

Trinity Lutheran Church Weapons Policy

1. PURPOSE

Trinity Lutheran Church is focused on spirituality, love, companionship, friendship and the enlightenment of Christianity and is dedicated to providing a nurturing and caring respite for all members and guests. We believe God intends the church to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all persons, committed to peacemaking and nonviolence. Individuals should be able to view a church as a place of sanctuary, worship, and peace wherein a personal and communal connection with God can be encouraged and enhanced. Accordingly, we believe that our church should be a safe place of worship and fellowship, free of weapons and related distractions. Notwithstanding this stance, we acknowledge that certain exceptions are necessary in this day and age so as to mitigate an immediate and life threatening danger to worshipers, clergy and staff in the unlikely event of an attack by an active shooter or other individual with malicious intent.

2. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Except with regard to specific exceptions which are set forth later in this policy, Trinity Lutheran Church prohibits weapons of any type on its property and at any church sponsored events. This general prohibition includes visible or concealed weapons, even those for which the owner has a valid permit. Prohibited items include any form of weapon or firearm; dangerous or hazardous materials, devices or substances; as well as any other explosive materials that are illegal under federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.

This policy applies to all Trinity Lutheran Church members and employees and also to contractors, vendors, and visitors. Anyone with a weapon will be requested to leave the premises, with a welcome to return without the prohibited item. The Pastors or Congregation Council may decline future attendance or usage of church property to an individual or group in violation of this policy.

Individuals who are members of a military unit, honor guard or similar group are exempted from this policy if they receive permission from a Trinity Lutheran Church pastor or the President of Congregation Council to appear on church property to participate in a ceremonial function. Furthermore, to mitigate an immediate and present danger to life to those on the property of Trinity Lutheran Church, the Congregation Council may allow the possession of concealed weapons only under the limited conditions stated in Section 3 below.

2.1 Statement of Intent

Our intent is for this policy to be more restrictive than what is provided for under Michigan law by only allowing active and retired law enforcement personnel, authorized security company personnel contracted for special events, and certain Trinity Lutheran Church members who have been approved, in writing, by the Executive Committee as set forth in Section 3, to carry concealed weapons on church property.

2.2 Definition of Weapons and Trinity Lutheran Church Property

Weapons are considered items that are intended to threaten or cause bodily harm, including, but not limited to, weapons or replicas of weapons, firearms, explosive devices, tasers, knives with blades longer than 3 inches or double-sided blades*, throwing stars, nunchucks, nightsticks, and similar items.

* Knives used in the kitchen/hospitality areas are excluded from the blade length rule.

Trinity Lutheran Church property includes all Trinity buildings, outbuildings, vehicles, parking lots, wooded areas, and lawns where Trinity activities are normally held. Private residences and vehicles are outside of the scope of this policy, except that all weapons carried in a private vehicle while parked on Trinity property must be kept safely secured and out of view within the private vehicle.

3. SPECIFIC CONTROLS FOR WEAPONS

As noted in Section 2 above, Trinity Lutheran Church hereby adopts a policy which prohibits individuals from carrying or possessing weapons on its property unless they are specifically authorized to do so under the following limited conditions:

3.1 Permission Level 1:

Current law enforcement officers who are visiting and/or worshiping at Trinity Lutheran Church are permitted to carry a concealed weapon while they are on Church property. They are requested to but need not obtain prior approval from the Executive Committee or the Senior Pastor.

- If a current law enforcement officer chooses to carry concealed, the church would encourage them to assist with the mitigation of an active shooter incident.
- It is requested that officers communicate to the Senior Pastor and the President of the Congregation Council, in writing, their intent to carry and which service(s) they usually attend.
- Law enforcement officers must maintain weapon qualification with their respective law enforcement agencies. Proof of qualification should be provided on a yearly basis at the request of the Executive Committee. If they should lose this qualification or fail to provide evidence of qualification as requested, they may not carry weapons at Trinity Lutheran Church unless they qualify under another provision of this weapons policy.

3.2 Permission Level 2:

Retired law enforcement officers who are visiting and/or worshiping at Trinity Lutheran Church. These individuals are retired law enforcement officers that would have successfully completed either the state or federal law enforcement certification program, and who have retired under honorable conditions and in good standing.

- If a retired law enforcement officer chooses to carry concealed, the church would encourage them to assist with the mitigation of an active shooter incident.
- Retired officers must communicate to the Senior Pastor and the President of the Congregation Council, in writing, their intent to carry weapons and which service(s) they usually attend.

- Retired law enforcement officers must maintain weapon qualification and provide proof of such qualification on a yearly basis. If they should lose this qualification or fail to provide evidence of qualification, they may not carry at Trinity Lutheran Church.
- The retired officer must have the concealed weapon under their control at all times.
- The weapon will not be allowed to be handled by anyone other than the retired officer.
- Openly displaying a weapon at any time while on church property, except when handling or addressing a threat, is prohibited.
- The Executive Committee may demand a retired officer not carry a weapon if for any reason it feels the welfare of the congregation or an individual is in danger. If the person does not honor the request the Congregation Council may take legal action to have the person restricted from the property.

3.3 Permission Level 3:

Employees of a security company contracted to provide security for special events on Trinity Lutheran Church property. These individuals may carry firearms or other weapons on church property only while exercising the duties for which they have been contracted for the specified event as long as said individuals are authorized under Federal and State law to carry a weapon concealed or openly displayed. After the terms of the contract are completed, these individuals may not carry firearms or other weapons on church property unless they also qualify under Permission Level 1 or 2 or 4.

3.4 Permission Level 4:

Trinity Lutheran Church Members who are licensed by the State of Michigan or another state to carry a concealed weapon shall be allowed to carry a concealed weapon or firearm on church property only if they are granted written permission by the Executive Committee. Any Church Member that is not qualified to carry a weapon or firearm pursuant to permission Level 1, 2, or 3, must submit a written request to carry a concealed weapon on church property to the President of Congregation Council. The President of the Congregation Counsel shall, within a reasonable time, cause an appropriate background check to be completed with regard to said individual and shall submit the results of the background check and recommendations to the Executive Committee which shall, by majority vote, determine whether or not the individual seeking permission shall be allowed to carry a firearm or other weapon on church property. The individual seeking permission shall be provided with a written acceptance or rejection of his or her request to carry within seven (7) days of the Executive Committee's decision.

Furthermore, to obtain and continue to qualify for Level 4 status, the individual will need to maintain the following requirements:

- The person must be granted written permission by the Executive Committee;
- The person must pass the State of Michigan CPL (Concealed Pistol License) safety program and possess a current CPL;

- The person must pass a background check on an annual basis and provide verification of their continuing possession of a CPL;
- The person must have the weapon concealed and under their control at all times;
- The weapon will not be allowed to be handled by anyone other than the owner;
- The weapons shall not be left on Church property but shall instead remain with the person granted permission to carry;
- Openly displaying a firearm or other weapon at any time while on Church property, except when handling or addressing a threat, is prohibited.
- The Executive Committee may demand that a person with Level 4 status not carry a weapon if for any reason it feels that the welfare of the congregation or an individual is in danger. If the person does not honor the request, the Congregation Council may take legal action to have the person restricted from the property.

3.5 Loss of Permission to Carry a Firearm or Other Weapon:

- If any of the above Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 requirements are lost, denied or violated, the permission to carry a weapon shall be revoked immediately.
- The Executive Committee or Senior Pastor may temporarily suspend an individual's permission to carry a weapon due to a safety concern. The suspension will be reported to the President of Congregation Council and the Executive Committee within two (2) business days of implementing the suspension. The Executive Committee will review the information and make a prompt decision regarding the suspension which decision shall be made in writing and presented to the person affected by the suspension.
- The Executive Committee may, by majority vote, permanently revoke the permission to carry a weapon at any time and for any reason unless that decision is contrary to State of Michigan law with regard to those qualifying under Level 1.

4. ENFORCEMENT OF POLICY

To ensure that weapons and other prohibited items are not present on its property, and when there is a reasonable suspicion of possession of prohibited weapons, materials or substances, Trinity Lutheran Church reserves the right to inspect personal belongings (including, but not limited to, items such as packages, purses, backpacks, or lunch bags) or to request that such items are not brought onto Trinity premises.

5. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy shall be made available to the congregation in at least the following ways. It shall be:

- Referenced in The Messenger for two months.
- Published on the church's website.
- Filed with Trinity's existing Policies and Procedures.

- Published in full and available at the Welcome Center in the Courtyard for the first three months after approval, and thereafter upon request from the church office.

6. MAINTENANCE OF POLICY / RECORD KEEPING

The Executive Committee shall maintain a file containing the copies of all requests to carry a weapon which are directed to the President of the Congregation Council, copies of all writings granting permission to carry, and copies of all background checks, correspondence and other documents related to implementation of this policy, including decisions by the Executive Committee to grant and/or deny or suspend or revoke an individual's right / ability to carry a weapon under this policy.

7. CHANGES IN POLICY

This policy shall be reviewed by the Congregation Council on a yearly basis and may be amended at any time by majority vote of the Members of the Congregation Council.

Effective August 1, 2020