

Detroit minister shoots attacker, debate on armed pastors continues

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([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) A good minister is supposed to protect his or her flock: pastor, after all, is Latin for shepherd. But should ministers carry guns?

The debate over arming preachers, and their congregations, may be rekindled this week after a Detroit pastor shot and killed a man who had a history of making threats against the church, who had entered the church on Sunday wielding a brick.

The 25-year-old suspect, whom officials say had sought help from the City of God minister in the past, was shot multiple times at the start of the 1:30 service, and pronounced dead at the hospital.

Pistols, like the minister's Glock, are not allowed in Michigan churches, although the *Detroit Free Press* reported a "packed hearing" just last week in Lansing, the state capital, as lawmakers debated whether concealed guns should be permitted in currently off-limits places such as schools, bars, and houses of worship. Concealed carry in churches is legal in roughly half of U.S. states today.

The City of God's pastor is now in custody; police have not determined whether to file charges. Although he has not been identified by the press, the storefront church's Facebook page includes links to the sermons of Pastor Keon Allison.

"Awesome Pastor who loves his members shows great concern and not ever too busy to come to your aid," one woman commented on Facebook. "Trully in the Soul saveing business."

The *Detroit Free Press* reported that while the city's clergy have often denounced violence, they haven't said much on the idea of guns in church. However, Andre Spivey, a pastor and member of the City Councilman, told the *Detroit News* that he hopes churches won't start to feel "like an airport."

But legal guns have a big fan in James Craig, Detroit police chief, who believes a rapid increase in legal permits has deterred would-be criminals.

"It was a well-known fact here in Detroit," he told NPR in April. "People didn't have a lot of confidence that when they dialed 911, that the police were going to show up. In fact, we know they didn't."

Detroit was highlighted as an example of dramatic changes in African Americans' views of guns: over the past two years, a Pew survey found, the percentage who believe guns are more likely to protect than harm is up from 29 percent to 54 percent.

But what does self-defense look like in a sacred space?

The debate over guns in church has soared since the June massacre at Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where a young man killed nine worshippers during a prayer service.

Pro-gun advocates worry that churches are open targets. Presidential contender Mike Huckabee was one prominent voice calling for churches' 'good guys' to arm up against the bad ones to avoid future tragedies.

But the movement to train congregants, security guards, and pastors themselves in proper gun use has been growing for years in churches that say that the admonishment to "turn the other cheek" cannot always be taken literally.

"If you have somebody of great moral character, as a pastor is supposed to be, that person should be trusted to have a firearm," Kenneth Blanchard, a Maryland pastor, told Al Jazeera. "You have to have your ploughshare and your sword on the wall."

One Catholic priest in Ann Arbor, just an hour's drive from Detroit, raised eyebrows (including his bishop's) by urging parishioners to take a gun course.

"We're Not In Mayberry Anymore, Toto!" his letter to the parish began.

In response, a spokesman for the diocese pointed to Bishop Earl Boyea's own letter on the notion of guns in church.

"We are followers of Jesus Christ, who raised not a hand against those who mocked, tortured, and finally murdered him," Bishop Boyea wrote in 2012. "While we grasp

both the Second Amendment and the legitimate right of some persons to defend themselves, our churches and our schools are dedicated to a far different approach to life's problems."