

Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty

Dear Governor Abbott, Members of the 84th Texas Legislature, and other elected officials,

We, the undersigned 551 faith leaders, reflecting the rich diversity of faith traditions observed in this great state, stand together in expressing our deep concerns about the death penalty in Texas. Our concerns are both moral and practical and are rooted in our religious traditions. We write to you today to call for the end of the death penalty in Texas in the belief that this practice is not in the best interest of our State, our justice system, or the safety of our people.

We join with many Texans in questioning our state's death penalty system, which has consistently been shown to be unfair and inaccurate. Texas leads the nation in the number of executions carried out each year. In fact, our state is a significant outlier in this regard, accounting for more than one third of all executions nationwide since 1976. Well-documented evidence suggests that often it has not been the crime itself but rather such factors as race, socioeconomics, geography, or politics that have determined the application of the death penalty. Another grave concern is the number of individuals who have been wrongfully convicted and spent years on death row for crimes they did not commit.

As faith leaders, we are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. We believe that instead of allocating scarce resources to fund an irrevocably flawed capital punishment system, the State of Texas should invest in victim support services, effective law enforcement, drug treatment programs, child and family services, and mental healthcare – all measures that hold potential for preventing future acts of violence. We should do all we can to make sure our state's resources are directed towards the improvement of life, not its destruction.

We firmly believe that those who commit terrible crimes should be held accountable for their actions and we advocate for a justice system that is both humane and restorative. It is particularly important to us to support the victims of violent crimes and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing. In responding to one of our greatest societal problems, we believe the state must consider solutions to violent crime that address our communities' need for safety and healing, not retribution.

As people of faith, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our opposition to the death penalty and to express our belief in the sacredness of human life and in the human capacity for redemption. It is this respect for all life that prompts us to join the diversity of voices across the state calling for repeal.

We urge you, our elected officials, to take a closer look at the reality of capital punishment in Texas and ask that you seek alternative ways to achieve healing and justice for all those who suffer in the wake of violent crimes. We thank you for your leadership and we pray for the time when our state is led away from this unnecessary, arbitrary, and outmoded form of punishment.

Sincerely,

Bishop Michael McKee
Bishop of the North Texas Conference,
The United Methodist Church
Plano, Texas

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie
United Methodist Bishop, Houston
Episcopal Area
Houston, Texas

Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
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Bishop J. Michael Lowry
The Central Texas Conference of the United
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Bishop James E. Dorff
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Bishop Ray Tiemann
Southwestern Texas Synod Evangelical
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Bishop Earl Bledsoe
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Bishop Michael Rinehart
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Rev. Mike Cole
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**Religious traditions and faith community names listed for identification purposes.*

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Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn Retired, The United Methodist Church Galveston, Texas	Rev. Frank Denner III Custer Road United Methodist Plano, Texas	Rev. Clay Horton Christ United Methodist Church McKinney, Texas
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Bishop John Russell Retired, The United Methodist Church Fort Worth, Texas	Deacon Art Tiongson St. Gabriel Catholic Church Frisco, Texas	Rev. Woodrow Weilage Retired, The United Methodist Church McKinney, Texas
Bishop Ben Chamness Retired, The United Methodist Church Huntsville, Texas	Pastor Charles Harrison Kessler Park United Methodist Church Garland, Texas	Rev. Don Zeiler St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church McKinney, Texas
Bishop Dan Solomon Retired, The United Methodist Church Abilene, Texas	Rev. James Minor Axe Memorial United Methodist Church Garland, Texas	Rev. Terry Heislen First United Methodist - Sachse Plano, Texas
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Rev. James Guest Retired, The United Methodist Church Carrollton, Texas	Pastor Preston Weaver Kirkwood United Methodist Church Irving, Texas	Pastor Chuck Hubbard Gloria Dei Lutheran Church - Garland Wylie, Texas
Rev. Jonathan Grace City Square Carrollton, Texas	Lama Duojom Dorjee Karma Thegsum Choling Dallas Irving, Texas	Rev. Donald Brown II First United Methodist Church Grand Saline, Texas
Rev. Jason Redick Holy Covenant United Methodist Church Carrollton, Texas	Rev. Gregory Neal Northgate United Methodist Church Irving, Texas	Rev. Charles Kimble First United Methodist Church Malakoff Malakoff, Texas
Rev. Carol Sparks Holy Covenant United Methodist Church Carrollton, Texas	Pastor Mary Beth Hardesty-Crouch Vista Ridge United Methodist Church Lewisville, Texas	Rev. Charles Aaron First United Methodist - Terrell Terrell, Texas
Rev. J.D. Allen First United Methodist - Carrollton Carrollton, Texas	Rev. Andy Lewis First United Methodist Lewisville Lewisville, Texas	Rev. Dana Russell Mesquite, Texas
Rev. Alice Coder First United Methodist - Plano Plano, Texas	Co-Pastor Isabel Marquez Cathedral of Hope Lewisville, Texas	Rev. David Weber First United Methodist - Mesquite Mesquite, Texas

