



UMC Advocacy Team -- February 2019  
2019 Legislative Session: House File 62 *and* Senate File 296

## Death Penalty

**SUMMARY OF POSITION: The United Methodist Church opposes the Death Penalty for any and all crimes.**

### UNITED METHODIST OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

“We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings. The United Methodist Church is deeply concerned about crime throughout the world and the value of any life taken by a murder or homicide. We believe all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable. When governments implement the death penalty (capital punishment), then the life of the convicted person is devalued and all possibility of change in that person’s life ends. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that the possibility of reconciliation with Christ comes through repentance. This gift of reconciliation is offered to all individuals without exception and gives all life new dignity and sacredness. For this reason, we oppose the death penalty (capital punishment) and urge its elimination from all criminal codes.” (Social Principles in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016, Paragraph 164 V, The Political Community)

“When another life is taken through capital punishment, the life of the victim is further devalued. Moreover, the church is convinced that the use of the death penalty would result in neither a net reduction of crime in general nor a lessening of the particular kinds of crime against which it was directed. The death penalty also falls unfairly and unequally upon an outcast minority. Recent methods for selecting the few persons sentenced to die from among the larger number who are convicted of comparable offenses have not cured the arbitrariness and discrimination that have historically marked the administration of capital punishment in this country. We will continue to advocate for the final elimination of this act of barbarism, which has no room in a civilized society, nor in a country that prides so much on its Christian heritage.” (The General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church, <http://main.umc-gbcs.org/issues/death-penalty>)

“A justice system must be first and foremost about humanization since God’s justice always works to bring reconciliation. Systems of retribution breed only violence and isolation. Indeed, ‘we cannot punish our way to a healthy society.’” ( Resolution 5031 Humanizing Criminal Justice, The 2016 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, page 491)

Contact your Senator to OPPOSE SF 296 and your Representative to OPPOSE HF 62.

## SUPPORTING FACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. People of faith who disagree with one another about many social issues are finding common ground concerning the death penalty. While The United Methodist Church would have many disagreements with other positions he takes, the Chief Counsel of The American Center for Law and Justice and personal attorney of the President of The United States Donald Trump is quoted: “I’m opposed to the death penalty not because I think it’s unconstitutional per se—although I think it’s been applied in ways that are unconstitutional—but it really is a moral view, and that is that the taking of life is not the way to handle even the most significant of crimes...Who amongst anyone is not above redemption? I think we have to be careful in executing final judgment. The one thing my faith teaches me—I don’t get to play God. I think you are short-cutting the whole process of redemption...I don’t want to be the person that stops that process from taking place.” And there are numerous other conservatives who oppose capital punishment on the basis of strongly held conservative principles including support for limited government and fiscal accountability. (Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty <https://conservativesconcerned.org/what-conservatives-are-saying/>)
2. The national trend in the U.S. is the abandonment of the death penalty, not the reinstatement of it. More and more Republican state legislators in “red states” are sponsoring bills to repeal the death penalty for a variety of reasons. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/republicans-conservatives-evangelicals-increasingly-opposed-to-death-penalty-204949/>
3. Despite the lengthy appeals process and improvements in scientific evidence the risk of wrongful conviction and execution of innocent persons is too high to justify the death penalty. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/many-prisoners-on-death-row-are-wrongfully-convicted/>
4. Studies have conclusively shown the application of the death penalty has been misused consistently against people of color, the poor, and mentally incompetent.. [http://www.law.nyu./sites/default/files/upload\\_documents/Bright-Death-Penalty-UN-April-2014.pdf](http://www.law.nyu./sites/default/files/upload_documents/Bright-Death-Penalty-UN-April-2014.pdf)
5. As of 2004, 117 wrongfully convicted persons have been released from death row. In Sister Helen Prejean’s book, The Death of Innocents, Vintage Books, New York, 2005, you read of two innocents who were wrongfully put to death. We do not want to add to their number.

For these and many other reasons The Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church opposes the reinstatement of the death penalty in Iowa. (Prepared by the Rev. Gary Nims)

### **For more information please contact any of the Advocacy Team Members:**

Rev. Gary Nims [Gary.nims@gmail.com](mailto:Gary.nims@gmail.com) (515) 422-2070  
Rev. Brian Carter [briancar@dwx.com](mailto:briancar@dwx.com) (515) 979-5775  
Sheila Corsbie [sjcorsbie@gmail.com](mailto:sjcorsbie@gmail.com) (515) 339-9730  
Rita Carter [ritaac@mchsi.com](mailto:ritaac@mchsi.com) (515) 979-0605