



**NCCADP**  
COALITION *for* ALTERNATIVES *to the* DEATH PENALTY

April 14, 2023

Updated with additional signatures October 10, 2023

The Honorable Roy Cooper  
Governor of North Carolina  
200 North Blount Street  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

*Sent via email to [roy.cooper@nc.gov](mailto:roy.cooper@nc.gov)*

Dear Governor Cooper,

As leaders from a host of faith communities across North Carolina, we come together to speak with one voice about the death penalty. Our faith practices and sacred scriptures may differ in form and substance, but they agree on this matter: the death penalty is immoral and cruel. As you well know, we can add to those faith-filled claims the fact that it is also inherently racist. Many states have already ended state sanctioned killing and it is our prayer that you will do everything in your power to add North Carolina to that list.

We represent faith traditions including Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and more. In a state where nearly eighty percent of our residents identify with a faith tradition, we unite our voices in the call to end state-sanctioned executions. While there are many valid reasons to end the death penalty, one of the most salient is grounded in the human potential for repentance. When retribution (death) replaces restitution (life), we ignore the possibility of redemption. We deny those who are created in the Image of God the opportunity to choose a different way to live.

In addition to our faith claims, the system we have to mete out punishment in North Carolina is rife with racial and wealth bias. Having been born out of the racist institutions of slavery and segregation, the death penalty was unethical from the beginning. There is nothing in the modern implementation of capital cases to persuade us this has changed. More than 60 percent of those on death row are people of color, and nearly half were sentenced by overwhelmingly white juries. Cases with white victims are still far more likely to result in death sentences. Over and over we see the death penalty assigned to people who are poor, who have mental illness, and who are survivors of physical and psychological trauma, and of course, people of color. Add to all of this the possibility that someone else on death row might actually be innocent. As you know, twelve people, eleven of whom are people of color, have been exonerated.

You can change this for North Carolina. We implore you to use your power to commute the sentences of the 137 people on North Carolina's death row. Spare our state from further participation in a system that devalues the humanity of all of us. As you know, North Carolina has the unfortunate distinction of housing the nation's fifth largest death row, and more than three-quarters of those people were tried in the 1990s or earlier. You can change this by commuting these death sentences to prison terms.

Please receive this letter as the beginning of a conversation. Behind our names are thousands of North Carolinians, many of whom have for decades called for the end of the death penalty. As we renew our commitment to this cause, with the help of the North Carolina Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, we expect a groundswell of support from our congregations and other faith communities across North Carolina.

We know you are also a person of faith who already knows much about the arguments we have made in this letter. Help lead our state out of the darkness of the death penalty. Help make North Carolina a place of possibility and hope for all who call this place home.

May God bless you.

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Pullen Memorial Baptist Church  
Pastor  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Elaine Pfaff, ARCWP  
Free Spirit Inclusive Catholic Community  
Pastor  
Hertford, NC

Rev Josho Pat Phelan  
Zen Buddhist  
Reverend  
Chapel Hill, NC

Bridget Phifer  
Living Better Life  
CEO  
Rocky Mount, NC

Rev. Lori Pistor  
Presbyterian Church, USA  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Rev. Catherine Powell  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Priest Associate  
Wilmington, NC

Rev. Eric W. Prenshaw  
Mount Bethel United Methodist Church  
Pastor  
Hillsborough, NC

Rev. Dr. Conrad K. Pridgen  
African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Presiding Elder  
Whitsett, NC

Rev. Joan Purcell  
United Methodist Church  
Retired Clergy  
Apex, NC

Rev. Paula C. Rachal  
All Saints Episcopal Church  
Rector & Pastor  
Greensboro, NC

Rev. George Ragsdale  
First United Methodist Church  
Senior Pastor  
Belmont, NC

Rev. Lynne Bolick Reed  
Mt. Olive Lutheran Church  
Retired Clergy  
Conover, NC

The Rev. Daniel J. Reeves  
Christ Episcopal Church  
Associate Rector  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Ray Reilly  
St. Eugene Catholic Church  
Vice Chair, Parish Advisory Council  
Zebulon, NC

Rev. Robert F. Renjilian  
Unitarian Universalists of Transylvania  
County  
Minister  
Brevard, NC

Pastor David Repass  
The Salvation Army  
Corps Officer  
Hickory, NC

Rev. Lisa Reynolds  
Bethany United Methodist Church  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Reverend Glencie Rhedrick  
Charlotte Clergy Coalition for Justice  
Co-Chair  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Thomas Rightmyer  
Episcopal Church  
Retired Priest  
Asheville, NC

