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# Living Water Church: Emergency Action Plan

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# Living Water Church: Emergency Action Plan

April 17, 2018

*PHOTO OF CHURCH'S LOGO, SIGN, OR MARQUEE*

### System, Characteristics, and Importance

Fires, lockdowns, and active shooters are all too common in today's world. In June 2017, a house in Waterbury Connecticut caught on fire while service was being held in the church adjacent to it (Stewart, 2017). In March 2018, a church in Mississippi was placed on lockdown while law enforcement officials used the grounds as a staging area during an active investigation (WAPT News, 2018). And in November 2017, a gunman opened fire inside First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Twenty-six people lost their lives, and many more were gravely wounded in the deadliest mass shooting in an American place of worship in modern history (KY3, 2017). It has become abundantly clear that churches are not immune to tragedy and violence. In order to protect those who spend their time there, Living Water needs to become resilient against fires, lockdowns, and active shooters. An Emergency Action Plan, "a written document used to facilitate and organize actions during various emergency situations" (United States Department of Labor, n.d.) can be implemented to help Living Water Church become more resilient than they are now, ready and capable to mitigate disasters that might otherwise be catastrophic. Living Water Church's highest aim is to, "see the hurting find hope and peace, the lost find purpose and direction, the struggling to find encouragement and passion, to see those who don't like church actually enjoying church, and for those not yet following Jesus to find forgiveness and freedom in His name" (Living Water Church, n.d.). Implementing this EAP will allow the church to become an even better and safer source of hope, peace, purpose, direction, encouragement, passion, enjoyment, and freedom in the town of Lewisville and beyond.

Living Water is located at 123 School St, Lewisville, Connecticut. Approximately 2.25-acres in size, the church's lot consists of an 8,000 sq. foot, single-level building and a parking lot that surrounds the building on all 4 sides (Appendix A). The building was built in 1994, originally a

used car dealership showroom before being converted into a church. Approximately 17,000 cars drive by Living Water's property on any given day (Larkin, 2018). A storage facility is their northern neighbor, a steel manufacturing plant sits directly to the east, and their southern border is shared with a truck repair and rental service. School Street sits directly west of the property (Appendix A).

The building is consistently used twice a week to host events. Every Friday night, Living Water hosts Celebrate Recovery, a multi-faceted recovery program. Anywhere from 40-50 people are there on any given Friday night. On Sunday mornings at 10am, 100-200 people gather to worship together in the sanctuary. The sanctuary sits in the western part of the building and building code allows for up to 300 people in the room at one time (Larkin, 2018). During the church service, children's classes are run in four separate rooms on the eastern side of the building. Combined, the children's program has 40-50 kids every Sunday, with 1-2 adults per room. Occasional parties, weddings, meetings, and other events are hosted at Living Water as well. Besides the building, the property also hosts numerous construction vehicles and utility vans/trailers.

### Threats and Vulnerabilities

Living Water faces multiple problems when it comes to resilience, but the biggest one is that they currently have no protocols in place when it comes to emergency management. Nobody in the church has assigned roles in case of emergency, no evacuation plans are posted anywhere in the building (or even written up for that matter), and no trainings are taking place. All of these things missing from Living Water are necessary for successful relief efforts (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). If a situation did arise at Living Water, it would be every-man-for-himself, as

there is simply no overarching response plan at all. According to *Principles of emergency management Supplement* (Department of Homeland Security, 2007), coordination is one of the biggest principles that governs proper emergency preparation and response. And the only way to coordinate efforts is to have standing policies and plans that consider all stakeholders involved. A complete lack of these policies is the biggest and most critical problem facing Living Water Church's resiliency.

Aside from a lack of coordinated relief efforts, some other things stand in the way of Living Water being as secure as possible during the event of an active shooter, fire, lockdown, or community emergency.

