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Man with machete arrested at church

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FORT WORTH - Some people bring a rosary to the altar when they pray. Others bring nothing.

One man brought a 15 1/4 -inch handmade machete when he went to the altar to pray Christmas Eve.

Paul Ray Smith Jr., 39, was arrested by Fort Worth police officers around 1 p.m. Christmas Eve after churchgoers saw a man pull "what appeared to be a machete" from his pants inside Meadowbrook First Baptist Church, at 6600 Ellis Road, according to a police report.

He placed the large knife on the altar before kneeling to pray, the report said.

None of the people reported that the man tried to use the knife, but they did call the police.

As officers arrived, they saw Smith, who matched the description given by the witnesses, walking on the sidewalk, the report said. The officers stopped Smith and searched him.

They found a dagger, a "zip gun" and a "15 1/4 inches long and 1 inch wide" thin strip of metal that "had been sharpened on one side" into a homemade machete. The knife's handle was "a tree limb wrapped in black tape and a leather belt," the report said.

Because of the size of the knife, police arrested Smith on suspicion of carrying a prohibited weapon. Smith has been arrested before, for resisting arrest and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

He was in the Mansfield Jail with bail set at \$750 late Monday. No one was at the church late Monday to comment.