

Minutes of the 878th Gathering of the Presbytery of Baltimore
10:00 AM Thursday, February 8, 2018
Hunting Ride Presbyterian Church
Baltimore, Maryland

OPENING AND WORSHIP

Moderator Adrienne Knight, who offered the opening prayer, called the Gathering to order at 10:00 AM. Host Pastor Deborah McEachran offered a welcome and necessary directions for moving about the church facilities.

The Stated Clerk then moved the adoption of the docket with the following alterations:

- Deleting the report of the General Presbyter and moving the report from the Presbyterian Loan and Investment Program (PILP) to 2:10 in the afternoon, immediately after we re-convene after Bible Study. It was noted that noon is the deadline for submitting new business to the Stated Clerk.

With a proper second, the motion was approved.

New pastors and first time Ruling Elder Commissioners were introduced by Rev. Jackie Taylor, General Presbyter. Rev. Jack Hodges, who will be received later as a member of the Presbytery, was seated as a corresponding member. Rev. Sunjin Kim, serving as Temporary Supply at Glen Burnie Korean Presbyterian Church, was welcomed as a guest.

The presbytery then moved to worship, led by Rev. Andrew Foster Connors, and the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, Revs. Kate Foster Connors and Tom Harris celebrating. During the worship service, names were read of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elders who died during 2017 (included in these minutes as Appendix E).

Following the worship service, Catherine Lynch of the Presbyterian Loan and Investment program spoke about the program and distributed rebate checks to the following six churches: Ark and Dove, Catonsville, Christ Our Anchor, First and Franklin, First of Howard County, St. Andrew's.

Rev. Kate Foster Connors and McKenna Lewellen of The Center introduced "Hands and Feet," a General Assembly initiative to promote mission in the cities of upcoming General Assemblies.

Susan Krehbiel of the Presbytery staff presented the Self Development of Peoples Award to the United Workers organization. Presbyters were reminded to contribute generously to One Great Hour of Sharing.

At 11:45, the Gathering adjourned to small group discussions in "Open Space."

At 12:30 p.m. the Gathering adjourned for lunch, with thanks to the volunteers of Hunting Ridge Presbyterian Church; Bible study led by Rev. Rob Hoch followed.

At 2:10, the presbytery reconvened, with prayer, led by Moderator Adrienne Knight.

STATED CLERK'S REPORT

Stated Clerk Jack Carlson gave his report; no items were requested to be moved from the Consent Motion. There was no new business presented. He then moved the following consent motion, which was **approved**:

On recommendation by the Stated Clerk:

1. THE approval of the minutes of the 877th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Baltimore, November 11, 2017, as posted on the Presbytery website (www.baltimorepresbytery.org). You may download the minutes to an electronic device or print the minutes, if you desire a paper copy.
2. THAT the Presbytery approve the following transfers:
3. The Rev. William Nickels to the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia, where he will become the Interim Pastor of Yorkminster Presbyterian Church.
4. The Rev. Jack Hodges, HR, from the Presbytery of the Cascades.

On Recommendation by the Nominating Committee:

5. CRE Ed Terry (Mt. Paran) was elected as Commissioner to Synod (Class of 2020).

On recommendation by the Committee on Ministry:

6. That the ministry of Rev. Karen Brown be validated. Rev. Brown is serving as Resource Developer at Intersection of Change, a community non-profit, and as Parish Associate at Grace Presbyterian Church

224 FUND

Moderator Adrienne Knight spoke to the Gathering about the 224 Fund, raising money for the 224th General Assembly, which will be held in Baltimore in 2020. Churches and individuals are invited to make pledges to the fund by buying "shares" at \$224.

OVERTURE TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE DEATH PENALTY

7. On motion by the Stated Clerk, with proper second, the following procedure for debate and voting on concurrences to be presented was **approved**:
 - a. That one representative of each Session bringing the overture be allowed to speak to the motion first and that these statements be limited to 2 minutes each
 - b. That subsequent statements or speeches be limited to one minute each, alternating between those speaking for or against the motion.
 - c. As we will be voting to concur with an existing overture, no amendments may be made to the overture. We may add additional rationales, but that is not a requirement.
 - d. Note that any postponement of a vote effectively eliminates the possibility to vote on the concurrence or the overture, since the deadline for all overtures is May 2, 2018, before our next Gathering on May 10.

