



# INTERFAITH COALITION TO STOP EXECUTIONS

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## ***TOOLS TO HELP YOU AND YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY WORK TOWARD REPEAL OF THE DEATH PENALTY***

The Interfaith Coalition to Stop Executions thanks the New Mexico Coalition to Repeal the Death Penalty for sharing these tools and other materials in this resource book.

### **\* Pray personally and corporately**

- Include petitions supporting those awaiting execution on death row
- Include petitions for victims of violent crimes
- Include petitions asking for help and guidance in efforts to bring about repeal
- Periodically focus your personal devotions on themes involving the death penalty and restorative justice

### **\* Study/Discuss/Discern**

- Read some of the many writings about capital punishment :



- \* *Dead Man Walking* by Sister Helen Prejean
- \* *Journey of Hope...from Violence to Healing* by Bill Pelke
- \* *Not In Our Name; Murder Victims' Families Speak Out Against the Death Penalty* featuring members of Murder Victims for Reconciliation
- \* *Against the Death Penalty, Christian and Secular Arguments* by Gardner C. Hanks
- \* *Against Capital Punishment, The Anti-Death Movement in American* by Herbert Haines
- \* *A Dream of the Tattered Man: Stories from Georgia's Death Row* by Randolph Loney
- \* *Choosing Mercy: A Mother of Murder Victims Pleads to End the Death Penalty* by Antoinette Bosco.
- \* *"Sermons, Homilies & Reflections on the Death Penalty"* compiled by the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project, [www.deathpenaltyreligious.org](http://www.deathpenaltyreligious.org)
- \* *"The Death Penalty: The Religious Community Calls for Abolition-Statement of Opposition to Capital Punishment"* compiled by the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project, [www.deathpenaltyreligious.org](http://www.deathpenaltyreligious.org)
- \* *Choosing Life: Building Opposition to the Death Penalty* from the National Pastoral Life Center, [roundtable@nplc.org](mailto:roundtable@nplc.org) , 212-431-7825
- \* *Death as Penalty: A Moral, Practical and Theological Discussion; and Who is My Neighbor: Learning To Care for the Victims of Crime* by the Mennonite Central Committee-Office of Criminal Justice, 202-544-6564
- \* *People of Faith Against the Death Penalty Newsletter* by North Carolina Coalition, 919-933-7567

Ohio's **Interfaith Coalition to Stop Executions**, is a statewide gathering of faith leaders offering faith based resources, actions, and networking to end the death penalty. Call us at 614-425-1819. [www.stopexecutions.org](http://www.stopexecutions.org)

○ **Surf the internet for information – begin with these sites:**

- \* Interfaith Coalition to Stop Executions [www.stopexecutions.org](http://www.stopexecutions.org)
- \* Ohio Council of Churches [www.ohcouncilchs.org](http://www.ohcouncilchs.org)
- \* Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project  
<http://www.deathpenaltyreligious.org/>
- \* Catholics Against Capital Punishment <http://www.cacp.org/>
- \* Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy: [www.angulimala.org.uk](http://www.angulimala.org.uk)
- \* Friends Committee on National Legislation: [www.fcnl.org/issues/cr/deaindex.htm](http://www.fcnl.org/issues/cr/deaindex.htm)
- \* General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church:  
[www.gbgm-umc.org](http://www.gbgm-umc.org)
- \* Jewish Resources for Social Change [www.socialaction.com](http://www.socialaction.com)
- \* Unitarian Universalists Against the Death Penalty: [www.uuadp.org](http://www.uuadp.org)
- \* United Church of Christ Ohio Death Penalty Information  
<http://ocucc.org/DeathPenalty/moreinfo.htm#top>
- \* Ohioans to Stop Executions [www.otse.org](http://www.otse.org)
- \* Cleveland Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CCADP) [www.clevedp.org/index.htm](http://www.clevedp.org/index.htm)
- \* Death Penalty Information Center <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/>
- \* Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation <http://www.mvfr.org/>
- \* National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty <http://www.ncadp.org/>
- \* Citizens United Against the Death Penalty [www.cuadp.org](http://www.cuadp.org)
- \* Pew Forum [www.Pewforum.org/deathpenalty/resources](http://www.Pewforum.org/deathpenalty/resources)

