



New Hampshire Council of Churches

People of faith strengthening New Hampshire communities.

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Joint Statement on the Death Penalty

The New Hampshire Council of Churches, an ecumenical Christian body of ten diverse denominations including Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions, regard the use of capital punishment as problematic and unacceptable. As Christians we believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). In our human condition sin tarnishes this image; nevertheless, we believe that the promise of redemption is offered to all through repentance. Thus, each of us is called to respect the life and dignity of every person, even when that person denies the dignity of others. We must still recognize that their dignity is a gift from God and is not something that is earned or lost through their behavior. Respect for life applies to all, even the perpetrators of terrible acts.

Scripture cautions us: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all” (Romans 12:17). From this Christian perspective we are led to conclude that the death penalty does not provide justice. Instead the death penalty perpetuates inhumane retribution, fosters feelings of revenge, and exacerbates a cycle of violence upon the perpetrators and victims without regard for that which is noble. These responses dehumanize society and blind us to God’s image in all; perpetrators and victims, rich and poor, young and old, Christian and non-Christian, no matter what color their skin may be. The use of capital punishment does not restore a broken society; it perpetuates the violence and injustice instead of condemning such intolerable acts.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, condemn the expansion of capital punishment and call for the abolishment of its use in the State of New Hampshire, asking all to seek that which is noble.

Adopted by the Board of Directors May 20, 2010

Member Denominations: American Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Friends, Greek Orthodox, Presbyterian Church/USA, Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Unitarian Universalist