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Rev. Mitchell Boone White Rock United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas	Rabbi Brian Zimmerman Union for Reform Judaism Dallas, Texas	Sean Briscoe Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church Dallas, Texas
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	Sister Patrice Sullivan Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	

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Sister Lourdes Leal Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Rabbi David Komerofsky Associate Vice President for Advancement at Hillel San Antonio, Texas	Sister Marian Sturm, IWBS Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Victoria, Texas
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Sister Grace Walle Daughters of Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Joseph Stobaugh Grace Avenue United Methodist Church Frisco, Texas	Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith Westlawn United Methodist San Antonio, Texas
Sister Mary Winkle Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Pastor Alicia Campos Principe De Paz United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Aaron Gonzalez El Divino Salvador United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Robert Wright Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas	Sister Imelda Gonzalez Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Isidro Pina Kelsey Memorial United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas
Rev. Robert L. Clark, II Corredor de Esperanza San Antonio, Texas	Brother Brian Haldermann, S.M. Marianist Province of U.S. San Antonio, Texas	Congregational Care Minister Tina Trimble The United Methodist Church San Marcos, Texas
Rev. Kelly Allen University Presbyterian Church San Antonio, Texas	Rev. John Manahan Society of Mary (Marianists) San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Beth Tatum First United Methodist Church Mathis Mathis, Texas
Rabbi Mara Nathan Temple Beth-El San Antonio, Texas	Brother Gerard Sullivan, SM Marianist Province of U.S. San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Mother Superior Michelle Marie Kuntscher Sisters of the Incarnate Word Corpus Christi, Texas

Pastor Kristine Bair 1st Presbyterian Church Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Amy Forsythe First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Darlene Boaz St. Luke United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Eradio Valverde Corpus Christi District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Fredda Horton Minick Retired, The United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. John Elford University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Father Armand Mathew, OMI Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Oblate Fathers and Brothers (OMI) Brownsville, Texas	Rev. Milton S. Jordan Retired, The United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Victoria Bailey, Retired University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Deaconess Cindy Johnson El Buen Pastor Brownsville, Texas	Rev. Steve Langford First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. John Reynolds St Luke United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Laura K. Merrill McAllen District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church Harlingen, Texas	Rev. Mark Skrabacz San Gabriel Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Georgetown, Texas	Rev. George Ricker University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Jerimey Wicke First United Methodist Church of Weslaco Weslaco, Texas	Rev. Mary Powell, Adjunct Spiritual Director St. Philip's United Methodist Church Round Rock, Texas	Rev. Stephanie True University Baptist Church Austin, Texas
Pastor Daniel Cruz Longoria La Trinidad United Methodist Pharr, Texas	Rev. Nancy McDougall First United Methodist-Burnet Kingsland, Texas	Rev. Bob Breihan United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Pastor Marcy Garza Bethel United Methodist Raymondville, Texas	Terry Cortes-Vega Dharma Teacher - Plum Blossom Sangha Manor, Texas	Rev. Katy Fitzhugh Oak Hill United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Deacon Dan Wright St. Thomas More Catholic Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Jeanette Heart First United Methodist San Marcos San Marcos, Texas	Rev. Bobbi Kaye Jones Tarrytown United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. Guston Browning Retired, The United Methodist Church Cedar Park, Texas	Rev. Sandra Londa Retired, The United Methodist Church Wimberley, Texas	Rev. W.B. Sandberg Pastor for Senior Ministries & Congregational Care, University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Norman Roe Retired, The United Methodist Church Cedar Park, Texas	Brother Richard Daly, CSL Brothers of the Holy Cross Austin, Texas	Rev. Bill Wack, CSC St. Ignatius Martyr Parish and School Austin, Texas
Rev. Mary Wilson Church of the Savior Cedar Park, Texas	Rev. Barbara Ruth First United Methodist Church - Austin Austin, Texas	Rev. Cecile Adam Congregational Church of Austin, UCC Austin, Texas
Rev. Anamae Storbeck Everyone's Call Del Valle, Texas	Rev. John Wright First United Methodist Church - Austin Austin, Texas	Rev. Sarah Bentley Congregational Church of Austin, UCC Austin, Texas
Rev. Jason Fry First United Methodist Church Fredericksburg, Texas	Rev. Helen P. Almanza Tarrytown United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Dr. Whitney Bodman Congregational Church of Austin Austin, Texas
Rev. Yvonne Coon First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Lynn Barton Westlake United Methodist Austin, Texas	Rev. Dr. John Elford University United Methodist Austin, Texas
	Rev. Dr. Larry Bethune University Baptist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Glenn Noblin The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

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Congregation Beth Israel
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Rev. Carol Tate
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Rev. John Yeaman
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Rev. George Holcombe
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Rabbi Amy B. Cohen
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Rev. Rudy England
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Rev. Dr. Kristina Carter
Parker Lane United Methodist Church
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Dr. Mike Renquist
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Pastor John Reynolds, Retired
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Rev. Judy Baskin
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