ABSTRACT

Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice

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This project addressed the problem of there being a need for Christians who are members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for justice in the administration of capital punishment.

The pivotal question at the core of this intervention is: “What effect does an intervention that educates, exposes, and brings biblical and societal awareness of justly administering capital punishment have on Christians?” How will engaging these biblical truths and societal realities provide awareness and an opportunity for introspection of both the just administration of capital punishment and the movement of Christians to advocate for justice in this process?

The subjects of this intervention were invited and compelled to honestly and earnestly answer questions and share beliefs on justice in the administration of capital punishment for the resolution of the following research questions:

1) “Can capital punishment be justly administered?” and
2) “Is capital punishment being justly administered?”

Starting here, in Texas and reaching across this nation and to other nations, the Church is required to reflect the justice of God by seeking justice. It is from the heart and
by the hand of Christians, that feeble, yet dynamic acts of advocacy serve to ignite a movement that will restore God’s justice to the administration of capital punishment.
Capital Punishment:
Christians Advocating for Justice

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..............................................................................................x

DEDICATION.............................................................................................................. xi

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction..............................................................................................................1

Statement of the Problem/Need .............................................................................1

Purpose Statements ................................................................................................1

  Personal Purpose .................................................................................................1

  Practical Purpose .................................................................................................1

  Research Purpose ...............................................................................................1

Rationale for the Project .........................................................................................2

  Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice......................................2

Statement of Research Questions..........................................................................13

  a. Problem/Need ................................................................................................13

  b. Purpose ..........................................................................................................13

  c. Research Questions ........................................................................................13

Statement of Significance and Scope of Project..................................................13

CHAPTER TWO:

A Postmodern Biblical View of Justice in the Administration of Capital Punishment..16

Today’s Church and Capital Punishment ................................................................16

Capital Punishment Worldwide ............................................................................21

Evidence of Injustice in the Current Use of Capital Punishment ............23
Capital Punishment During Old Testament Times .................................32

Adam and Eve ..................................................................................32

Cain ..................................................................................................36

Judgment and the Flood ..................................................................39

Abraham ..........................................................................................43

Moses and the Law ..........................................................................45

David ...............................................................................................51

The Prophets Speak on Justice and Mercy ......................................55

Reconciling Old Testament Positions on Capital Punishment ...........63

Jesus, the New Testament, and Capital Punishment ......................68

The Cross as the Intersection of Justice and Mercy .......................71

A New Paradigm: The Kingdom of God .........................................72

The Sanctity of Life and Blood Vengeance ....................................75

A Postmodern Christian View of Capital Punishment ....................79

Church and State, the Two Kingdoms .............................................84

Another Option to the Death Penalty .............................................87

The Need for Reform ......................................................................90

Conclusion: The Paradox of Capital Punishment .........................93

Recommendations ..........................................................................98

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology ....................................................................................101

Introduction ......................................................................................101

a. Problem/Need .............................................................................101
b. Purpose ........................................................................................................ 101

Description of Intervention ........................................................................ 101
Orientation Forum ......................................................................................... 101
Pre-Intervention Interview ......................................................................... 101
Pre-Intervention Interview Questions ....................................................... 102
Statement of Research Questions .............................................................. 103

Description of the Method ........................................................................ 103
Sessions of the Intervention ........................................................................ 104
Session I (Day 1) ......................................................................................... 104
Session 2 (Day 2) ....................................................................................... 105

Role of the Researcher ................................................................................. 107
The Sample .................................................................................................. 108
Entering the Field of Research .................................................................. 108
Data Collection .............................................................................................. 109
Data Analysis ................................................................................................ 109
Validity and Reliability ................................................................................ 110

Post-Intervention Interview Questions ..................................................... 111

Ethical Issues Related to the Study ......................................................... 112
Conclusion .................................................................................................... 112

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Analysis ................................................................................. 117
Statement of the Problem ........................................................................... 117
Purpose Statement ...................................................................................... 117
Case Boundaries.............................................................................................................117
Pre-Interview Questions & Responses........................................................................119
  Intervention Questions..............................................................................................130
Sessions Overview......................................................................................................131

CHAPTER FIVE
Discussion and Reflection..........................................................................................134
  Discussion of Research Questions..............................................................................134
    Research Question I...............................................................................................134
    Research Question II.............................................................................................147
  Reflection on Research Questions...............................................................................154

APPENDICES
  A. Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty.................................163
  B. Black Letter Recommendations...........................................................................180
  C. Information/ Demographics Form for Participants...........................................187
  D. Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice..................................188
  E. Facts about the Death Penalty...............................................................................191
  F. Brentwood Baptist Church Profile......................................................................195
  G. Brentwood Demographics..................................................................................197
  H. Grief Led Man to Start Prison Ministry.............................................................198
  I. SBC Resolutions on Capital Punishment............................................................202
  J. Consent Form........................................................................................................204
  K. Approval Letter....................................................................................................205
L. Texas Baptists on Capital Punishment.................................................................206

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................214
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I thank my family for their continued encouragement. My husband Rev. Larry V. Pickens has been my constant prayer partner and sounding board. I thank God for him. I pray that the essence and scope of this project will outweigh the time stolen from my bonus daughter and son-in-law, Tiffany and Neal, and our grandchildren, Trenton, Nakia, Cameron, and Calleigh. I also wish to acknowledge the motivation from my brother
Gerald W. Clay whose ongoing incarceration has been used by God for the good to stimulate interest and sensitivity for those behind prison walls.
DEDICATION

To: My mother, Eleanor Lewis Clay, who is 90 years of age and who has always lived her life by extending unconditional love even in the most difficult of circumstances
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Project

Statement of the Problem/Need

There was a need for Christians who were members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for Justice in the administration of capital punishment.

