30 days!



Copyright © 2001-2008, Wennblom Solutions, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

**Keep Your Visitors-** make sure someone follows up on them and they don't fall through the cracks!

**Secure You Children's Areas-** Save time standing in line with your kids with EZ Check-IN™ software, RFID hardware, name tags with pictures.

**Picture Directories-** by family or individual (print duplexed booklets)

**The Works!-** Track attendance, schedule volunteers, match gifts/pledges, organize small groups, classes, seminars, etc.

You'll wonder how you managed without it.

[www.seekerworks.com/download.htm](http://www.seekerworks.com/download.htm)

Questions? 866-seeker3 (866.733.5373)



Wennblom  
Solutions, Inc.

alerts sent to administrative or security personnel.

The second important function of a security camera system is addressing an incident after it occurs. A security camera system can provide church administrators or security officials with information that would not otherwise be available. Once the perpetrator is caught, there is a chain of events involving confrontation, denial, member involvement, consequences, and perhaps involvement of law enforcement and the legal system. Church administrators will be forced to spend a great deal of time on the matter, and all participants will find the process distasteful.

The third advantage of a security camera system may be cost savings. They can free up manpower for more appropriate work. Incidents at churches can consume the valuable time of both the clergy and administrators. By preventing vandalism, camera systems also result in direct savings to the church.

Finally, in our litigious society, the documentation that a video recording provides

can be invaluable in situations involving liability claims or lawsuits. One area church was faced with a lawsuit over an incident in their parking lot. With the use of the surveillance camera recordings, they were able to document that the individual who was suing was actually responsible.

### WHAT A SECURITY CAMERA SYSTEM CAN'T DO

Many churches also insist that their camera systems be monitored continuously by administrative or security personnel. This live monitoring might give a false sense of security. Monitoring video screens is both boring and mesmerizing. Trying to use a camera system to stop a theft in its early stages, prevent someone from bringing weapons into the facility, or catch a thief before he makes his escape are great goals but seldom achieved.

There are, however, some effective uses of live monitoring. One practical application of real-time viewing of a video monitor might be the intent to actively allow or disallow individuals to enter a particular locked

door. Another might be the live monitoring of collection counting or for a certain incident that is expected at a church during a finite time, such as during the services when cars in a parking lot are frequently broken into. But, live monitoring is expensive and almost impossible for smaller denominations.

As you can see, security camera systems can be an important weapon in improving security at your church. But beware! Too often, these technologies are not applied appropriately and are expected to do more than they are capable of, or are not well maintained after initial installation.

Before purchasing a security cameras system, your church administration should develop a clear set of realistic goals and specific objectives. These objectives will drive the placement of your security cameras and ensure that your systems assist in maximizing security at your church. **RPN**

**Linda Richardson** is the director of product marketing at Video Insight, [www.video-insight.com](http://www.video-insight.com).



## NURSERY PAGERS PROVIDE PEACE OF MIND

(for you and parents)

Enable parents to focus on the service while being confident your investment will perform week in and week out. You'll eliminate service disruptions creating the optimal environment for worship.

Choose LRS for:

- **Best Value**
- **Superior Warranty**
- **Highest Quality**
- **Premiere Service**

For more information, call  
**800.437.4996**



[www.pager.net/rpn](http://www.pager.net/rpn)