Rev. Sharon Risher  
Death Penalty Action  
Board Chair  
Charlotte, NC

Deacon Wendy Roberts  
Morning Star Lutheran Church  
Deacon of Discipleship  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. William Robinson  
Western N.C. Conference, United Methodist  
Church  
Retired Clergy  
Charlotte, NC

The Venerable Janet S. Rodman  
Episcopal Church  
Archdeacon  
Washington, NC

Bishop Samuel S. Rodman  
Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
Bishop  
Raleigh, NC

The Rev. Elizabeth J Roles  
Episcopal Church  
Rector  
Brevard, NC

The Reverend Leslie Roraback  
St. Andrew's On-the-Sound Episcopal  
Church  
Priest  
Wilmington, NC

Rev. Sandra Rountree  
St James Episcopal Church  
Clergy  
Swannanoa, NC

Rev. Robert Rutledge  
Holy Infant Catholic Church  
Clergy  
Durham, NC

Deacon Phil Rzewnicki  
Holy Cross Catholic Church  
Deacon  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Dr. James Sabak, OFM  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh  
Director of Divine Worship  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Dr. Fatimah Salleh  
Christian  
Minister  
Durham, NC

Rev. Dr. Joan M. Saniuk  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
Retired Clergy  
Hendersonville, NC

Rev. Kelly Sasser  
Watts Street Baptist Church  
Minister with Youth and Community Life  
Durham, NC

The. Joslyn Ogden Schaefer  
Grace Church in the Mountains  
Rector  
Waynesville, NC



Rev. Craig Schaub  
Parkway United Church of Christ  
Pastor  
Winston-Salem, NC

Rev. Ken Sehested  
Circle of Mercy Congregation  
Founding Co-pastor  
Asheville, NC

Rev. Nancy Sehested  
Circle of Mercy Congregation  
Retired Pastor  
Asheville, NC

Dr. Bob Setzer, Jr.  
Knollwood Baptist Church  
Pastor  
Winston-Salem, NC

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton  
N.C. Conference, United Methodist Church  
Bishop, Raleigh Area  
Garner, NC

Reverend Senmyo Jeffrey Sherman  
Buddhist  
Priest  
Chapel Hill, NC

Rev. Alan Sherouse  
First Baptist Church  
Senior Pastor  
Greensboro, NC

Rev. Mary M. Shields  
Sr. Joseph's Episcopal Church  
Deacon  
Fayetteville, NC

The Rev. Albert Shuler  
N.C. Conference, United Methodist Church  
Retired Clergy  
Durham, NC

Fr. Thomas M. Simisky, S.J.  
Saint Raphael the Archangel Catholic Parish  
Pastor  
Raleigh, NC

Rev Joel Simpson  
First United Methodist Church  
Pastor  
Taylorsville, NC

Rev. Charles M. Smith  
N.C. Conference, United Methodist Church  
Pastor & Conference Leader  
Washington, NC

Rev. Gregory Smith  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
Assisting Priest  
Goldsboro, NC

Deacon Joseph Smith  
Diocese of Charlotte  
Deacon  
 Mooresville, NC

Bishop Timothy M. Smith  
N.C. Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church  
of America  
Presiding Bishop  
Salisbury, NC

The Rev. Dr. J. Warren Smith  
Duke Divinity School  
Professor of Historical Theology  
Durham, NC

Rev. Ellen Snow  
Moravian Church in America, Southern  
Province  
Chaplain  
Colfax, NC

Rabbi Matthew Soffer  
Judea Reform Congregation  
Senior Rabbi  
Durham, NC

Rabbi Eric Solomon  
Beth Meyer Synagogue  
Senior Co-Rabbi  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Melissa Sparks  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Catawba  
Valley  
Minister  
Hickory, NC

Rev. Fran Spier Saylor  
The Table Moravian Church  
Pastor  
Apex, NC

Rev. Chuck Spong  
Love Out Loud  
Executive Director  
Winston-Salem, NC

Alice Stancil  
Next In line Community Outreach Center  
Director  
Greenville, NC

Rev. Danzy Stancil  
New Vision Faith Ministries  
Pastor  
Greenville, NC

Bishop Darryl B. Starnes  
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church  
Presiding Bishop  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Alex Stayer-Brewington  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Pastor for Youth & Families  
Durham, NC

