

# Member of Temple Emanu-El synagogue apologizes

He calls gunshot mishap; temple restates its no-firearms policy

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Temple Emanu-El of Dallas is sending members an unusual pre-Yom Kippur message:

Please don't pack heat in the synagogue.

And by the way, the fellow who dropped his gun last week is very, very sorry.

The special letter, mailed Tuesday in advance of this weekend's High Holiday services, was a reaction to an incident that briefly made last week's Rosh Hashanah service the most famous in the nation. But not in a good way.

A 50-year member of the congregation stood for a prayer Wednesday night, and his legally concealed handgun slipped to the floor and went off. Three people were slightly injured, but the service was not interrupted.

The man with the gun, Marvin Marks, is a retired police officer. He is not to be confused with Marvin Marks, the retired furniture store owner who was sitting one row back and a few seats over and had nothing to do with the mishap.

In the letter, the armed Mr. Marks explained what happened. He said he had started to carry a concealed gun years earlier after being threatened by someone he had previously arrested. Normally, he leaves the gun in his car when he goes places where guns aren't welcome.

"On Wednesday evening, I forgot to leave it in my car. I know this is a poor excuse for bringing it into temple with me, but that is the truth," he wrote.

The gun fell out, he wrote, and although the safety was on, it fired.

Mr. Marks, who is 81, also had a word of apology for his fellow Mr. Marks, who is 86 and had to explain a few times that he didn't drop the gun.

"I hope that this letter will help to clear any confusion," wrote the armed Mr. Marks.

The apology was the younger Mr. Marks' idea, the letter from the temple said, offered in the "High Holiday spirit of repentance and return."

As for the synagogue, it's putting up new signs that make it clear that concealed handguns are not welcome. The old signs excluding guns did not specifically mention legally concealed weapons, temple spokesman Dana Moffatt said.

The synagogue staff has reviewed its security and emergency procedures and decided that – except for the need to change the sign at the front door – everything was handled pretty well.

And while the story raised a smirk or two outside the congregation, Mr. Moffatt said, "nobody inside the temple took it as any kind of a joking matter."