

Pastor Defends Carrying a Pistol in the Pulpit on Sundays

While a national debate goes on about the prevalence of guns in this country, one pastor defends his decision to pack a gun when preaching from the pulpit on Sundays.

The Rev. Larry Dickey at First Baptist Church in Sunizona, Ariz., about three hours east of Phoenix, shares his rationale on : “I do so because there is a need for people to understand that we need to defend families and ourselves. We are not a nation that understands how important it is to be vigilant in safely handling a firearm in a defensive manner—with courts and other segments of our society thinking if we are unarmed we will be a safer people.”

Dickey has had a CCW permit for Arizona, Nevada and Utah, and the training that goes with carrying firearms. “I was in one of the first Law Enforcement Explorer posts in southern California in the 1960s,” he says. “I have a degree in police science, now called criminal justice, and have been an endorsed chaplain with my denomination for more than 25 years.”

In the past five years there have been several shootings in churches, one in Illinois where the pastor was killed while in the pulpit. Says Dickey: “I have seen how under-protected we have become, by solely expecting law enforcement to keep us safe. They cannot. They will be the first to admit this. They need a population that is willing to step up into harm’s way and do what needs to be done, at a time that it needs to be done.

“If someone were to come into our church with a gun or a knife, they could do a lot of damage before the police could

get into the church. Even if we had officers in the parking lot, by the time they could get inside, it would be over. We, as citizens, need to protect what we love and be willing to lay our life on the line for them.”

Dickey admits that many people question whether guns belong in a church. “In my view,” he says, “we have seen and read of folks who entered a church with the intent of doing a fair amount of hurt and killing with the guns they carried into houses of worship. They expect people inside to be unarmed and feeling safe inside a church. This is not always the case.

“The truth is that in every state where the citizens are allowed to carry concealed guns, the crime rate is down. Conversely, in every state where citizens were not allowed to conceal carry, the crime rate has gone up. Look at California and Illinois. When people can defend themselves, you’re going to have criminals thinking twice about what they will do.”

Church Executive, a business magazine for larger and megachurches, also carried an article in its July 2012 issue about an executive pastor, Deb Kluttz, at Westview Community Church, Manhattan, Kan., who carries a gun on Sundays. She observed in the article:

“Westview does not have any of those stickers on our doors that say ‘NO GUNS’.” For us and other churches that do not employ a professional security team, it is a blessing to have cool-headed and responsible people in our congregation who are licensed to carry concealed firearms.”

Dickey strongly endorses training and practice in the use of a gun. “I choose to stay concealed, because if I were to open carry, I would become a target. If I am in a situation, I want to be able to get the optimum protection and position as possible. I can’t do that if I open carry.”

He says he is a firm believer that if more people carried either openly or concealed, the public would not have the

crime that it has now.