



# North Carolina Council of Churches

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March 1, 2021

Dear President Pro-Tem Phil Berger, Senator Danny Britt, Senator Warren Daniel, Senator Todd Johnson, and Speaker Tim Moore,

As faith leaders in North Carolina we are deeply concerned about the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of all people. Clearly, a safe place to worship and learn creates an environment conducive to this well-being. The presence of guns in our schools and sanctuaries does not. While the sponsors of S.B. 43, the Protect Religious Meeting Places Act, may be well intentioned, the facts do not support the claim that arming parishioners makes them safe.

Well documented statistics show that the presence of guns increases the risk of tragedy. This truth is born out in places of worship as well. A number of things can happen such as accidental discharge,<sup>1,2,3</sup> chaotic shootouts,<sup>4</sup> or, in the case of a January 3, 2021, church shooting, the gun owner was disarmed by someone who then turned the gun on the owner and others.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the presence of firearms could make it harder for law enforcement to distinguish between credible threats to public safety and those with concealed carry permits.

Linking schools and places of worship, as this bill does, only endangers the children who are currently protected by state laws that prohibit concealed firearms in all schools, including places of worship with an associated school. By removing this protection S.B. 43 will put school children at risk for all the reasons stated above. Furthermore, this bill will set a dangerous precedent that opens the way for private schools unaffiliated with religious places of worship to argue for an exemption from the firearms prohibition, all of which further erodes the prohibition of guns on school property.

Finally, and most importantly, those of us signing this letter hail from faith traditions whose holy scriptures explicitly prohibit violence. The presence of guns in our sanctuaries is contrary to our very being. Indeed, the Christians among us follow one who when they came out with swords and clubs to arrest him, said, “No more of this!” (Luke 22:51) and again, “all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Leaning on the teachings of our faith traditions and relying on evidence, we

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<sup>1</sup> Shapiro E. During discussion about guns in church, man accidentally shoots himself, wife: Police. November 17, 2017. <http://abcn.ws/39FfhkL>

<sup>2</sup> Jorgensen M. Church security guard injured in Lancaster County after another guard's gun was 'unintentionally discharged'. February 10, 2020. <http://bit.ly/3rhCia0>

<sup>3</sup> Reavy P. Gun goes off in Provo church, sending bullet into classroom of teens. September 17, 2018. <http://bit.ly/3arTsEv>

<sup>4</sup> Price M. 'Brazen' shootout at church funeral service leaves 18-year-old dead, NC police say. November 11, 2020. <http://bit.ly/39DGfcG>

<sup>5</sup> Madani D, Kesslen B, Stelloh T. Pastor killed, two other people injured in Texas church shooting. Jan 3, 2021 <http://nbnews.to/3oIRNiU>

affirm that guns do not make us safe. They should not be present in our schools and sanctuaries.

We continue to pray for our lawmakers. We give thanks for the care and attention you offer to make North Carolina a place where all can flourish to the best of their abilities.

Cordially,

Dr. Zoila Airall  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC

David Allgood  
True Worship Ministries  
Biscoe, NC\*

The Rev. Verlon O. Anderson  
Corinth African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church  
Siler City, NC

Elizabeth S. Andrews  
University United Methodist Church  
Pittsboro, NC\*

Beth Armbruster  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Durham, NC\*

Jeanie Aycock  
United Methodist  
Cary, NC\*

Christopher Baranski  
Kadampa Center for the Practice of Tibetan Buddhism  
Raleigh, NC

The Rev. Stephen J. Batten  
Episcopalian  
Chocowinity, NC

The Rev. Kathy Beach  
Rumple Memorial Presbyterian Church  
Blowing Rock, NC

Diane Faires Beadle  
St. Paul's Christian Church/Disciples of Christ  
Raleigh, NC

Jennifer Bell  
Christ the King Lutheran Church  
Holly Springs, NC\*

Karin Binx  
Parkway United Church of Christ  
Winston-Salem, NC

The Rev. Dr. Robert Black  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Salisbury, NC\*