Deacon Gary Stemple  
St. Ann Catholic Church  
Deacon  
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Timothy J. Stephens, S.J.  
St. Peter Catholic Church  
Pastor  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Jeanette Stokes  
Resource Center for Women in Ministry in  
the South  
Executive Director  
Durham, NC

The Rev. Jessica Stokes  
The North Carolina Council of Churches  
Associate Director  
Durham, NC

Rev. Deborah Suess  
Quaker / UCC  
Pastor  
Greensboro, NC

Rev. Samuel Johnson Taylor  
Jonesboro Presbyterian Church  
Pastor (Head of Staff)  
Sanford, NC

Rev. Andrew Taylor-Troutman  
Presbyterian (USA)  
Pastor and Head of staff  
Chapel Hill, NC

Rev. Betsy T. Thigpen  
Meyers Park Baptist Church  
member  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Deacon Rhonda Thomas  
Church of the Servant Episcopal Church  
Deacon  
Wilmington, NC

Rev. Anita M Thompson  
African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion  
Presiding Elder, Eastern District  
Hillsborough, NC

Gail Thomssen  
Christian  
Prison ministry volunteer  
Raleigh, NC

Fr. Gonzalo de Jesus Torres-Acosta, OFM  
Immaculate Conception Catholic Church  
Parochial Vicar  
Durham, NC

Rev. Richard W. Tucker  
Alliance of Baptists  
Retired Pastor and Hospice Chaplain  
Brevard, NC

Rev. Janice Valder  
Reformed Church in America  
Lay Member  
Charlotte, NC

Breana van Velzen  
Durham Congregations in Action  
Executive Director  
Durham, NC

Rev. Stephanie Vander Lugt  
Kinship Plot  
Director  
Charlotte, NC

Deacon Mike Vandiver  
Catholic Diocese of Raleigh  
Coordinator of Prison Ministry  
Wallace, NC

Rev. Linda Velto  
Good Shepherd United Church of Christ  
Associate Pastor  
Cary, NC

Desider Viktor  
Saint Matthew Catholic Community  
Deacon  
Durham, NC

The Rev. Isaac Villegas

Mennonite Church  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Rev. Bill Walker  
St. Philip's Episcopal Church  
Former Interim Rector  
Highlands, NC

Bishop Hope Morgan Ward  
N.C. Conference, United Methodist Church  
Bishop, Retired  
Raleigh, NC

The Reverend Bobby Weatherly  
The Episcopal Church  
Deacon  
Greenville, NC

Rev. Julia Webb-Bowden  
Elizabeth Street United Methodist Church  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Rev. Stephen Weissman  
Episcopal Church  
Priest  
Asheville, NC

Rev. Kimberleigh Wells  
New Hope Presbyterian Church  
Pastor  
Asheville, NC

The Rev. Judith Whelchel  
St. James Episcopal Church  
Rector  
Black Mountain, NC

Rev. Jaye N. White  
N.C. Conference, United Methodist Church  
Director of Outreach Ministry  
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Madison White  
Moravian Church in America, Southern  
Province  
Chaplain Resident  
Winston-Salem, NC

Rev. Dr. Bill White, Jr.  
Western N.C. Conference, United Methodist  
Church  
Director of Equity and Justice Ministries  
Huntersville, NC

Rev. Sara Wilcox  
Land of the Sky United Church of Christ  
Pastor  
Asheville, NC

Ashley Wilcox  
New Garden Friends Meeting  
Interim Pastor  
Greensboro, NC

The Very Rev. Ginny Wilder  
Episcopal  
Rector  
Winston Salem, NC

Suzanne Will  
St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church  
Coordinator Elementary Religious  
Education  
Apex, NC

Dewey Williams  
Baptist  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Rev. Mel Williams  
Watts Street Baptist Church  
Pastor Emeritus  
Durham, NC

Rev. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove  
St. John's Missionary Baptist Church  
Associate Minister

Durham, NC

The Rev. Dr. Lauren F. Winner  
St. Joseph's Episcopal Church  
Vicar  
Durham, NC

Chip Wilson  
Queen of the Apostles Catholic Church  
Deacon  
Belmont, NC

Rev. Fred Womble  
First Missionary Baptist Church  
Family Minister  
Huntersville, NC

Rev. Sarah Woodard  
St. Titus Episcopal Church  
Pastor  
Durham, NC

Dr. Rachael Wooten  
Center for Tibetan Buddhist Practice  
Director and Meditation Teacher  
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Joel Wright  
Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent  
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Cognitive Behavioral Counselor  
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Rev. Nina Wynn  
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