

COLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

POSITION PAPER ON FIREARMS AT CHURCH

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. (ESV, 1 Corinthians 14:33a)

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul exhorts his readers to maintain orderly and peaceful behavior when they gather together for worship. He bases his exhortation on the nature of God – that God is not a God of confusion but of peace. Our objective for corporate worship times is to provide an environment that is orderly and free of distracting elements. In our culture, differing views regarding the carrying of personal firearms have created opportunities for confusion and distraction. This paper explains the rationale behind our policy regarding firearms at church.

Worship is one of the primary means by which we enter into our relationship with God. As Cole's Philosophy of Corporate Worship states, "Worship is all that we are, Mind, Heart, Soul and Body, humbly responding to all that God is as He reveals Himself, initiated and empowered by the Holy Spirit." In the design of our gathering together, we desire to do those things which enhance each person's ability to enter into worship fully and to focus upon God solely during their various times of worship. Although some people are comforted by the presence of firearms as a means of protection from the violence that is rampant in our world, other people are made equally uncomfortable by their presence. This difference of opinion is not a matter of right versus wrong. The two views regarding the presence of firearms simply represent a part of the diversity in the way that God has designed His creation.

Although there may be times and situations that require followers of Christ to aggressively respond to violence, it does seem clear that Jesus does not intend for His people to prepare to face the brokenness of our world by allowing our assembly to mimic its character. Rather we are to sacrificially set aside ourselves and embrace Christ's call to be committed to redemption. Toward this end the gathering of Christ's body, the church, must be a sanctuary from the pervasiveness of violence in our world.

A firearms policy is one part of an overall strategy to create an environment conducive to rich fellowship and focused worship. Such a policy must consider biblical principles, existing laws, the likelihood of violence which could be deterred by the presence of firearms, the likelihood of an accident caused by a firearm, as well as the concerns and attitudes of church members regarding firearms. Given these variables, churches in different neighborhoods will come to different conclusions regarding the firearm policy that best provides sanctuary from violence.

In summary, as the church of Jesus Christ we are to be exemplary in our trust in God, our willing submission to Jesus' example of sacrifice, and our commitment to bringing the peace of Christ to this troubled world. Guided by the principles outlined in this paper, the Elders developed a firearms policy for Cole Community Church which is published in the document entitled "Policy Regarding Firearms at Cole Community Church."

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (ESV, Hebrews 12: 14)

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