

Voices of Delaware Religious Leaders

We, the undersigned clergy and religious leaders, reflecting the rich diversity of faith traditions in Delaware, call for the repeal of the state's death penalty. Because we represent such a wide spectrum of belief and practice, we approach public policies, such as the death penalty, in as varied ways as we approach spiritual matters. However, we share the values of respecting the sacredness of all human life and in the human capacity for change.

As leaders within our communities, the public often seeks our guidance on issues that require thoughtful consideration. We have concluded that the death penalty fails us. We join many in Delaware who question capital punishment due to its record as an ineffective, unfair and fallible response to violence. The death penalty applies disproportionately to the poor and minorities and puts innocent lives at risk of execution. Since 1973, 150 individuals sentenced to death were later exonerated of their crimes. When a human life is at stake, there is simply no room for error.

As religious leaders, we often serve as a resource to victims' families in the aftermath of murder. Given this responsibility, we have a special interest in advocating for policies that serve their needs and promote healing and well-being. There is growing evidence that the death penalty does the opposite: it prolongs victims' pain and delays healing while retrials, appeals, and reversals force families to relive their trauma.

Finally, we cannot ignore the millions of dollars it costs to administer the death penalty system. In light of the serious economic challenges facing our state and the nation, the valuable resources expended on the death penalty would be better invested in programs to prevent crime and meet the needs of victims' families.

As people of faith, we reaffirm our opposition to the death penalty in all cases and our belief in the sacredness of human life. We urge you, our elected officials, to examine the reality of Delaware's death penalty and seek ways to achieve true healing for those who suffer because of violent crime. Please support repeal of the death penalty. It is time for Delaware to move beyond this broken and harmful system.

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Reverend Joseph Archie, III, Marshallton United Methodist Church, Wilmington, DE

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