

Resolution Calling for a Moratorium On the Death Penalty in Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, Unitarian Universalist Association member congregations “covenant to affirm and promote: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations; the use of the democratic process ... [and] the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;” and

WHEREAS, General Assemblies of the Unitarian Universalist Association have adopted many resolutions opposing capital punishment as inconsistent with human life on account of its retributive, discriminatory, and non-deterrent character; and

WHEREAS, in June 2000 the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association approved an Action of Immediate Witness calling for “its member congregations to engage actively in efforts to eliminate the death penalty, to work with other organizations in this effort, and to increase efforts to persuade governors to forego capital punishment.”; and

WHEREAS, the death penalty is not a proven deterrent to homicide; and

WHEREAS, death penalty cases are fraught with errors as evidenced by more than 130 exonerations of inmates nationwide, including six death row prisoners in Pennsylvania;

WHEREAS, an American Bar Association study of Pennsylvania’s capital punishment system and found that it failed to comply with over 93 percent of the ABA’s 92 recommendations that were designed to improve the fairness and accuracy of death penalty cases. In October 2007, the ABA recommended that Pennsylvania conduct studies to analyze racial, economic, and geographic disparities in the capital punishment system; and

WHEREAS, the execution system is plagued with racial and economic inequalities: in March 2003 a Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System, appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, reported overwhelming evidence of inequities and recommended that a moratorium be imposed; and

WHEREAS, 70 percent of the inmates of Pennsylvania’s death row are people of color, 90 percent of the inmates of Pennsylvania’s death row cannot afford private counsel; and

WHEREAS, studies across the nation have shown that execution costs are up to \$2 million more than housing an inmate for 40 years in prison.

Now therefore, **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Erie calls on our State Legislature and Governor Rendell to enact legislation imposing a moratorium on executions and on signing death warrants in our Commonwealth until a fair and impartial study of the application of the death penalty is completed. The

legislation will require the moratorium to remain in place until the legal, political, racial, economic, moral, and ethical problems surrounding the death penalty are fully addressed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution shall be forwarded to the appropriate members of the Pennsylvania Legislature and to the Governor of Pennsylvania.

ADOPTED April 19, 2009

Rev. Steve Aschmann
Pastor

Gene Seigworth
Board President

Regis T. Sabol
Chair, Social Responsibility Committee