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All people are created in God’s image. Sin has tarnished this image of God and violence violates the sacredness of life. We grieve with the family and friends of victims of violence. Even though we are angered and saddened by the injustice of violence, we believe that the death penalty only perpetuates the cycle of violence and retribution.

Instead we seek a path of forgiveness, healing, and redemption. We seek a path centered in Christian principles as taught by Jesus.

God does not desire a continuation of violence through retribution. In Biblical witness God sets out to do away with retaliatory violence. Consider that, after Cain killed Abel, God forbade anyone to touch Cain. The Bible discourages the use of death as a way to settle scores.

The most famous, and often quoted Biblical scripture in support of the death penalty is an “eye for an eye.” Five generations after Cain, one of his heirs, Lamech, lived under the law of the clan—which was spinning out of control. At that time it was permissible to kill 77 people for a minor infraction. In the Law of Moses, an eye for an eye was God’s way of curtailing retaliatory violence. It was not God’s permission to allow states to execute people. An eye for an eye was a compromise of sorts for people who could not abide by God’s perfect will.

For Christians the meaning of this was interpreted by Jesus. “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Jesus was returning us to God’s original intent. Christians inspired by Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew’s Gospel, can see clearly Jesus teaching against retaliatory violence.

The New Hampshire Council of Churches, made up of ten different Christian denominations, advocates abolishing the death penalty. It is an inspiring testament that so many different denominations come together to speak out against retaliatory violence. We continue to lift our voices and call for better, more spiritually directed alternatives to violence.