

Resolution to Work Toward Repeal of the Death Penalty in Texas

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church, according to its Social Principles (§ 164. G.), believes “the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore, and transform all human beings,” and “opposes the death penalty and urge(s) its elimination from all criminal codes,” ; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Texas:

- 521 persons have been put to death since the state resumed executions in 1982;
- Harris County alone accounts for 122 executions, more than any individual state, except Texas;
- according to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, more than 20% of the 273 inmates on Texas’ death row are diagnosed with some type of mental illness; among the persons executed since 1982 at least nine were developmentally disabled;
- among those executed since 1982, thirteen were juveniles when their crimes were committed;
- race appears to play a significant role in application of the death penalty; of states with more than 10 people on death row, Texas (70%) has the largest percentage of minorities on death row; among those executed since 1982, eighty-three African Americans were put to death for crimes against white victims, and only one white person was executed for crimes against African Americans; over the last 5 years 60% of all new death sentences have been imposed on African Americans;
- twelve persons sentenced to die have later been proven innocent and removed from Texas’ death row;
- the cost of an average death penalty case is nearly three times higher than imprisoning someone in maximum security for forty years; and
- the use of the death penalty throughout the state is fraught with inefficiency and inequality,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the 2015 Annual Conference of the Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church meeting in Houston, Texas:

- call upon all Texas Conference delegates to vote in favor of 2016 General Conference legislation, if any, reaffirming the United Methodist Church’s stand against the death penalty
- call upon all clergy members of the Annual Conference to sign the Clergy Sign-On Letter sponsored by the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty for the 2017 Texas state legislative session;
- call upon all local churches and lay members of the Annual Conference to work with their local and state representatives toward the abolition of the death penalty in Texas;
- call upon the Texas Legislature either to abolish the death penalty completely or to stop executions in the state until such time as all capital cases can be tried in a completely equitable way;

- call upon the Texas Pardon and Parole Board and the governor to commute the sentences of persons currently on death row to life in prison without parole or to life in prison;
- invite the Bishop of the Texas Conference or an authorized representative to attend the press event on the steps of the Capitol during Faith Leader Lobby Day on the Death Penalty, to be held at the next regular session of the Texas Legislature in 2017; and
- call upon the secretary of the Annual Conference to have copies of this resolution sent immediately to members of the Texas Legislature; to each member of the Pardon and Parole Board; to the Governor of Texas; to the Lieutenant Governor of Texas; to Devon Anderson, District Attorney of Harris County; to Texas Impact, and to the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Buchanan