David H. Bland  
St. John's Episcopal Church Wake Forest: Vestry Member  
Raleigh, NC\*

The Rev. Patricia E. Boswell  
United Church of Christ  
Greensboro, NC

Mitchell Boughman  
United Methodist  
Connelly Springs, NC

The Rev. Larry Bowden  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

Lori Anne Bowen  
United Methodist  
Newton, NC

The Rev. Lacey Brown  
Community United Church of Christ  
Raleigh, NC

Nalda Brown  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. John Bryant  
United Methodist  
Salisbury, NC

The Rev. Jason Butler  
Open Table United Methodist Church  
Raleigh, NC

Chris Calloway  
Carrboro United Methodist Church  
Carrboro, NC\*

Amelia Danielik Campbell  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
High Point, NC\*

The Rev. Paul Canady  
Christ Episcopal Church  
New Bern, NC

The Rev. Theodore Churn  
Presbytery of New Hope  
Raleigh, NC

The Rev. E. Christine Clore  
Kernersville Moravian Church  
Winston-Salem, NC\*

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland,  
Executive Director, N.C. Council of Churches  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Brian D. Crisp  
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Charles Daly  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Durham, NC\*

Carolyn Davis  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. Kellan Day  
Episcopalian  
Highlands, NC

Lana Dial  
Baptist/Triangle Interfaith Alliance  
Raleigh, NC

Rabbi Lucy Dinner  
Temple Beth Or / Reform Judaism  
Raleigh, NC\*

Felicia Flanders  
United Church of Christ  
Durham, NC

Rev. Dawn Flynn  
New Life Metropolitan Community Church  
Gastonia, NC

Rev. Tamara Franks  
High Country UCC  
Vilas, NC

Rev. Chris Furr  
Covenant Christian Church/Disciples of Christ  
Cary, NC

Louis C. Gadol  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Hillsborough  
Durham, NC

Lynne Gilbert  
West Market Street United Methodist Church  
Greensboro, NC

The Rev. Edith Gleaves  
Ocean View United Methodist Church  
Oak Island, NC

Rabbi Daniel Greyber  
Beth El Synagogue, Jewish  
Durham, NC\*

Stephanie C. Hankins  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Boone, NC

Patsy Harlow  
Epworth UMC  
Durham, NC\*

Diane P. Harper  
The Place Of New Life United Methodist Church  
High Point, NC

The Reverend Mr. Warren Heitzenrater  
United Methodist/Baptist  
Durham/Jackson, NC

Jennifer Heller  
None  
Hickory, NC\*

Mary Hill Henry  
United Methodist  
Hendersonville, NC

Suzanne Hetzel  
St. John's Episcopal Church of Wake Forest  
Raleigh, NC\*

The Rev. Steve Hickle  
Fairmont United Methodist  
Raleigh, NC

The Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple  
The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
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The Rev. Judith F. Hunt  
Wesley United Methodist Church  
Charlotte, NC

The Rev. Sara Ilderton  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Charlotte, NC

George B. Jackson  
Citadel of Faith Christian Fellowship  
East Spencer, NC\*

Henry Jarrett  
Fairmont UMC  
Raleigh, NC

The Rev. Kevin Johnson  
Macedonia United Methodist Church  
Cary, NC

Venerable Dr. Pannavati Karuna  
Buddhist  
Hendersonville, NC\*

Rev. Dr. James Kubal-Komoto  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh  
Raleigh, NC

Janis Landes  
Wilmington Friends  
Wilmington, NC

Pastor James Lea  
Locust Grove Baptist Church  
Efland, NC

The Reverend Sonja Lee  
Unity Fellowship Church Movement  
Charlotte, NC

John M. Lewis  
United Methodist  
Holly Springs, NC

Betty Lohr  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Hickory, NC\*

The Rev. Dr. Christy Lohr Sapp  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Hickory, NC\*

The Rev. Douglas S. Long  
Umstead Park United Church of Christ  
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Johnny Lord  
New Salem United Methodist Church  
Randleman, NC

