



From the NACCC Racial Justice Task Team  
Sub-Group Educational Offerings  
By Cynthia Hardy

## How To Guide: Inviting Local Police Officers To Your Church Event

My hope is that this guide gives your church some essentials on how to invite and build relationships with the local police officers in your community. Whether your location is rural, urban or suburban, this guide will give you the tools to host a town hall meeting or afternoon event. God intended us to love our neighbors (Luke 10:27) and as Christians, we should be orderly and abide by the commandments of our Lord and seek the common tie that binds us as children of God (Colossians 3:14) in our community.

This year we have experienced and witnessed considerable loss due to the COVID19 pandemic and deaths caused by racial injustice from police departments across our nation. Our lives have been turned upside down. My prayer to you is that you find strength and comfort in the spirit and the love of God to get you through and that you continue to bathe yourself in the power of His love, Amen.

If these random acts of disorder have you confused about the role of your local police officers in your community then say something and do something to seek resolution. God does not want us to be confused. Use this time to ask these questions to your local police department. Inviting the police officers to your church. It may take three months to plan and create a successful event. Make it simple and enjoyable for the volunteers, attendees and the guest speakers. Consider these basic elements to create the event and add items as needed.

**In the first month**, the church should have a meeting to discuss hosting an event; selecting a date, time, event name and purpose. The church should vote on whether a thank you gift should be given to the speakers. If approved, the next step is to form an event committee and select a Chair. Before the Chair contacts the police department to make the formal request for the police officers to attend the event, the church needs to select the type of event to host. It could be:

- **Town hall** with the officers as keynote speakers with a question and answer session immediately following their speeches.
- **Honor the officers** with a special blessing at the Sunday morning service

- **Family & Youth Funfest** have the police officers pass out informational pamphlets with treats and a giveaway at a table.

Next is to create the agenda. Here are two samples of two different event agendas for town hall and blessing service:

### **Town hall**

- Ask for bios and pictures of police officers to be printed on the programs and flyers, posted on the church website and social media
- Decide on the length of the event
- Reason for the event
- Request questions from the members prior to the date of the event
- How many questions

*Here are some sample questions that the congregants may want to ask: how long are the duty shifts at your precinct? Is it true that police officers usually stop blacks more than white drivers? Do the dispatch operators sometimes give the wrong address and description of persons of interest? Why are protesters vandalizing property? Why are police departments across the nation being accused of racial profiling? Why are smoke bombs being used for crowd control? Why is excessive use of force being used continually against unarmed Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter marchers?*

- Select prelude music and ask the church musicians to play for the event
- Sign up sheet for volunteers to setup, break down, food prep and other duties for the event
- Greeters to welcome guests and give out programs
- Ask the church Moderator to be your Master/Mistress of ceremonies.
- The Pastor will open the program with a prayer and give the greeting (includes directions to the bathrooms, make sure all guests have programs)
- The Moderator will introduce the speakers and have the questions ready for Q&A portion of the event
  - Speakers have 10 minutes each to speak
  - Q & A portion minimum of 15 minutes
  - Closing remarks & thank you by the Moderator
  - Closing prayer by the Pastor
  - Light refreshments to be served immediately after the event.

### **Blessing Service**

- Perform at regular morning Sunday service officiated by the Pastor

- Invited police officers (could be City, County, State and Federal officers).
- The blessing prayer and presentation of the certificates will be done during service.

***A sample of the Pastor blessing:*** *“In this season of distrust, We pray, Dear Father that you bring us together to overcome the spiritual evil among all people. We pray for strength and protection for our police officers as they go about their work of keeping the peace, preventing crime, caring for victims, assisting the mentally ill, finding the lost, regulating traffic, keeping demonstrations peaceful, fighting the battle against drug abuse, intervening in domestic abuse, protecting against terrorism, investigating crimes. We lift our hands to pray for protection by following your words: that no weapon formed against thee shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17); that they be strong and of a good courageous and fearless (Deuteronomy 31:6); that they will be protected by the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18); that you will generously give them wisdom and discernment (James 1:5). We pray for blessing and protection on their families of our police officers. We thank and praise your name in Jesus we pray. AMEN.” (Written by Rev. Victor Hardy)*

- The officers in attendance will stand before the church and each person will be given a Certificate
- The officers will have an opportunity to state their names, department and give remarks.
- A potluck fellowship will be served immediately following service.