The Revs. Andrew Foster Connors (Brown Memorial) and RE Carol Mason (Maryland) presented the following overture to the Presbytery of Baltimore:

8. THAT the Presbytery concur with the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta overture, Ovt 013, "On Calling for an Immediate Moratorium on All Executions." The complete overture was included in the Overtures document, printed separately (included here as Appendix F). Following debate according to the rules adopted, the motion was approved.

STEERING CABINET REPORT

Rev. Caroline Kelly gave the report of the Steering Cabinet, as follows, the Cabinet recommending:

9. The following changes in the Presbytery Manual:
 - a. Amend 7.2 on Membership in the Steering Cabinet to include a representative from Ministry Group Conveners: The section would read:
7.2. Membership. The Cabinet is composed of the following: 7.2.1. Voting members: The members of the Presbytery Steering Cabinet are the Cabinet Chair (Former Moderator), Moderator of Presbytery, Vice Moderator of Presbytery, the chairs of the Commission on Thriving Congregations, the Commission on Spiritual Leader Development, and the Commission on Reconciliation, the chair of the Administration Committee, the Stated Clerk, the General Presbyter, ~~and the Associate General Presbyter,~~ and one representative to be elected by and from the ministry group conveners (this member shall serve for one year, and may be re-elected annually by the ministry group leaders to serve up to three years consecutively). The motion was approved.
 - b. Amend 10.8 to strike the words in italics: The section would read: Annually, through the Conveners Group, Ministry Groups will report to the Steering Cabinet regarding their progress in advancing the vision of the Presbytery and how funds were spent. ~~The Cabinet may determine that a Ministry Group is not fulfilling the vision of the Presbytery and ask the Ministry Group to revisit how it is fulfilling the the vision of the Presbytery."~~ The motion was approved.
 - c. Amend 20.1.3.2 as follows, to bring it into conformity with the Book of Order:
"The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will present Candidates in person to the Presbytery ~~with a written statement from the candidates concerning their sense of call.~~ Candidates shall be examined by the Presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and any areas of instruction determined by the Presbytery." The motion was approved.

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

10. On motion by Rev. Heather Shortlidge, Chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, examined RE Jay Garvin (Harundale) concerning his personal faith, instruction, and motives for seeking to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder serving in the Harundale Presbyterian Church. His statement of

faith is found in Appendix C. It was then moved and seconded to arrest the examination; after a voice vote approval, RE Garvin was excused, and following discussion, it was moved and seconded to sustain the examination, and to approve RE Garvin as ready to be commissioned. The motion was approved and RE Garvin was welcomed back into the Gathering.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

RE Jim Schroll gave the report for the Committee on Ministry, recommending the following:

11. That the Presbytery approve the commissioning of RE Jay Garvin to the work described in the job description provided in Appendix D and that he be granted permission to administer the Sacraments and perform weddings.

After the motion was approved, Rev. Tracey Davenport (Harundale) led the Gathering in prayers for CRE Garvin's ministry.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

CLOSE OF BUSINESS

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was entertained. Following a second and an **affirmative** vote, Vice Moderator Caroline Kelly announced several pastoral concerns and offered the closing prayer at 2:45 PM, and the presbytery was **adjourned**.

Respectfully Submitted,

Attest:

John V. Carlson
Stated Clerk

Mary D. Gaut
Deputy Stated Clerk

Appendices:

- A. Attendance Detail
- B. Reports – Stated Clerk, Steering Cabinet
- C. Jay Garvin, Statement of Faith
- D. Job Description for Commission for RE Jay Garvin
- E. Necrology
- F. Overture and supporting material from Presbytery of Atlanta

Appendix A: Attendance Detail

Category	Present	Excused	Absent	Total
Teaching Elders Serving Churches	41	9	15	65
Resident Specialized Clergy and H.R.	11	3	57	71
Ruling Elder Members of Presbytery's Steering Cabinet and Commissions	3	0	6	9
Continuing Corresponding Members	1	0	0	1
Ruling Elder Commissioners	30	0	47	77
Youth Advisory Delegates	0	0	0	0
Guests and Presbytery Program Staff	17	0	0	17
Commissioned Ruling Elders	4	2	3	9
Certified Lay Employees with vote	0	0	1	1
Former Ruling Elder Moderators	2	0	2	14
Former Ruling Elder Stated Clerks	0	1	2	3
Totals	109	15	133	267

Teaching Elders serving churches:

