

A Congregational Resolution for a Moratorium on Executions

We, the members of the First Unitarian Church of Richmond, Virginia adhere to the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part; and

Whereas there is ample evidence that the death penalty is applied in a racist manner:

In 1990, the United States General Accounting Office reported “a pattern of evidence indicating racial disparities in charging, sentencing and imposition of the death penalty.” Nationwide, 82% of those put to death had been convicted of murdering a white person even though people of color are the victims in more than half of all homicides, and

Whereas death sentences are generally reserved for the poor:

About 90% of those persons facing capital charges cannot afford their own attorney. No state, including Virginia, has met standards developed by the American Bar Association (ABA) for appointment, performance and compensation of counsel for indigent prisoners, and

Whereas prisoner appeals have been severely curtailed, increasing the risk of imprisonment and execution of innocent people:

In a series of rulings since 1991, the Supreme Court has drastically restricted the rights of death row prisoners to appeal their convictions and death sentences in federal courts, even in cases where prisoners present compelling evidence of innocence. In 1996, new legislation drastically limited federal court review of death prisoners, and

Whereas the American Bar Association has concluded that administration of the death penalty is “a haphazard maze of unfair practices with no internal consistency” and has called for a moratorium on executions.

Therefore, be it resolved that the First Unitarian Church of Richmond, Virginia calls on the Governor and our representatives to the Virginia General Assembly, the President of the United States and our members in the United States Congress, to adopt executive policies and orders and enact legislation imposing a moratorium on executions at least until policies and procedures are fully implemented which

Eliminate discrimination in capital sentencing;
Ensure that death penalty cases are administered fairly and impartially;
Entirely eliminate the risk that innocent persons may be executed;
Prevent the execution of mentally retarded persons;
Prevent the execution of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of their offenses.

Be it further resolved that copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, State Senators and Delegates in the Virginia General Assembly representing districts serving our Church members, the President of the United States, the two United States Senators from Virginia, and those Members of the United States House of Representatives representing districts serving our Church members.

Signature and title _____ Date _____