Active Shooter: Living Water Church is currently moderately vulnerable to an active shooter. Although violent crime in Lewisville is 25% below the national average (Area Vibes, 2016), the quantity of recent active shooter situations in this country is a huge cause for concern. The two doors leading into the children's wing do not have locks on them, nor do any of the doors for the actual classrooms. There is also no way to see through any of those doors, making it difficult or impossible to identify who or if anyone is about to enter. Additionally, there is no direct exit from the children's wing to the outside of the building. The only way out is through the main lobby. Finally, there is no formal security/lock down/evacuation plans for people to follow.

Fire: Fires are cause for concern in every single building. Living Water is not particularly susceptible to a fire and they are up to code per the building inspector. But if a fire did occur, it could result in damage, injury, or even death. The building does not have a sprinkler system, nor does it have any plans in place for rapid evacuations. Living Water is up to fire code, however, and their fire detectors are tested regularly.

Lockdown: It is unlikely that Living Water Church will need to go into a lockdown. However, if the situation did arise, Living Water does not currently have the resources or training to properly handle it. No emergency supplies (flashlights, bottled water, food, etc.) are currently being stockpiled. The only storage space large enough to house an ample amount of emergency supplies is the attic, to which there is no direct access from inside the building. Because of that, only a small amount of lockdown supplies could be stored at a time, but not even that is currently being done. Living Water also has no organized communications system to use to get information to stakeholders during a lockdown situation.

Community Emergency: Living Water has the unique opportunity to act as an asset in times of emergency disasters. Should something happen at Lewisville High School, Living Water can act as a staging area for law enforcement and other first responders. During a flood, terrorist attack, or other disaster in the community, Living Water is large enough to act as a temporary shelter, staging facility, and/or medical relief center. However, while large enough to do so, Living Water does not currently have ongoing relationships with local agencies such as police, fire, EMS, or Lewisville Office of Emergency Management. Because of this, they are not really able to be of much service during a town disaster.

### Potential Solutions

As stated before, a complete lack of emergency policies is the biggest and most critical problem facing Living Water Church's resiliency. However, a gap analysis done on the church (Appendix B) shows that some very simple steps can be taken towards rectifying this problem. The key factors for change that are outlined in the gap analysis can be achieved in 3 different ways:

1. Continue forward with **minimal security** oversight, promoting an every-man-for-himself approach to emergency response and resilience.
2. Use a **whole community** resiliency approach, establishing policies and protocols that require participation from all stakeholders in order to be executed effectively.
3. Mobilize an **exclusive security** team to handle 100% of emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Comparing cost, difficulty of implementation,  
necessary participation, and estimated success

Continued **minimal security** would not bring any new costs, making it the cheapest option. It is easy to implement as nothing has to change, and required participation is minimal to none, each person being responsible for themselves. This option leaves children and disabled individuals to fend for themselves and puts those with little or no safety training in a vulnerable position. It also ignores what the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2007) says plays a key role in resiliency: community collaboration.

Successfully using a **whole community** resiliency approach would encourage community collaboration and would give all stakeholders basic resiliency tools, allowing people to function independently but in sync with each other in an emergency situation. It would require moderate financial investments, as well as moderate participation from all or most of the church's stakeholders. It would be beneficial for those who cannot look out for themselves, but would require individuals in leadership to carry a bit more responsibility than others.

Mobilizing an **exclusive security** team would be the most expensive of the three options, as it would require ample training for an elite group of people. Logistically, it would not be difficult to implement, as communication would only have to be spread between a few people.

Members of the team would have to be very dedicated and willing to participate extensively in security efforts. Each member would carry a large amount of responsibility. If one or more members were not available in an emergency, relief efforts would be severely limited.

