

NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD

Congregation Resource: Weapons on Church Premises

INTRODUCTION

God intends the church to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all persons, committed to peacemaking and nonviolence. Individuals hopefully can 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 a church should be a weapon-free / gun-free premises. Notwithstanding this stance, we acknowledge and respect individuals who are responsible gun owners, hunters, security officers, and military personnel.

Individual congregations are encouraged to have a specific policy related to having weapons on their church premises and to communicate that policy in the manner and at the time which best fits their individual congregational culture and consistent with how other such matters are communicated within the congregation. Please note that Michigan law prohibits weapons on church premises, subject to narrowly itemized exceptions or specific church policy.

SAMPLE POLICY

Sample language a congregation may consider using in communicating its policy related to weapons is provided below. Please modify as appropriate for your congregation. Congregations are encouraged to consult with their local attorney and/or insurance provider for additional input and guidance.

CHURCH prohibits weapons of any type on its premises 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 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 church pastor or authorized church council representative may decline future attendance or usage of church premises to an individual or group in violation of this policy.

Exceptions to this policy may include retired police officers, licensed private investigators or corrections officers, a military unit in the performance of ceremonial duties, or other statutorily-excluded individuals; however, it is important that the pastor of the church or the president of the congregation is made aware before the weapon is brought onto church premises or to the event.

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, 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 CHURCH premises.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ELCA Social Messages and Social Statements

These can be found at: <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society>

Examples include:

For Peace in God's World August 20, 1995 (social statement)

Living in a Time of Terrorism April 18, 2004 (social message)

Community Violence April 18, 2004 (social message)

The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries August 17, 2013 (social statement)

Michigan's Firearms Act (commonly referred to as the concealed weapon law)

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(2gqvkhj0ox2cxzsc1vkyzrav\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-28-425o](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(2gqvkhj0ox2cxzsc1vkyzrav))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-28-425o)

NWLMS Employee Handbook - Violence Prevention Policy (page 37)