

Keeping Churches both Accessible **AND** Secure

We operate in a dichotomy where churches need to be welcoming to individuals, but in today's world they must also be secure and protected. Some churches choose to keep their churches unlocked, even when there is no one in the church to monitor it. Though this practice allows visitors and parishioners to come and go freely, it presents a number of security issues. It is sad, but necessary that parishes must develop alternative methods to provide access to the church other than leaving the church unlocked or placing a key under a rock in front of the church.

By leaving the church unlocked, the church is exposed to the risk of vandalism and theft. In our faith the greatest risk is the exposure of the Blessed Sacrament to potential vandalism. When a church is unlocked a parish person needs to be around to offer protection and security from reprehensible individuals. There are several alternatives to leaving the church unlocked that will still allow necessary individuals to come and go without having a parish person present. Below are some of these alternatives which have been incorporated at parishes in our diocese:

1. **Lockboxes** are boxes that attach to the door or are bolted to the exterior wall of the building. A code secures the box where a key to the property is stored. The parishioner will input the code and gain access to the key. Lockboxes usually range in price from \$20 to \$100. If this method is used, the code to access the box should be periodically changed. This method is used effectively at medium and smaller parishes such as St. Hildegard in Menoken and Sacred Heart in Wilton.
2. **Key Fobs and Cyber keys** are electronic keys. The advantage to these is that the parish has the ability to restrict access by time of day as well as by who has access. These types of systems can typically more expensive however St. Joseph parish and school in Williston achieved installing a cyber key system within a limited budget. (Please follow this link to see more detail <http://bismarckdiocese.com/documents/Finance/Security%20System-Williston.pdf>).

It is important to note that while considering these options, there are places inside the church that only certain people should have access to and should not be open to public access. It is also important that areas, where children are or will be present, receives special attention when considering different options.

In addition to developing some of the above features, the parish work at developing a list of who has access to where in the church.

The article at <http://www.ctpost.com/police-reports/article/Shelton-church-vandalized-4590909.php> shows what could happen if a vandal gained access to the parish.