All things considered, a **whole community** resiliency approach is Living Water's best course of action. On a large scale, a whole community approach, "attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal governmental partners" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011). On a Living Water Church-sized scale, this means uniting ministry leaders, staff, volunteers, regular attenders, and all other stakeholders under one goal: resiliency. It means ensuring all stakeholders know the unique role they play in resilience and are able to execute that role when necessary in order for operations to run smoothly. Furthermore, it means building relationships with local community assets such as law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services (EMS), food banks, homeless shelters, and schools. Just like a family operates best when every member has a specific part to play, so emergency safety is best achieved through group participation, with each person having a distinct role to which they are assigned. However, despite the individual roles, everyone still needs to be on the same page, so leadership and oversight are critical. A community-based resiliency plan accomplishes all this by offering a coordinated response effort that still plays to everyone's strengths (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013) and has a clearly defined hierarchy of responsibility. It also advocates for a no-person-left-behind approach to safety, highlighting Living Water's goal of being united under one vision.



Successfully using a whole community approach to resilience would encourage community collaboration and would give all stakeholders basic resiliency tools, allowing people to function independently but in sync with each other in an emergency situation. It requires investments of both time and money, but it more than pays for itself in efficiency and resiliency. It is beneficial for those who cannot look out for themselves, but also requires individuals in leadership to carry a bit more responsibility than others.

In order to use the whole community approach to achieve the suggested key factors for change outlined in the gap analysis (Appendix B), Living Water must first and foremost institute a hierarchy of responsibility and authority among church leadership, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. This includes assigning emergency responsibilities among the hierarchy so all stakeholders have clearly defined roles in emergency situations, as emergency response is easier, smoother, and better when everyone knows their respective responsibilities (Cintas, n.d.). Tasks need to be delegated appropriately and a clear-cut chain of command should be established. An Emergency Response Team of church members from different fields of public safety should be created if at all possible. When assigning leadership responsibility, special consideration should be given regarding who is in charge of assisting disabled persons and children in the event of a crisis.

Second, *specific* procedures for evacuations, lockdowns, active shooters, and general safety need to be created. “Establish a detailed emergency plan that dictates how to respond, when to respond, and identifies a path of egress” (Cintas, n.d.). Evacuation plans should be posted in the classrooms, bathrooms, main lobby, and any other frequented areas in the building. A comprehensive alert system (phone, email, website, social media, etc.) should be established. It

can be used in times of lockdown and any other emergency situation in which it is deemed necessary to mass communicate among stakeholders. It can also be used to notify stakeholders of upcoming safety meetings, changes in policies or procedures, and anything else pertaining to the security of the building and everyone in it.

Finally, trainings on these plans, policies, and procedures should be held at least yearly, with mandatory attendance from staff and volunteers. Anyone in leadership should have active CPR/AED and first-aid certifications, and should be regularly trained on what to do in different emergency situations. The Emergency Response Team leader should meet regularly with team members and other church leaders to continually address questions, concerns, and updates regarding church safety.

To help prepare against an **active shooter** specifically, the children's wing on the east side of the building should be secured to make it less vulnerable to an active shooter. Peepholes should be drilled in all six doors in the children's wing. Sliding bolts should be placed on the four doors directly connected to the children's rooms, and deadbolts should be placed on the two general children's wing doors. Staff and members should be trained on the active shooter plan (Appendix C).

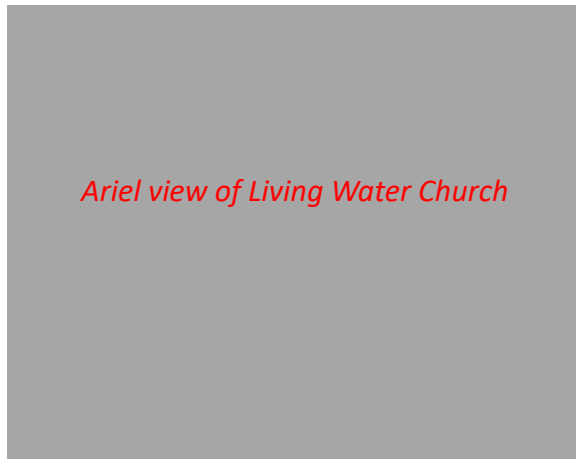
To further protect against damage and injury during a **fire**, children's ministry leaders should regularly go over fire safety procedures with children in their classrooms. Every weekend, the side doors in the sanctuary should be unlocked by the first person into the building and locked by the last person out. All exits should always be clear of snow, debris, and anything else that might hinder them from opening in an emergency situation. Staff and members should be trained on the evacuation plan (Appendix D).

