

# All those who take the sword will perish by the sword

by Rev. Monte Marshall, Senior Pastor, Travis Park United Methodist Church

I am a follower of Jesus, but in my childhood, my father gave me the gift of a 22-caliber rifle. I used it for target practice and, on one occasion, for hunting. In my early twenties, I came to see the discrepancy between following Jesus and possessing firearms. I proceeded to change my thinking and my behavior. I no longer own a firearm of any type, and I haven't for many, many years.

As a follower of Jesus, my perspective on violence and the possession of firearms has been influenced by the stories of Jesus found in the Christian scriptures. In Matthew's gospel, for example, those who come to arrest Jesus in "a place called Gethsemane" were carrying weapons of violence, "swords and clubs."

Apparently, Jesus was unarmed, but one of his disciples was carrying a sword. After Jesus had been seized, the sword-carrying disciple drew his weapon and attacked one of those who had accompanied the arresting officers, cutting off his ear. Jesus said to this disciple: "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword."

Because of stories like these, the first followers of Jesus renounced violence. There is a consensus among historians on this point.

But that was then, this is now. Swords are no longer the issue—guns are. The followers of Jesus today are all over the map on the issue of violence and the place of firearms in our society.

As the senior pastor of Travis Park United Methodist Church in San Antonio, however, my counsel to the congregation I serve is to follow Jesus by renouncing violence and the carrying of weapons. In my view, violence begets violence. The only way to end violence is to renounce violence and to put away the weapons we use to inflict violence.

Does this make us vulnerable to others who might do violence? Yes, but in the same way that Jesus was vulnerable. Are we defenseless? No, there are non-violent alternatives to the use of weapons that can be learned and practiced.

In light of recent actions by the State of Texas to affirm the carrying of handguns in a variety of public places, I am grateful that the leaders of the church that I serve have acted unanimously to adopt a policy that prohibits both the open-carry and the concealed-carry of handguns on our church campus. Our aim is simple: to follow Jesus.

We also gladly stand in solidarity with others of different faiths, and with those of no faith, who have taken similar actions and who share a common commitment to a non-violent world.



## EL PARQUE BRACKENRIDGE NUESTRA TRADICIONES EN PELIGRO



La mayoría de los habitantes de San Antonio tenemos un recuerdo agradable en el parque Brackenridge. Recientemente llevó a cabo una reunión para discutir un plan maestro para este lugar tan especial y sus alrededores.

El líder del proyecto es el arquitecto Jim Gray, de rialtostudios.com; en el equipo también están las firmas Alamo Architects y Ford Powell Carson.

El plan incluye desde la construcción de varios edificios para estacionarse; el cierre del tráfico en calles entrando al parque; el uso de un tranvía para entrar al parque; la creación de un gran jardín en las

áreas de picnic; el cierre de Avenue A, por lo que los visi-

tantes del parque deberán entrar caminando o en tranvía; y posiblemente una tarifa para poder usar las áreas de picnic y de campamento.

Supuestamente parte del presupuesto para estas modificaciones, de \$150,000,000 será cubierto por los fondos de bonos de 2017 que se presentarán al público.

Dicen que se necesita invertir en el parque porque está muy descuidado, pero sigue siendo muy visitado por la comunidad latina. Varias celebraciones que se realizan ahí son ya tradicionales. Los que usan el parque deben participar en las discusiones sobre cualquier cambio que pretenda hacerse para garantizar que seguirán siendo bienvenidos con las tradiciones intactas.

Entre otras dudas que surgen, ¿por qué no se ha involucrado a los vecindarios de las personas que mayor uso hacen del parque? Si la idea es pagar los trabajos con dinero privado, significa más privatizaciones de lugares públicos. Los conminamos a mantenerse informados, a contactar a su representante en el concilio y exigir más audiencias públicas.

—Beatriz Macín