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Lock Doors Mid-Service vs. Open Doors

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This is ONE guy's perspective that must be weighed against law, insurance, culture, etc.

Note: This is a separate question from whether you have a security team, how they are identified, or whether they are armed. Door policy is a physical access control decision that affects everyone — including late arrivals.

Whether to lock the doors once your service begins is one of the most debated decisions in church security. It is also one of the most misunderstood. There is no single right answer. The right policy depends on your campus layout, your threat environment, your congregation's culture, and whether your team can actually enforce whatever policy you set. What matters most is that the decision is intentional, written down, and known by your team.

Also the elements here also can easily apply to non-service times (M-F for example). Also this can apply to certain “zones” like sanctuary vs. “kids area” might be different along with “back doors” vs. front lobby doors. A locked door should never prevent egress access in an emergency!!

	Lock Doors at Start of Service	Remain Open with Monitored Entry	Open Campus — No Door Control
Pros	<p>Significantly reduces unauthorized entry once service is underway.</p> <p>Creates a hard perimeter — anyone entering after a set time could be subject to some level of screening.</p> <p>Consistent with active-assailant best practice guidance from law enforcement.</p> <p>Reduces disruption from late arrivals during worship or speaker.</p>	<p>Balances security with the welcoming culture of most churches.</p> <p>Allows late arrivals, parents returning from children's ministry, and restroom trips without incident.</p> <p>A staffed door provides a human checkpoint — a greeter who can read the situation.</p> <p>More defensible in congregations where locking doors would cause cultural friction.</p>	<p>Maximum accessibility — no barriers for first-time visitors or late arrivals.</p> <p>No coordination burden on volunteers.</p> <p>Consistent with a hospitality-first culture.</p>
Cons	<p>Locks out late arrivals, parents, medical personnel, and your own team members who step out.</p>	<p>Only as effective as the person at the door — an untrained greeter is not a security checkpoint.</p>	<p>No perimeter control whatsoever.</p>

	<p>Requires a volunteer or staff member to monitor the door — who then cannot respond elsewhere.</p> <p>Creates a liability question if someone cannot enter in an emergency.</p> <p>Cultural resistance is high in churches that emphasize being welcoming.</p>	<p>A determined bad actor can still enter.</p> <p>Requires clear protocols for what the door monitor does when they have a concern.</p>	<p>A threat actor has unrestricted access at any point during the service.</p> <p>Difficult to transition to a harder posture during an event if needed.</p>
Also Consider	<p>Have you physically walked your campus at service time? How many unlocked doors exist that are not the front entrance?</p> <p>Locking front doors while leaving side and rear doors open provides false assurance.</p> <p>Consider a 'soft lock' — a staffed door with a keypad or intercom for verified late entry.</p>	<p>Who is stationed at the door, and what are they trained to do if someone raises concern?</p> <p>A monitored entry is only as strong as the judgment and training of the monitor.</p> <p>Consider a two-person door team: one greeter, one security role.</p>	<p>An open campus is a policy choice, not a default — make it intentionally and document the tradeoff.</p> <p>Pair with strong interior positioning and situational awareness training for your team.</p> <p>Revisit this decision annually or after any incident or near-miss.</p>