

Dear Family of Faith,

I am writing to let you know about Trinity's policy on the "open carry" of handguns. On January 1, 2016, Texas law will change allowing the "open carry" of handguns. This change has given us an opportunity to think deeply about the place and role of guns in our common life at Trinity Church.

Much of our life as a parish is guided by the simple statement made by Jesus in Luke 17, "The Kingdom of God is among you." The presence and coming nearness of the Kingdom or Reign of God is a core teaching of Jesus. We live into this teaching by our continual recognition that God is sovereign over every part of our lives, especially when we gather at church. At times this has meant we act out of peace, compassion, justice, generosity, or faithfulness. Most often it means that we aspire to be an example of God's kingdom among us.

We know that we do not yet live in the coming Reign of God, and still we believe that one day Jesus will come again bringing the fullness of God's plan for all people over the whole earth. Until that day we make every effort to live in ways that are ordered, blessed, and guided by God. Most especially when we gather at Trinity for worship, fellowship, teaching, and prayer we recognize the abiding presence of God among us. In doing this, our church, its ministries, and members become an example of what God's reign could be in this time.

We also carry the responsibility of keeping our church and school safe. Now we must ask ourselves: Are those who bring guns to church or school trained to keep large numbers of people safe in adverse circumstances? We have no way to verify such information on a Sunday morning or at student drop-off/pick-up. It seems this is a duty best performed by trained professionals.

There are important practical reasons that the open carry of handguns will not be allowed at Trinity Episcopal Church and School including the potential for children to discover or play with misplaced or unsecured weapons. The primary reason for this policy is our desire to continually abide within God's kingdom, a place where God's love reigns and where all people are safe to worship, study, fellowship, and pray.

What does this all mean from a practical standpoint?

- For the first three Sundays of January we will make announcements at Sunday services and in the worship bulletin about our policy.
- Anyone arriving at Trinity openly carrying a handgun will be given a copy of our policy and asked to comply.
- The Wardens, Vestry, and I will continue to determine further needs regarding guns on church and school property and inform you as our policy develops.

Finally, there are responsible gun owners in our congregation and many of them do not ever bring a weapon to church. The decision for an in-depth look at the subject of guns is prompted by the change in law and is not motivated by any action taken in the church. It has given us a rich opportunity to think theologically about the place of guns in church and to consider the best options for a safe church and school.

This Sunday, January 3, the clergy, Wardens, and Vestry will be in the Parish Hall to answer questions, listen to suggestions and concerns, and to be in conversation with you about Trinity's Gun Policy. If you are unable to be with us this Sunday, please do be in touch with any of us to discuss further.

I pray that your Christmastide is full of God's blessings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlye J. Hughes" with a cross at the end of the line.

Grace and peace,  
Mother Carlye+