



THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

October 31, 2024

The Honorable Henry McMaster
State House
11 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor McMaster,

I write to you today as Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina to offer my full support of the letter sent to you on September 1, 2024, by members and leaders of The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Summerville, South Carolina, urging you to take definitive steps to end the use of the death penalty in South Carolina. As their letter so clearly stated: “We can both protect society from violence and promote a culture that respects all human life without resorting to state-sanctioned executions.”

The Episcopal Church has long advocated that the death penalty should be repealed, dating back to a 1958 General Convention resolution which asserted that the “taking of such a human life falls within the province of Almighty God and not within the rights of man.” Over the years, this belief has been reaffirmed at numerous General Conventions.

In South Carolina and throughout the nation, capital punishment disproportionately affects people of color and those without the financial resources to defend themselves. Far too often, inmates who have long been on death row who are provided with the resources to present an adequate defense in the appeals process, have had their sentences overturned and their innocence proclaimed.

The life and example of Jesus enforces our belief as Christians that all people are made in the likeness and image of God. As such, our call to love God and our neighbors and constantly advocate for justice, peace, and reconciliation, demands that we reject violence of all kinds, including the act of capital punishment. In our Baptismal Covenant, we as Episcopalians are called to “respect the dignity of every human being,” yet the execution of our siblings in Christ, no matter their alleged crime, is not consistent with that core belief.

As we approach All Souls’ Day on November 2, remembering especially both the victims of crime and those who have been unjustly convicted and put to death through the act of capital punishment, I ask your consideration. Together with the beloved congregation of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Summerville, I urge you to work to end the use of the death penalty in South Carolina.

Sincerely yours,

The Right Reverend Ruth Woodliff-Stanley
Bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina