

Tuesday in Holy Week
April 4, 2023

My dear Siblings in Christ Jesus,

I write during this most holy season in the Church's life to share that the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i is now a "Gun Free Zone." Until the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling - *N.Y. State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, such a policy did not seem to be needed in Hawai'i. Events far away have again impacted our Islands.

At my initiative, the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council have each adopted the following resolution with the accompanying explanation:

RESOLUTION: PROHIBITION OF FIREARMS ON THE PROPERTY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN HAWAI'I

Resolved, that the Bishop, Standing Committee and Diocesan Council directs that the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i is a "Gun Free Zone" and that the carrying of firearms is prohibited in the Cathedral, all Parishes, all Missions, all Preaching Stations, Camp Mokulē'ia, St. Andrew's Schools, and on all property owned and managed by the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i and incorporated Parishes except by duly authorized civil authorities in the exercise of official duties, or church, camp or school authorized security or other personnel; be it further

Resolved, that the Diocesan Support Center be instructed to obtain or produce placards and public notices to be publically posted instructing the public that firearms are prohibited anywhere in the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i; be it further

Resolved, the clergy-in-charge, Senior/Bishop Wardens and Junior Warden ensure that such placards and public notices be posted at the entrances of all Episcopal Churches in Hawai'i, and that all tenants of the congregations be informed of the policy; be it further

Resolved, that the Director and Board of Camp Mokulē'ia ensure this policy is publically shared with all employees and guests of the Camp; and be it further

Resolved, that the the Head of School and Board of St. Andrew's Schools ensure this policy is publically shared with all employees and those coming onto the campus.

EXPLANATION

The 2022 U.S. Supreme Court ruling - *N.Y. State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen* (“*Bruen*”) - in which gun regulations were broadly relaxed. The *Bruen* decision struck down a New York law requiring concealed carry applicants to show “proper cause” to carry a handgun in public. Consequently, the public carry of firearms was allowed throughout the United States, including here in Hawai‘i. While Counties are adopting bills providing for restrictions of firearms on public property, churches are not included. The resolution publically declares all property of the Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i to be “Gun Free Zones”.

Church property must provide safe spaces of peace. By acts of General Convention, this resolution is in keeping with the policy of The Episcopal Church:

2000-B007

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention request members of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to acknowledge that the violence in our communities is encouraged and enabled by the presence of guns; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention call upon all members of the church to work intentionally in their several committees, legislatures, and institutions toward the removal of handguns and assault weapons from our homes, other residential communities, and vehicles.

2012-D003

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention requests every parish and every diocesan place of work to declare their establishments as Gun Free Zones.

This resolution is intended for all church, camp and school related buildings on grounds owned by the Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i. It is recognized that some congregations have commercial leases with tenants having 24/7 “control” of property for an extended period. In such cases, the “tenant” has control of the requirements for entrance to the property.

On the other hand, there are those who “use” space as short-term tenants or just guests: AA groups or congregations of other denominations. In such situations, these requirements will come immediately in effect for those with no lease and must be included in future leases for those who use space on a limited basis. In any event, the “Gun Free Zone” signage must be posted.

It is acknowledged that the Diocese has no control over space used by a congregation not owned/leased by the Church or subject to diocesan

policy. For example, should a congregation worship in rented space or in an individual's yard.

It is also noted that some rural congregations allow licensed hunters on church property to deal with trapped wildlife. This is allowed as "authorized personnel" in such situations.

What do we do if a private citizen with a license to carry gun comes onto the property legally armed – including a parishioner or parent? We must be clear on TECH policy. There is no expectation that individuals will be questioned or searched. If a person chooses to disclose that they are armed or a gun seen, then action should be taken. Leaders or authorized personnel of the congregation/camp/school (clergy, wardens, members of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, appropriate staff or security) can be polite, but firm. If the individual is uncooperative, they can be politely asked to leave the premises. Confrontation should be avoided. If the person fails to leave, the police should be immediately called, and the person trespassed. In such a situation, worship should be delayed in the church until the matter is settled. In other institutions, standard policy should be followed. Please immediately inform the Bishop of any such situations.

Sharing the policy of the Episcopal Church (both by General Convention and the Diocese) regarding church property being "Gun Free Zones" is very important.

This resolution was finalized with the input and engagement of the elected leaders of our Diocese. I appreciated the lively exchanges, questions, and concerns from our elected Diocesan leaders. We realize that we are acting as a religious institution upholding the teaching of our Church and exercising our oversight of God's property entrusted to our care.

If you have a concern or a question about this resolution or the "Gun Free Zone" policy please contact me at ["Send a message to the Bishop"](#).

This is sent with my prayers for a blessed Holy Week and a glorious Easter!

Your servant in Christ Jesus,
+Bob

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick, Bishop Diocesan
The Episcopal Church in Hawai'i