(POL-WEAPONS) Firearms and Weapons Policy

General Board Approved: May 31, 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear expectations regarding firearms and weapons on church property.

The 1st Free Will Baptist Church recognizes the importance of protecting the safety of the congregation, guests, staff, volunteers, children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The church also recognizes that an uncoordinated response to a threat may create additional danger. Therefore, this policy is intended to provide order, accountability, and clarity regarding firearms and weapons inside church facilities.

This policy is not intended to discourage lawful self-defense or responsible firearm ownership. It is intended to ensure that any firearm carried inside church facilities is carried only with proper authorization and in coordination with the church's safety and security expectations.

2. General Policy

No person may carry a firearm inside church buildings or facilities unless specifically authorized by the Lead Pastor.

Authorization is required whether the firearm is carried openly or concealed.

This policy applies during worship gatherings, ministry events, classes, meetings, private events, facility use, and any other activity taking place inside church buildings or facilities.

3. Missouri Law

Missouri law restricts carrying firearms in churches or other places of religious worship without the consent of the minister or the person or persons representing the religious organization that exercises control over the place of worship.

For purposes of this church policy, the Lead Pastor is the person authorized to grant or deny permission to carry a firearm inside church facilities.

4. Parking Lot and Vehicles

This policy does not prohibit a person from lawfully possessing a firearm inside his or her personal vehicle while parked on church property, provided the firearm remains in the vehicle and is not removed, displayed, handled, or brandished while on church property.

A firearm stored in a vehicle must be stored safely, lawfully, and responsibly.

2026-05-31

5. Authorized Persons

The Lead Pastor may authorize certain persons to carry firearms inside church facilities.

Authorization may be given to:

- Approved members of the church safety/security team;
- Law enforcement officers;
- Other individuals approved by the Lead Pastor for a specific reason or occasion.

Authorization may be granted, denied, limited, suspended, or revoked by the Lead Pastor at any time.

6. Church Safety/Security Team

The church may have individuals who serve in a safety or security role during worship gatherings and church events.

Those authorized to carry as part of the church's safety/security efforts should act in coordination with the church's safety/security plan and under the authority established by the General Board.

A separate Church Safety/Security Team Policy may further define team membership, training, expectations, communication, emergency response, and accountability.

7. Off-Duty Law Enforcement

Off-duty law enforcement officers may carry a firearm inside church facilities, provided that their presence and intent to carry is made known to the Lead Pastor as soon as reasonably practical.

The Lead Pastor may request that off-duty law enforcement coordinate with the church safety/security team during church gatherings or events.

8. Requirements for Authorization

Before a person may be authorized to carry a firearm inside church facilities, the Lead Pastor may require one or more of the following:

- Church membership or regular connection to the church;
- Valid legal authority to possess and carry a firearm;
- Background check;
- Firearms training;
- Safety/security training;
- Agreement to follow church policy;
- Willingness to coordinate with the church safety/security team;
- Demonstrated maturity, judgment, self-control, and reliability;
- Any other requirement the Lead Pastor considers necessary for safety and accountability.

A person shall not be authorized to carry if the Lead Pastor determines that the person's conduct, judgment, temperament, training, background, or circumstances make authorization unwise.

2026-05-31

9. Concealed Carry Requirement

Unless specifically approved by the Lead Pastor for a law enforcement or security-related reason, any authorized firearm must remain concealed while inside church facilities.

A firearm shall not be displayed, handled, shown, discussed unnecessarily, or removed from concealment except in response to an imminent threat or as otherwise required by law enforcement or emergency circumstances.

10. Open Carry

Open carry of firearms inside church buildings or facilities is not permitted unless specifically authorized by the Lead Pastor for law enforcement, security, or emergency purposes.

11. Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Areas

Firearms are not permitted in nursery, children's ministry, youth ministry, classroom, or vulnerable adult care areas unless carried by an authorized safety/security team member, law enforcement officer, or another person specifically approved by the Lead Pastor.

Any authorized person carrying in or near these areas must exercise heightened caution and must comply with all church safety and child protection policies.

12. Unauthorized Response to Threats

In the event of a threat or emergency, persons who are not authorized by the church to carry or respond as part of the church's safety/security plan should not attempt to respond with a firearm inside church facilities.

The church desires to avoid confusion, crossfire, mistaken identity, or an uncoordinated armed response that may increase danger to the congregation.

13. Other Weapons

This policy also applies to weapons other than firearms, including but not limited to large knives, tasers, clubs, batons, or other items carried or used as weapons.

This policy is not intended to prohibit ordinary pocket knives, small utility knives, tools, or other common items carried for ordinary lawful purposes, unless such items are used, displayed, or threatened as weapons.

The General Board may prohibit any item or behavior that creates a safety concern.

14. Storage and Handling

Firearms and weapons shall not be left unattended inside church buildings.

Firearms shall not be stored in purses, bags, desks, classrooms, bathrooms, offices, closets, or other unsecured locations.

Authorized persons are responsible for maintaining control of their firearm at all times.

If a firearm must be secured in a vehicle, it should be stored safely, lawfully, and out of plain view.

2026-05-31

15. Facility Use and Outside Events

This policy applies to all persons using church facilities, including members, attenders, guests, outside groups, and community users.

Outside groups using church facilities may not authorize firearms or weapons inside church facilities. Permission may only be granted by the Lead Pastor according to this policy.

16. Violation of Policy

A person who violates this policy may be asked to remove the firearm or weapon from the building, leave church property, meet with the General Board, or be denied future permission to carry or use the facilities.

Serious violations, threats, unsafe handling, brandishing, or unlawful conduct may be reported to law enforcement.

17. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the General Board and may be revised as needed.

2026-05-31