

Carrying Concealed At Church

By Jason Curtman

Missouri RSMo 571.107 (14) lists as one of the areas prohibited from carrying any church or other place of religious worship without the consent of the minister or person or persons representing the religious organization that exercises control over the place of religious worship.

In this day and age, just because a building is a house of worship does not guarantee that it is not subject to being the scene of a violent encounter. Recent history has given us scenario after scenario of assaults, shootings, injuries, and even murders perpetrated at the hands of insane and violent church goers. Note that I did not say worshipers, Christians, or even church members. I said church goers. According to the Church Security Alliance, church shootings in 2008 were up 175% over what they were in 2007. They appear to be on the rise.

A good number of my classes in the St. Louis area are to members of churches and church security teams. A large portion of my students in all of my classes tell me that they plan on carrying concealed in church and that they have the pastor's permission to do so. I am delighted that so many pastors are seeing the importance of safety and security in the house of the Lord. After all, if you can't be safe in God's own house, where can you be safe at? I certainly encourage all pastors and church boards to allow their members to legally carry concealed in church.

All members who carry concealed in church should put their permission or authorization in writing. I know, I know..."My pastor is an honest man and he would never deny that he gave his permission!" But let's take a look at what could happen in a really bad, worst case scenario.

Your pastor has given you verbal permission to carry concealed in church. You do so for months without incident and then one Sunday morning the nightmare happens.

A crazy lone gunman enters the sanctuary and kills the pastor, kills a few others, and injures more. Several members draw their weapons and fire at the shooter killing or injuring him. Let's say that a visitor is wounded in the crossfire. Hopefully this wouldn't happen, but again, we are looking at extremes.

Months after the smoke clears and the fatalities are laid to rest; the injured visitor decides to file a lawsuit against the church and the members of the church who were carrying that day. A major issue that will arise is going to be whether or not these members had permission to carry concealed at church. You know you did, but the pastor is now deceased and cannot vouch for you. Not only that, but the new pastor, who is now facing a lawsuit, can say that he has never given you permission and that there is no record of you ever having permission to carry at church.

For this reason, I recommend that all of my students who carry concealed in church get it in writing. At least two copies should be made. One copy should be put in a file at the church and the other should be filed away in a safe location by the church member who will be carrying.

These minor details will seem insignificant before and maybe even immediately after the incident (God forbid there be one), but may come into play months or even years down the road. A little preventive planning will could save you a lot of grief and stress.

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