To help a **lockdown** scenario be executed properly, Living Water should begin stockpiling emergency supplies in one of the two storage areas on either side of the state. These supplies should include drinking water, non-perishable food items, a can opener, flashlights, phone chargers, two-way radios, and a first-aid kit. Additionally, a master list of names, phone numbers, and email addresses of those who attend the church should be kept with the supplies.

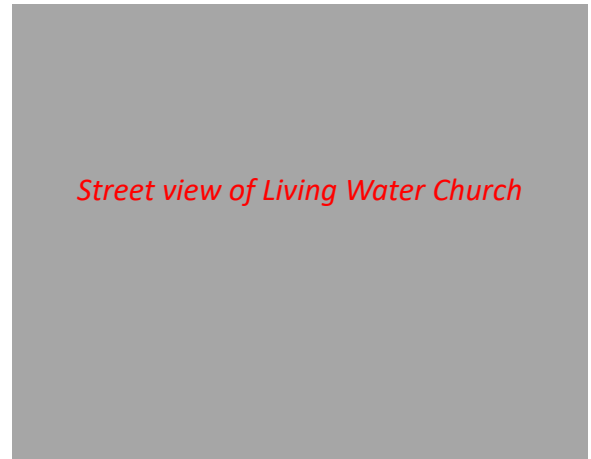
### Moving Forward

The task of moving towards resilience can seem daunting, overwhelming, and not worth the effort. However, when supported by all stakeholders and broken down into small steps, resiliency can be achieved without stress or panic. Appendix E outlines a breakdown of “next steps” that can be implemented to help make Living Water a safe, secure, prepared, and resilient church.

## Appendix A:



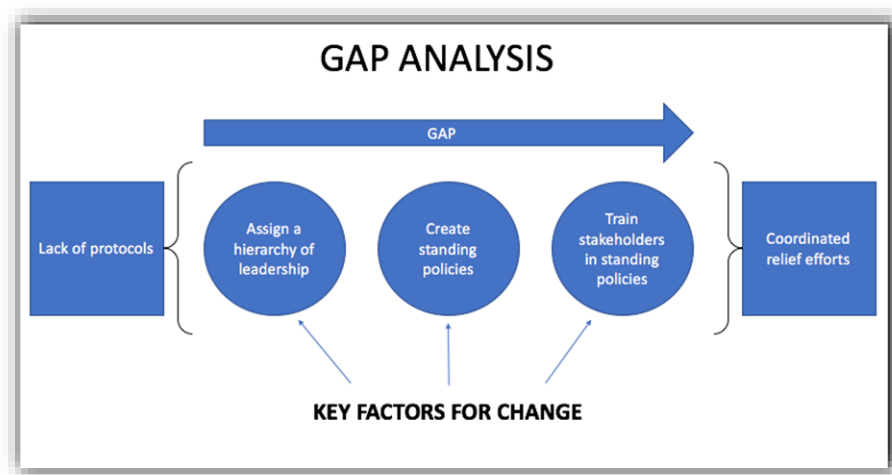
*Ariel view of Living Water Church*



*Street view of Living Water Church*

*\*Photos retrieved using Google Maps and Google Earth Pro*

## Appendix B:



## Appendix C:

### *active shooter or other disgruntled persons plan*

*most tips in this plan are taken from Ready.gov,  
an associate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*

#### **Before an incident:**

- Maintain general awareness of your surroundings and environment.
- Report concerns or alarming activity to leadership. If you see something, say something!

#### **During an incident:**

*RUN* and escape if possible

- Getting away from the shooter or shooters is the top priority.
- Leave your belongings behind and get away.
- Help others escape, if possible, but evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Warn and prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
- Call 911 when you are safe, and describe shooter, location, and weapons.
- Assist disabled and elderly persons.
- Parents should **NOT** try to access their children. cKids head teachers are responsible for all their students.