Present: Kimberly Secrist Ashby; Jennifer Barchi; Dorothy Boulton; Christa Burns; Harold Cahill; Amy Carlson; Laura Crihfield; Tracey Davenport; Susan DeWyngaert; Jennifer Di Francesco, Amy Duiker; Carrie Finch-Burriss; Andrew Foster Connors; Jeanne Gay; Matthew Glasgow; Alison Halsey; Jeong Hoon Han; Mark Hanna; Morton Harris; Sue Lowcock Harris; Thomas Harris; Bill Hathaway; Rob Hoch; Tim Hughes Williams; Caroline Kelly; Edwin Lacy; Jessie Lowry; Renee Mackey; Teresa Martin-Minnich; Deborah McEachran; Elizabeth McLean; Ray Meute; Michael Moore; Jonathon Nelson; Keith Paige; Adrian Pratt; Heather Shortlidge; Tim Stern; Joel Strom; Laurel Underwood; Janna VanderWoude.

Absent and Excused: Terrence Alspaugh; Randall Clayton, Rebecca Crate; Phyllis Felton; Ronnie Hankins; Ken Kovacs; Daniel Melton; Stephen Melton; David Norse.

Absent: Thomas Blair; Rob Carter; Brandon Frick; Andrew Gathman; Richard Hill;
Scott Hoffman; Leonard Hornick; Mary Ka Kanahan; John Kazanjian;
Nancy Lincoln-Reynolds; Shannon Meacham; Eric Myers; Andrew Nagel;
Mark Sandell; John Schmidt; Todd Smith; Tanya Wade; David Willerup.

Resident Specialized Clergy and Honorably Retired

Present: John Carlson; Katherine Foster Connors; Mary Gaut; Richard G. Jones;
Edward Richardson; Jackie Taylor; Migde Lucas.

Absent and Excused: Lindley DeGarmo; Onaje Hopper;

Absent: Brandon Brewer; Karen Brown; Sarah Diehl; Christopher Leighton;
Stephen Mann; Stacy Martin; Kay Myers; John Myhill; Caroline Sell; Nate Sell;
Charles E. Thomas, Sr; Jennifer Williams

Honorably Retired

Present: Doris Cowan; David Harris; Jack Hodges; Roger Rice; Walter Peters
Excused: Terry Schoener

Ruling Elder Members of Presbytery's Steering Cabinet and Commissions

Present: Chrystie Adams; Adrienne Knight; Guy Moody; Susan Moody

Absent: Deborah Baer; Lisa Beacham; Alice Haskins; Guy Moody; Rob Smith; Rob
Smith; JoAnne Torrie; Jaime Wilkins-Parker

Corresponding Members: Jack Hodges

Ruling Elder Commissioners from Congregations:

Present: Brown Memorial Park Avenue, Lenna Gaye Barney; Brown Memorial
Woodbrook, Christ Memorial, Bill Gretsck; Christ Our Anchor, Alice Robeson;
Christ Our King, Linda Smigelski, Keith Reagan; Faith, Audrey Trapp; Fallston,
Sharon Tyler; First, Annapolis, Betsy Stewart, Helen Krone; First, Bel Air, Liz Scott;
First Cumberland, James Stickler; First of Howard County, Doris Rocha; Good
Shepherd, Cindy Prevatte; Govans, E. M. Ceanfaglione; Hamilton, Janice Howard;
Harundale, Doris Garvin; Havre de Grace, Ron Stein; Highland, John Walkden;
Hunting Ridge, Stella Ngang; Kenwood, Lynn Seay; Madison Avenue, Jean
Owens; Maryland, Carol Mason; Mt. Hebron, Judy Sheldon; Northminster, Brian
Cumer; Perry Hall, Kathy Weiman; Prince of Peace, Lillian van Rompay;
Springfield, Robert Stepling; St. John United, Susan Moody); Woods Memorial,
Linda Cramblett, Sue Hamel

Congregations without Elder representation: Ark and Dove; Babcock, Barrelville,
Bethel, Catonsville; Central; Cherry Hill; Chestnut Grove; Churchville; Covenant;
Dickey Memorial; Emmitsburg; First and Franklin; First, Frostburg; First
Westminster; Franklinville; Frederick; Glen Burnie Korean; Grace; Granite; Grove;
Hagerstown; Hancock; Havenwood; Hope; Hughes Memorial; Knox; Korean
United; Light Street; Lochearn; Mount Paran; Roland Park; Second; St. Andrew
(Williamsport); St. Andrew's (Mt. Airy); Taneytown; Towson; Trinity.