Dr. John Lott  
Epworth United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. Bentley Manning  
Episcopalian  
Highlands, NC

Betty Matteson  
Epworth United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

William Matteson  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. Susan Mazzara  
Butner Presbyterian Church  
Cary, NC\*

Tamiko L. McCullough  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Preschool  
Durham, NC\*



Austin Meadows  
Bethel United Methodist Church/Locust Hill United Methodist Church  
Pelham, NC

Brandon Melton  
Presbyterian Church  
Durham, NC

The Rev. Gina Miller  
St. John United Methodist Church  
Avon, NC

Dr. William H. Mitchell Jr.  
Selvia Chapel Free Will Baptist Church  
Greenville, NC\*

The Rev. Kate Morrison  
Presbyterian Church  
Salisbury, NC

Fred L. Mowry  
Epworth UMC  
Durham, NC\*

Nancy H. Myers  
Epworth UMC  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. Linda B. Nelson  
Lutheran Church of the Living Word  
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The Rev. Aluce Geils Nord  
Presbyterian Church  
Mebane, NC

The Rev. Linda W. Nye  
Episcopal Church of the Epiphany  
Eden, NC

The Rev. Adam Pierce  
St. Paul's Episcopal  
Wilmington, NC

Carolyn R. Pilgrim  
United Methodist  
Waynesville, NC

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St. John's Episcopal Church  
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Jerry Prickett  
Episcopalian  
Alexander, NC

The Rev. Dr. Conrad K. Pridgen  
Western District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Whitsett, NC

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Hendersonville, NC\*

Eric Reece  
United Methodist  
Robbinsville, NC

Larry Reeves  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Cary, NC\*

The Rev. Dr. Michael Robinson  
PowerHouse Church  
High Point, NC\*

The Rev. Dr. Claire Robinson  
PowerHouse Church  
High Point, NC\*

Prophet Dr. Madeline B. Rogers  
Divine Refuge Ministries  
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The Rt. Rev. Samuel S. Rodman,  
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Wilmington, NC

Bishop Dr. Roy Rogers  
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Lumberton, NC

Dr. Anne Russell  
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Wilmington NC\*

The Rev. Rennie Salata  
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Mills River, NC

The Rev. Fran Spier Saylor  
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Spruce Pine, NC

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Hickory, NC

The Rev. Matt Seaton  
First United Methodist  
Rocky Mount, NC\*

The Rev. Kevin Seymour  
Ebenezer United Methodist  
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The Rev. Harriet G. Shands  
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Pisgah Forest, NC

Carol Shearin  
Fairmont UMC  
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The Rev. Bob Stillerman  
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Buddhist  
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Melissa H. Swanson  
Lutheran  
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The Rev. Judy Tavela  
St. Peters by the Sea  
Cape Carteret, NC

Rosalie Turner  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

William E. Unverfehrt  
Concordia Lutheran Church  
Conover, NC\*

The Rev. Bruce Updyke  
Kingswood United Methodist Church  
Rural Hall, NC\*

The Rev. Nancy D. Walton  
Trinity United Methodist Church  
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Katherine Watford  
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Lexington, NC

Rebecca Wheeler  
Epworth UMC  
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Leona Whichard  
Church Women United in NC, Vice President  
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The Rev. Jaye N. White  
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The Rev. Terry M. Williams, Sr.  
United Methodist Church  
Rocky Mount, NC\*

The Rev. Emily Wilmarth  
First Presbyterian Church  
Highlands, NC

The Rev. Amanda Fleishman Wilson  
United Methodist  
Durham, NC\*

The Rev. Melinda Keenan Wood  
Pilgrim United Church of Christ  
Durham, NC

The Reverend Sarah Woodard  
Episcopalian  
Durham, NC

The Rev. Rani Woodrow  
United Methodist  
Chapel Hill, NC

Rev. Katey Zeh  
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church  
Apex, NC

*\*Denotes congregations/faith traditions in which there is a school associated.*