○ **Organize learning opportunities in your communities**

- \* Adult forums, youth groups, community groups, discussion groups, etc. are possible places to facilitate learning about the death penalty
- \* Invite a speaker to your church, school or community group
- \* Preach about or encourage your pastor to preach about the death penalty
- \* Use the study guide, *Living and Dying According to the Voice of Faith – Thinking about the Death Penalty* available from the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project (215.241.7130)
- \* Read and use *“Choose Life! – Building Opposition to the Death Penalty”* available from The Roundtable—Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors (212.431.7825)
- \* Watch a video of “Dead Man Walking” with family, friends, etc. and use the *“Dead Man Walking” Study Guide* available from the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project
- \* *“Young People and the Death Penalty”* Bible passages and background information to accompany three study sessions from the Presbyterian Church  
<http://www.teacher.deathpenaltyinfo.msu.edu/>
- \* View *“Envisioning a World Without Violence”* a 20-minute video tape resource developed specifically to assist faith communities with initiating dialogue and action around the challenging issue of the death penalty. Available from the American Friends Service Committee, Criminal Justice Resources 215-241-7127.
- \* The death penalty is a difficult issue to talk about. *“Talking Together as Christians about Tough Social Issues”* might be a helpful guide and is available from the Division for Church in Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or can be downloaded from [www.elca.org/dcs/talkingtogether.html](http://www.elca.org/dcs/talkingtogether.html)

## \* Plan/Act

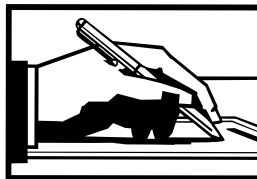
- Sign a "Declaration of Life" statement which states your opposition to the death penalty in case you die as a result of a violent crime. A copy of the statement can be found at [www.nmrepeal.com](http://www.nmrepeal.com)
- Write letters to someone on Death Row. Suggestions can be found at [www.deathpenaltyreligious.org/ministry/deathrow/penpal.html](http://www.deathpenaltyreligious.org/ministry/deathrow/penpal.html)
- Join the Interfaith Coalition to Stop Executions (614-425-1819)
- Sign a Moratorium Campaign petition. [www.moratorium2000.org](http://www.moratorium2000.org)
- Join places of worship throughout Ohio in Ringing Bells at the time of any Ohio execution – currently 10am.
- Contact elected officials -- state legislators (particularly your own representative and senator), the governor, Ohio's congressional delegation and the president -- to let them know that you are opposed to the death penalty.

One of the most effective ways of influencing public policy and pending legislation is communicating with public officials, especially your legislators. Your legislators represent you. Senators and representatives appreciate hearing from their constituents and value their input and convictions. It is sometimes asked whether contacting public officials makes any difference. The answer is a definite YES. What you think about an issue counts and elected officials care about what you think!

## *Communication Basics*

- ✓ Be courteous, respectful, friendly and positive
- ✓ Don't be arrogant, condescending or threatening
- ✓ Be brief
- ✓ Be sure to mention if you are a constituent
- ✓ Listen carefully
- ✓ Be appreciative; acknowledge past support
- ✓ Be specific; if possible, refer to specific legislation

### Forms of communication



**Letter Writing** -- Many people think that any letter to a public official is just a waste of time. Nothing could be further from the truth. Legislators and other public officials give a great deal of weight to their mail when decisions are made. Most state legislators read their mail personally. A well-written letter can be the most powerful means of communicating with your lawmaker. Only a small percentage of people ever write to a legislator. Consequently, your letter represents many letters, most policy makers think that for every one letter sent, a lot more people feel the same way but haven't taken the time to write.

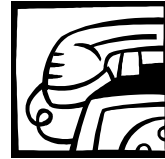
In addition to *Communication Basics* listed above, keep these tips for letter writing in mind:

- ✓ Write about only one issue per letter
- ✓ Handwrite, type or e-mail your letter
- ✓ Try to include supporting facts
- ✓ Give reasons for your position
- ✓ Refer to a specific bill if possible
  
- ✓ Put your return address on the letter as well as the envelope
- ✓ Use the proper form of address
  - "The Honorable" on the address on both the envelope and the heading
  - "Dear Representative" or "Dear Senator" is the salutation

**Remember:** *As long as you are sincere and polite, there is no wrong way to write a letter to a public official.*

**Telephone Calls** -- During state legislative sessions, secretaries answer most calls to senators and representatives. When you call a legislator at home, you may reach them directly or reach an answering machine. Again, in addition to the previous "basics":

- ✓ Talk about only one issue per call
- ✓ Be brief
- ✓ Refer to a specific bill if possible



**Personal Visits** – Face to face discussion can be very effective and is essential to the establishment of a good working relationship. Be as informative as you can but don't be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out." Personal visits are more easily arranged either early in a legislative session or prior to a session. Remember, as a constituent, you are important to your legislator

- **Contribute financially to organizations that work for death penalty repeal like Ohioans To Stop Executions. [www.otse.org](http://www.otse.org)**
- **Help groups that support the condemned and their families**
- **Support groups that work with victim's families like Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation. [www.mvfr.org](http://www.mvfr.org)**
- **Urge your congregation and other denominational groups to become active in efforts to repeal the death penalty.**