Commissioned Ruling Elders

Present: John Brewington; Ledonia Kimball; Donna Lea; Greg Seltzer

Excused: Anita Bishop-Johnson; Ed Terry

Absent: Joan Berry; LaJerne Cornish; Cleoda Walker

Youth Advisory Delegates Present: None

Certified Lay Employees with vote: None

Former Ruling Elder Moderators: James Schroll; William Starke. Excused: James Parks

Former Ruling Elder Stated Clerks Present: None; Excused: Catherine Blacka

Presbytery Program Staff Present (without vote): Debbie Schmidt; Susan Krehbiel; Judy Johnson. Excused: Deb Milcarek;

17 guests and Presbytery program staff were also present.

APPENDIX B: Reports

Stated Clerk's Report

No written report.

Steering Cabinet

The Steering Cabinet reports that:

1. The Rev. Rob Hoch and the Rev. Christa Burns have been added to the Govans Administrative Commission, and that Trustee Brooke Schumm has been named a non-voting adjunct member to the Commission.
2. Applications for "Relief of Conscience" with the Board of Pensions should, once a resolution has been passed by the Session of a particular church, be submitted to Cabinet, which will, upon approving the application, in turn recommend it to Presbytery.

Appendix C, Statement of Faith, Jay Garvin

I love Jesus, and I am trying my hardest to follow in his footsteps.

1 I believe in the eternal God, who created the universe from nothing but spoken word. 2 God loves all of creation, especially us humans, who were made in God's likeness; to be in 3 relationship with God and each other. I believe that God imparted to each of us an inherent 4 knowledge of God through his creation, we only have to take the time to look and see God's 5 presence in everything. I believe we are to care for his creation but we are doing poorly in that 6 task. I believe that God exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all 8 three are equally God. I believe in and treasure the mystery of the triune God, but I am 9 incapable of fully understanding this mystery.

10 I believe that Jesus is the human born son of God, sent to live among us in human form 11 to teach us how to live in relationship with the Father and with each other. I believe that 12 Jesus was betrayed by humanity and was crucified to death, that he, sinless, bore our sin to 13 the grave but death could not hold him, he arose from the dead to ascend to heaven to sit at 14 the right hand of the Father. I believe that Jesus' death on the cross provided us with 15 salvation through his resurrection, freely given to us by the grace of God. I believe that 16 humans are sinful creatures and we have chosen to live sinfully in our everyday lives, 17 choosing to living selfishly instead of sharing what we have with others in need. And I 18 believe, at the time known only to God, Jesus will sit in judgement over us.

19 I believe that the Holy Spirit entered into the lives of Jesus' disciples at Pentecost and 20 into our lives, to be our advocate until the time that we depart this earthly life to live in the 21 eternal kingdom. I believe that each of us who follow in the teachings and footsteps of Jesus 22 have the Holy Spirit in our lives to guide us and to ensure that we feel the constant presence 23 of Jesus in our lives.

24 I believe that scripture is the inspired word of God, captured by prophets and apostles; 25 and given to us to read, study, wrestle with, live by, and share with others, wherever we are.

25 I believe that the church is the body of Christ, the life and light of the world, where we 26 can seek refuge in the community of believers, welcomed, loved, and nurtured through 27 scripture and participating in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. Through 28 Baptism we are cleansed by the water and untied with Christ's dying to sin and rising with 29 him into new life. Through the holy communion we celebrate the reconciliation with God and 30 with one another as we joyfully eat at the table of our savior, remembering that through 31 Jesus' resurrection we also have hope for our resurrection.

32 I believe that I am to represent Jesus to the world, living as he taught, loving all, caring 33 for the sick, visiting the prisoners, sharing both material and spiritual riches with others, and 34 being the church to all whom I encounter.

Appendix D

Job Description for Jay Garvin's Commission

Harundale Presbyterian Church: Commissioned Lay Pastor Job Description

Purpose of the Position

The Commissioned Lay Pastor is responsible for performing pastoral functions as needed by the Head of Staff.

Accountability

- a. As a follower of Jesus Christ, first to God, then the Presbytery of Baltimore.
- b. Within the life of the congregation, under the oversight of the Session through the personnel committee.
- c. In the daily operation of the church and its programs, under the direction of the Head of Staff.

