



The Parish Safety Team

“Sheep Dogs” of Our Community Protect and Serve the Parish

Though few of us will ever experience the disaster of a home fire, it’s a common practice to install smoke detectors in a home to ensure the safety and security of our loved ones. Parishioner and Commanding Officer Ed Gallagher says this is the role that the Parish Safety Team plays here at St. Philip Neri. It works to ensure our community’s preparedness and overall safety should disaster hit — be it medical, environmental or one of violence.

“The threat of an active shooter, is it probable?” Ed says. “No. Is it possible? Yes. That’s what we prepare for. In this world, there is a need to protect the flock. For that you need sheep dogs. Well, we are sheep dogs.”

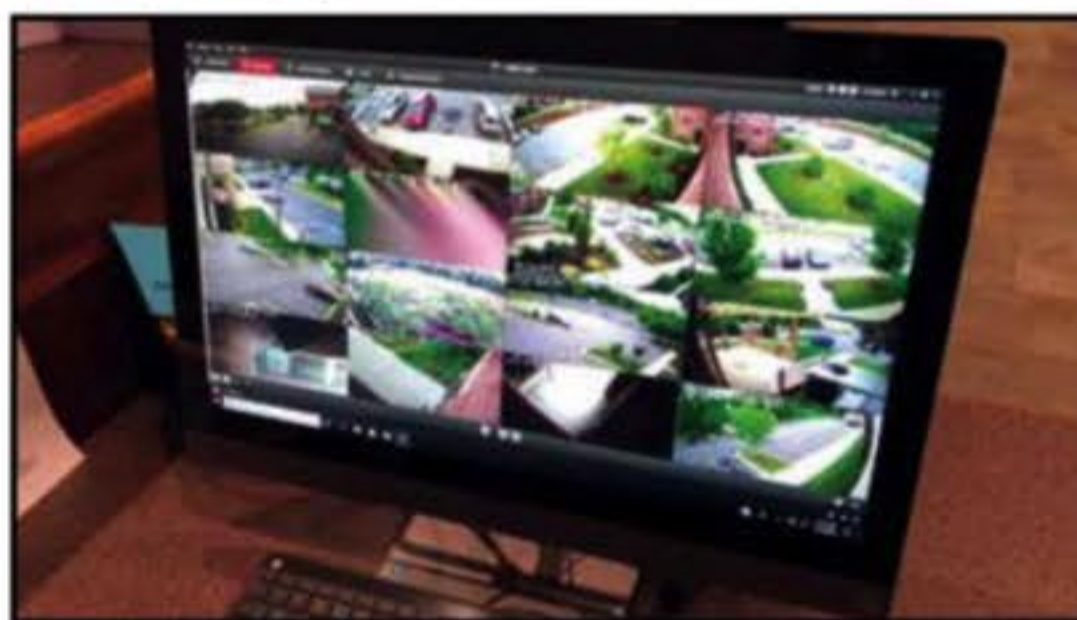
Ed says the process of forming the Parish Safety Team began in 2016 as a response to the growing

phenomenon of the active shooter in America. Seeing the growing need, Ed felt compelled to launch a ministry which would allow him to use his professional background as a retired Master Chief Petty Officer, USN, for the benefit of his church community.

“When it comes to stewardship, I think that people ought to do what people do well and what they like,” Ed says. “For the almost 30 years that I spent in uniform, I trained people to handle weapons and to defend a perimeter. I did a lot of anti-terrorism and force protection work. So for me personally, to be able to contribute my area of expertise to our church, parishioners and our Lord is very satisfying to me.”

Today’s Parish Safety Team consists of a committed

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A look at our Parish Safety Team in action (clockwise, from left): A Parish Safety Team member standing post at the front door of the church; Human Trafficking seminar; ASP Collapsible Baton Training; CCTV Monitors are one of the many ways the Parish Safety Team helps ensure a secure church campus; KDI badge

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group of parish volunteers, many with backgrounds in the military, police, EMS and fire service. The ministry has been formally recognized by the Diocese of Charleston and is also affiliated with KDI Security. Through KDI, the Parish Safety Team has been able to receive its South Carolina Law Enforcement Division credentials. As part of this process, Parish Safety Team members participate in a rigorous vetting system and ongoing training opportunities in order to ensure the best possible protection for St. Philip Neri parish and its members.

“We are the public safety force for St. Philip Neri Church,” Ed says. “We now have standard operating procedures for everything, from a lost child to a bomb threat. We are also fully aligned with our nurse’s ministry in the event of a medical emergency. We’re not

just here to protect the parish from crime and criminal activity. We are also there for weather emergencies, visiting VIPs, and any other area we might be needed.”

Though Ed says it is unfortunate that we live in a world where such safety measures are necessary, he is also proud to be part of a parish that has taken the initiative to get in front of potential dangers — he is proud, too, to be able to pass on his own expertise and to serve his parish community in this capacity.

“When I see a young girl in her white dress walk to the front of the Church to receive the Blessed Sacrament for the first time and her mother, father, grandparents and friends are there, I take great satisfaction in knowing that in no way is she going to be harmed while we are here on post,” he says. “That is all the thanks and fulfillment I need.”

If you would like more information about the Parish Safety Team and how to get involved, please contact Ed Gallagher at bmcm205@gmail.com.