*HIDE* if escape is not possible.

- Get out of the shooter's view and stay very quiet.
- Silence all electronic devices and make sure they won't vibrate.
- Lock and block doors, and turn off lights.
- Head teachers: lock classroom doors.
- Check in volunteers: move to cKids environment and lock main cKids doors.
- Don't hide in groups- spread out along walls or hide separately to make it more difficult for the shooter.
- Try to communicate with police silently. Use text message or social media to tag your location, or put a sign in a window.
- Stay in place until law enforcement gives you the all clear.
- Your hiding place should be out of the shooter's view and provide protection if shots are fired in your direction.

*FIGHT* as an absolute last resort

- Commit to your actions and act as aggressively as possible against the shooter.
- Recruit others to ambush the shooter with makeshift weapons like chairs, fire extinguishers, scissors, books, etc.
- Be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.
- Throw items and improvise weapons to distract and disarm the shooter.

#### **After an incident:**

- Keep hands visible and empty.
- Know that law enforcement's first task is to end the incident, and they may have to pass injured along the way.
- Officers will shout commands and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.
- Follow law enforcement instructions and evacuate in the direction they come from.
- **Take care of yourself first**, and then you may be able to help others.
- While you wait for first responder to arrive, provide first aid.
- Turn wounded people onto their sides if they are unconscious and keep them warm.

## Appendix D:

### *fire evacuation plan*

#### **Preparation for a fire:**

- Keep all exits clear from snow, bricks, and other items that may hinder quick exits
- First person into the building should unlock the two side exits in sanctuary
- Last person out of the building should lock the two side exits in the sanctuary
- If you see a fire, pull the nearest fire alarm. Remember, if you see something, say something!

#### **During a fire:**

- Walk calmly towards the closest exit (look for neon exit signs). **Whenever the fire alarm sounds, EVERYONE is to leave the building, even if you are sure it is a false alarm**
- Leave all belongings behind
- Assist injured, handicapped, elderly, and young
- Call 911 as soon as safely possible
- Gather in front of parking lot near *LIVING WATER CHURCH* street sign
- Do not, under any circumstances, go back into the building until it has been cleared by the fire department
- Children's ministry head teachers: Calmly lead your students to nearest exit, or exit farthest away from the fire. Have your children hold hands with each other and do frequent headcounts. Make sure you have all your students!
- **Parents should not attempt to get to their children in the cKids environments**
- Check-in volunteers: Assist babies environment teachers with evacuating babies
- Designated emergency response team members will check both bathrooms and nursing mom's room to make sure no one is left behind

*All other evacuation procedures, even if not for a fire, should follow this same plan. Exit the building through the closest door or the door farthest away from the danger zone. Gather underneath *LIVING WATER CHURCH SIGN* and do not re-enter the building for any purpose until given the all-clear by authority.*

### Appendix E:

<b>-NEXT STEPS-</b>		
<i>Less Than 12 Months</i>	<i>12 Months-3 Years</i>	<i>3+ Years</i>
Add locks/peepholes to all doors in the children's wing	Purchase AED	Put in sprinkler system
Hold first-aid/CPR class	Create a comprehensive communications system	Purchase generator
Establish an emergency response team/leader	Develop a discrete, semi-formal security team	Purchase a security system with cameras and alarms
Implement evacuation, lockdown, and active shooter plans	Start building relationships with local emergency organizations and schools	Begin acting as a short-term shelter in case of community emergency
Create master list of everyone who has a key to the building	Build access to upper storage area directly from within the building	Continue building relationships with local emergency organizations and schools
Create a master emergency contacts list for staff and regular attenders	Continue stockpiling lockdown and emergency supplies as necessary	Continue annual CPR and first-aid trainings and recertifications
Begin stockpiling emergency supplies	Continue annual CPR and first-aid trainings and recertifications	Continue plans and procedure trainings on an annual basis
Hosting annual plans and procedure trainings	Continue plans and procedure trainings on an annual basis	

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