Specific Responsibilities

1. Assist with pastoral care
2. Develop new ministries with men in our church
3. Assist stewardship committee with budgeting
4. Facilitate Sanctuary improvements working with IT, AV, music and pastoral personnel
5. Lead in worship and develop preaching and teaching skills

Characteristics Required

1. Primary commitment and dedication to the ministry of Harundale Presbyterian Church.
2. A strong, personal faith shown in a life lived in a manner consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Compassion to call on those in the hospital or emergency situations as needed and meet the needs of those who are ill or bereaved.
4. Ability to work well with others on the pastoral staff.
5. Commitment to the polity, peace, unity and purity of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

Appendix E

Necrology, 2017

Necrology, 2017

Ministers of Word and Sacrament

- Rev. Ben Jones, HR, Taneytown and Emmitsburg Churches
- Rev. Yoo I. Peal, HR

Ruling Elders

Babcock Presbyterian Church

- RE Patricia Kohlbauer

Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church

- RE David George Franklin Mock

Catonsville Presbyterian Church

- RE Ethel Rainey Ward
- RE Nancy Jane Hutton Burger
- RE James P. Wiley

Central Presbyterian Church

- RE Gary Goshorn

Chestnut Grove Presbyterian Church

- RE Robert C. Vogelsang

Christ Our King Presbyterian Church

- RE Therese Johnson

Covenant Presbyterian Church

- RE Davis Baughman

Faith Presbyterian Church

- RE Margaret (Peg) Leary
- RE Mildred Miller

First Presbyterian of Bel Air

- RE Mary Ruth Sidwell
- RE Don Mitrovitch
- RE Ed Wilsey
- RE Susan Moseley
- RE Al Ward

First Presbyterian of Cumberland

- RE Eleanor Johnson

First Presbyterian of Howard County

- RE Robert Miller
- RE Dorothy (Dottie) Kingsley
- RE Stanley Werner
- RE David McCrary

Franklinville Presbyterian Church

- RE Betty Jane Leedy

Frederick Presbyterian Church

- RE William "Bill" Smith

Grove Presbyterian Church

- RE May Lootens
- RE Marion Miller
- RE Elizabeth Feroli

Hagerstown Presbyterian Church

- RE Kenneth Hiatt

Havenwood Presbyterian Church

- Bob Doudiken
- Barron "Bill" Mouring

Highland Presbyterian Church

- RE Jeanne W. Galbreath
- RE Thomas Moore
- RE Barbara K. Richardson

Hope Presbyterian Church

- RE Wynn Harger

Hunting Ridge Presbyterian Church

- RE Paul Wareheim

Maryland Presbyterian Church

- RE S. Hartley Shearman

Mt. Hebron Presbyterian Church

- RE John Lawson

Perry Hall Presbyterian Church

- RE Jon Tilley

Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church

- RE Albert D. Chohey

Second Presbyterian Church

- RE Leonard Levering
- RE Joseph David Zimmerman
- RE Kenneth Simmons
- RE Dr. Anne McKusick

Springfield Presbyterian Church

- RE Samuel L. Warfield

Taneytown Presbyterian Church

- RE Eric Brauning

Towson Presbyterian Church

- RE George E. Hohl
- James Hyde
- Richard Allchin
- Kendall Strout

Trinity Presbyterian Church

- RE James Philyaw
- RE Gloria Jones
- RE Estelle Pinkett
- RE Valeria Tocci

Appendix F

The Presbytery of Baltimore voted to concur with the following Overture to General Assembly from the Presbytery of Atlanta

For Recommendation:

The following overture to the next General Assembly has come to the Presbytery from the session of Central Presbyterian Church. The session of Columbia Presbyterian Church has sent in a letter of endorsement of the overture.

The Bills and Overtures Committee met on October 11 to consider the overture. A representative from Central met with the committee to present the session's viewpoint and to answer questions.

The Committee voted 8 to 0 to *recommend approval by the Presbytery*. The reasons for the committee's recommendation to approve are as follows:

- This action is consistent with previous General Assembly actions
- This overture supplies updated statistical information helpful for consideration
- Item 3 in the recommendation asks that the Stated Clerk of the Assembly communicate with the President of the United States, representatives in Congress, and governors and legislators from the 33 states with persons incarcerated while awaiting execution. Many of these elected officials are new to their office and therefore a different constituency from previous correspondence from our General Assembly on this issue.