**Special note**, before the Chair submits the request to the police department, it is highly recommended to have as much of the details about the event included with the request. This would be very helpful in the selection of the officers.

**After the agenda has been reviewed and accepted by the committee**, the next step is for the Chair to contact the local police department’s main administration office to make the request. This is a great place to start in your area. In this office you will submit your oral or written request to staff with your agenda and event details. It is also possible that the Administration office may direct you to either Community Services, Community Engagement or Community Policing & Crime Reduction department to submit your request. Generally, these different departments would handle the request for the officers to attend and participate in community events. Again, these departments may have a different name in your local municipality. That being said depending on the location of the NA member church, the office may vary. Not to worry though, the administration office will direct you accordingly. For instance, in Wetumpka, Alabama Police Department the contact person is Chief R. Lowery office. Whereas in Chandler, Arizona the Police Department has a Community Services Section that generally handles these types of requests. Currently the Sergeant to contact in this unit is Danny Mejia.

**In the second month**, notification of approval from the administration office begins the next step of publicizing the event on social media and in the local newspapers. Posting of the volunteer signup sheets for various duties and finalizing the agenda.

**In the third month**, continue to announce the event at all church services and on social media. Finalize the volunteers, food for the event and review any other duties assigned to committee members.

**Two weeks** before the event, reconfirm the police officers' attendance, volunteers' duties are assigned (i.e. setup, break down, food prep, servers, audio & video, etc.; purchase of thank you gifts, printing of programs and/or certificates).

**One week** before have a meeting with the volunteers to review duty assignments for event setup and break down; food delivery and servers; greeters, and audio/video. Make sure the volunteers and guests know the time and location of the check-in table.

**Day of the event**, the committee members will check in the guests, greeters and volunteers. Then give all volunteers their duty assignments and supplies for the event. The Chair will be the caretaker of the thank you gifts for the police officers and place an agenda on the podium.

**Two weeks**, after the event the committee will have a wrap-up meeting to thank everyone and get feedback.

Hosting a community event like this at your church, hopefully, will be the beginning of many more events with the police department.

**Building your relationship with your local police department:** Whether your church event consists of a formal town hall or Family & Youth Funfest with pie eating contest, the 21st century policing regards community and church relationships critical in building safe and crime free neighborhoods. Incorporating community initiatives in today's policing contributes to building trust and level of comfort for both the residents and the local police officers.

If your church is still not sure on how to host and invite the police officers, here are a few more suggestions: your first event (when it is safe after the COVID19 alert) could be as simple as: holding a "Coffee with a Cop" or "Pizza with Police" event. This type of casual forum encourages your church members to meet the officers who patrol your facility and neighborhood. It also lets the officers know that they are welcome to come in and use your restroom and grab a cup of coffee in between calls. Additionally, having an officer sit in his or her patrol car while writing reports on your grounds is a great crime deterrent and builds goodwill.

Consider asking the officers to the church for youth sports competitions, lead the safety briefing, visit with seniors, be the presenter for the community watch for churches. Also,

inviting the police chaplain to a church fellowship. You may ask the officers to bring information on enforcement activities, provide crime prevention and response plans for the neighborhood to any of your church events. Most officers welcome opportunities to share information with residents in their precinct. Lastly, an invite could be given to the officers to enjoy a regular church service with potluck fellowship.

Your precinct could also invite your church members to join one of the citizen community groups such as Citizen Academy, Citizen Review Panel; Youth Coalition & Preventive teams or to volunteer at a local table event with the Officers. Providing these different opportunities to fellowship with one another creates a friendship and comfort level for both. It is a wonderful gift to behold. Building a working relationship early with your local police department is a God thing to do.

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Wetumpka, Alabama Police Department at City of Wetumpka Administrative Building 408, South Main Street Wetumpka, Alabama 36092 Non-Emergency Phone #: (334) 567-5321