



The BISHOP of ATLANTA
THE RIGHT REV. ROBERT C. WRIGHT

A Charge and a Pastoral Directive – April 28, 2014

For the Clergy, Wardens and Ministry Heads of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

Greetings in the Name of our Risen Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace,

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal has signed into law House Bill 60, officially called the Safe Carry Protection Act of 2014. This law is to go into effect July 1.

Given the implications of this law on our common life, I write to share a summary of the law as it pertains to our community and provide our Diocesan policy going forward.

The Safe Carry Protection Act makes it unlawful for even a licensed gun holder to carry firearms into "a place of worship, unless the governing body or authority of the place of worship permits the carrying of weapons or long guns by license holders"...

Diocesan policy

While the new law would permit churches to allow firearms in their buildings and on their property, the Diocese of Atlanta will not do so.

My judgment, charge and directive – as the ecclesiastical, or governing, authority of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta – is that with the exception of on-duty law enforcement officers, firearms are not permitted in church buildings or on church property. Georgia law permits and enforces this policy, and it shall remain in effect in this diocese.

Furthermore, according to the law, should a license holder bring a gun into church against the wishes of the church leader, the gun owner will be fined \$100. This also means that if "a non-license holder" brings a gun to that same church, he or she will be guilty of a misdemeanor.

My judgment and this policy are based on the normative understanding of the teachings of Jesus as The Episcopal Church has received them. This matter and I hope this policy afford us yet another opportunity to live the words we pray each week.

In the Name of the Prince of Peace,