With this background, Bills and Overtures Recommends the following overture:

Recommendation

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta overtures the 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

1. Join the 171st (1959), 177th (1965), and the 189th (1977) General Assemblies of the United Presbyterian Church, the 106th General Assembly (1966) of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., and the 197th General Assembly (1985), 212th General Assembly (2000), 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and 221st General Assembly (2014), and declare its continuing opposition to capital punishment.
2. Call for an immediate moratorium on all executions in all jurisdictions that impose capital punishment.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to communicate the call for an immediate moratorium and our continuing opposition to capital punishment to the president of the United States, our representatives in Congress, as well as the

governors and legislators of the thirty-three states with persons incarcerated while awaiting execution.

Rationale

This is the fourth anniversary of the last resolution of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) regarding capital punishment.

Since 2007, seven more states, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Illinois, Connecticut, Maryland, and Delaware have abolished the death penalty. We give thanks that the death penalty has been abolished in a total of nineteen states.

Both as Christians and as citizens of the United States of America, we believe that one of the greatest tragedies that can occur is the execution of an innocent person by the state, yet we know that this has occurred repeatedly throughout history. Human judgment is always fallible, including the judgments of juries and judges deciding death penalty cases.

It has been recognized by numerous authoritative sources that the death penalty has been imposed in a racially discriminatory manner. No state has been found to be in full compliance with the American Bar Associations Guidelines and other ABA policies regarding the death penalty. Even those states that have “adopted” the Guidelines often have fallen short in finding qualified defense counsel and providing adequate compensation for defense counsel and supporting services. (Director of ABA Death Penalty Representation Project July 31, 2017.)

We recognize that the death penalty is a moral issue that demands paramount discernment by legislative and judicial bodies. Since 1973, 159 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. From 1973–1999, there was an average of three exonerations per year, nationally. From 2000–2011, there has been an average of five exonerations per year, nationally (Death Penalty Information Center, Facts about the Death Penalty, current as of July 7, 2017). Given these rates, it is reasonable to assume that judges and juries will continue to make such errors in future death penalty cases. Yet such errors are not morally defensible.

Nor can the legal system, as presently structured, provide any assurance against innocent persons being subjected to the death penalty. In recent years, prisoner appeals have actually been curtailed, increasing the risk of the execution of innocent people.

In 1996, new legislation drastically limited federal court review of death penalty appeals and gutted public funding of legal aid services for death row prisoners (PC(USA), 212th General Assembly [2000]).

Further, human judgment is flawed and influenced by human sinfulness. For example, 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. In 82 percent of their studies, race of the victim was found to influence the likelihood of being charged with capital murder or receiving a death sentence, i.e. those who murdered whites were found to be more likely to be sentenced to death than those who murdered blacks. This finding was remarkably consistent across data sets, states, data collection methods, and analytic techniques. The finding held for high-, medium-, and low-quality studies (U.S. General Accounting Office, Report GGD-90-57, Death Penalty Sentencing: Research Indicates Pattern of Racial Disparities, February 26, 1990, 5).

A comprehensive study of the death penalty in North Carolina found that the odds of receiving a death sentence rose by 3.5 times among those defendants whose victims were white (Professor Jack Boger and Dr. Isaac Unah, "Preliminary Report on the Findings of the North Carolina Death Penalty Study 2001." University of North Carolina, April 16, 2001).

A study in California found that those who killed whites were more than three times more likely to be sentenced to death than those who killed blacks and more than four times more likely than those who killed Latinos (Glenn Pierce and Michael Radelet, "The Impact of Legally Inappropriate Factors on Death Sentencing for California Homicides, 1990–1999." Santa Clara Law Review, Vol. 46. 2005).

As of July 7, 2017, among the 1,456 people who have been executed in the United States since 1977, 307 have been executed for interracial murders. Of these, 20 involved white defendants and black victims and 287 involved black defendants and white victims (Death Penalty Information Center, Facts about the Death Penalty, current as of July 7, 2017).

Our legal system does not currently assure that persons accused of crimes receive full economic justice. The right to effective counsel is recognized as one of our most fundamental rights, and one of our most important protections against wrongful convictions. However, about 90 percent of those persons facing capital charges cannot afford their own attorney.

As Christians, we recognize God as sovereign in all spheres of human life, including the political sphere. We declare that God's commandment against killing is still good law. We follow a Lord who taught us to go beyond "an eye for an eye." We believe that human individuals and institutions are sinful and make mistakes. And, as humans, we lack any power to correct our errors if we wrongly execute another human being.

