

No. 9131

(Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution)

MORATORIUM ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**Background Information:****I. Theological Rationale:**

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who does you wrong. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too... You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies, and pray for those who mistreat you, so that you will become children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do right and those who do wrong." Matthew 5:38-39, 43-45 (Good News).

"Whoever one of you committed no sin may throw the first stone at her." John 8:7 (Good News).

"If someone does evil to you, do not pay him back with evil. Do everything possible, on your part, to live at peace with all. Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's wrath do it... Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good." Romans 12:17-19, 21 (Good News).

II. Other Supporting Evidence:

1. We acknowledge that violent, deplorable acts are carried out within our society. We further acknowledge that society must be protected from the perpetrators of such acts.

2. We grant that the seriousness of the crime may well justify punishment. It is morally unsatisfactory and socially destructive for criminals to go unpunished, but the forms and limits of punishment must be determined by moral objectives. Our Christian approach maintains that this need for punishment does not require, nor does it justify, taking the life of the criminal, even in cases of murder.

3. We believe there is a Christian mandate against capital punishment. We know God's justice and mercy through the teachings of his son, Jesus Christ, who both taught and practiced the forgiveness of injustice.

We are called to forgive the murderer as Christ forgives the murderer, as Christ forgives us. We are called to be reconciled with those who have injured us. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, "Capital punishment is society's final statement that we will not forgive."

4. Some argue that capital punishment strengthens the ultimate value of human life. We believe, to the contrary, that capital punishment sets an example for other killing.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 25-30, 1991, support a permanent moratorium on capital punishment whether undertaken for deterrence or redress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that congregations, regions and general units of this church be encouraged to pursue ways to support and implement the intent of this resolution at the national, provincial, state and local levels.