

British clergy warned to leave collars at home: A safety measure

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A British church safety group is advising clergy—from the archbishop of Canterbury on down—to reduce the risk of being attacked by taking off their clerical collars when they go out while off duty.

A new report issued by National Churchwatch says clergy are in danger from assailants who believe that they have money or who bear some sort of “grudge against God.” Clergy may also be viewed as people unlikely to fight back, said the independent group.

In Britain, five vicars have been murdered in the past decade, and in a survey of 90 members of the clergy that Churchwatch president Nick Tolson said he conducted last year, nearly half reported they had been attacked in some way during the previous 12 months.

The Church of England was lukewarm about the safety advice, saying in a statement that while it was welcomed, church rules still state that “clergy should dress as clergy.”

“I feel much safer wearing my ‘dog collar’ when I’m walking through the streets at night,” David Houlding of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London told the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper. “There is still an air of respect to it,” and “most of the time, I wear it every day. It’s my uniform.” -*Religion News Service*