



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Office of the Bishop

January 4, 2016

Dear Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas:

You are undoubtedly aware that on January 1, 2016, persons licensed to carry a concealed handgun became entitled to carry them openly—in a holster—in most public places in Texas. Sadly, at the same time the Legislature also removed the gun-free protection that churches previously enjoyed under prior law. Fortunately, however, the Legislature affirmed that churches—like other property owners—have the legal right to exclude handguns from their property by taking affirmative steps to do so.

I want to be very clear: notwithstanding the change in Texas law, our longstanding policy in the Diocese of Texas remains the same—guns have no place in our churches, schools, and institutions. Other than those carried by officers of the peace or security officers on duty, we will adhere to our policy prohibiting guns on church and school property because we believe that our responsibility is to promote an atmosphere of peace and safety. The presence of firearms on church property is inconsistent with our diocesan vision of evangelism, service, and reconciliation.

Each of our congregations, schools, and institutions needs to communicate to its employees and constituents our expectation that guns will not be brought onto its property. At my request, our diocesan chancellor David Harvin has analyzed the new law and offered the attached suggestions on how congregations, schools, and institutions can implement our gun-free policy in light of what the new legislation requires. I expect the governing bodies of our churches, schools and institutions now to adopt measures that are appropriate for their own circumstances to implement our gun-free policy.

Please read the following enclosure from a posture of prayer. I am deeply grateful for your cooperation on this matter.

Faithfully,

C. Andrew Doyle, D.D.
IX Bishop of Texas