Purpose Statements

Personal Purpose

The personal purpose of this project was to gain perspectives, from Christian members of Brentwood Baptist Church, of advocacy efforts that emerged after they engaged the topic of justice in the administration of capital punishment.

Practical Purpose

The practical purpose of this project was to initiate, using a microcosm of the Brentwood Church, actions of advocacy that were outcomes of a personal focus on justice in the administration of capital punishment.

Research Purpose

The research purpose was to focus the investigation on the effect of the intervention in identifying actions of advocacy by Christian participants as related to justice in the administration of capital punishment.
Rationale for the Project

The love of God radiates through His church as proclaimed in 1 Jn. 1:8, “God is love.” The Spirit of God speaks to and through His church, informing and instructing Christians as a Body. All believers must listen and be instructed by the Holy Spirit to understand spiritual matters and to discover their purpose. The church can exude harmony and a beautiful melody when, as a congregation, there is synergy and a move toward seeking the will of God for their lives. Dr. Terry W. York says, “The voice of the congregation is the voice of two homes: home on this earth and home in heaven. People recognize the voice of home when they hear it.” He then reminds us that Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.” 1 Notice, it is the Voice of God that is directing, with the sheep obeying and doing as He does. The rationale for this project invites the voices of Brentwood members to resonate with Christian conviction and be accompanied by authentic efforts of advocacy as an effect of this intervention of focus on Justice and Capital Punishment.

Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice

The voice of Brentwood Baptist Church continues to inform all listeners that it is “the church that cares.” It is a voice that sings the praises of God and gives melody to prayers. This unified voice extends a welcome to all; it is a compassionate and inclusive voice that stresses deliverance, restoration, liberation, and reconciliation. The voice of this congregation is encouraging and deliberate about promoting freedom from oppressive systems, and it stresses release of the captives by defying limitations and

boundaries. It is known for promoting education and excellence, and it is a voice that lifts prayers for the diseased and the hurting, while extending helpful words and actions to those harmed by injustice and hate. The voice of this congregation speaks comforting words to the bereaved and mourns with those who grieve. Dr. York insists that the clergy must help the laity to embody the voice of the congregation through involvement, discipleship, and the equipping of the saints.²

Brentwood Church exists to lift its voice in love, speaking from a heart of compassion, and proclaiming God’s Word in love. The Word of God undergirds these beliefs and actions by admonishing the believer that God is love. Love moves the believer to action. The first words read by Jesus in the synagogue on the Sabbath day following His baptism were initially penned by the prophet Isaiah, who effectively painted a picture of “compassionate actions” of the church when under the control of the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18-19).

Historically, the church has been a voice that instructs and encourages love for God and man. This is true especially in the culture in which I grew up, the African American Baptist Church. I experienced the church serving as a voice that spoke on behalf of those victimized by the injustices of society, and that insisted upon justice for all, in particular in the arena of social justice, which most often encompasses the criminal justice dimension of ministry relegated to serving the “least of these” in society. Thus,

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² York, The Voice of Our Congregation, 32.
various social justice ministries that address incarceration-related issues within the church are labeled in a variety of ways such as: Jail and/or Prison Ministry, Restorative Justice Ministry, Criminal Justice Ministries, or simply Justice Ministry. Often these ministries provide the incarcerated person with worship services, living skills classes, opportunity to make restitution to their victim(s), and opportunities for inmates to interact with their spouses, children, parents and/or other family members during incarceration. Upon the prisoner’s release, some of these ministries then offer access to counseling, aftercare assistance (referrals for training, employment, and housing), and mentoring for both the former inmates and/or their families. It is also commonplace for social justice ministries to address needs within facilities that house juvenile offenders, and to reach out to their families in an effort to offer support and make resources available. An often forgotten yet necessary component of social justice ministries is to offer assistance and resources to the victims of criminal acts that might heal or restore them to wholeness.

This overview of the components of various social justice ministries is shared in an effort to contrast the frequently existing areas of ministry with other areas that I have found to be without voice at the individual member and congregational level of many churches within our sphere of interrelations over the past thirty years of ministry. This place of silence or apathy is the church’s hushed voice and lack of involvement in the addressing of advocacy issues regarding capital punishment. The Church must seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in incorporating this missing component into its ministries. How does the household of faith view those housed on death row? Is there an outreach to those who were wrongly incarcerated and released from Death Row? What can the royal priesthood of believers do to promote “justice” in the administration of the death penalty?
The Brentwood Criminal Justice Ministry has sponsored events and collaborated with ministries from other churches and para-church organizations in order to address the numerous needs surrounding incarceration. We have sought participation and input from our congregation to be preventive by exposing, educating, and bringing awareness to youth through outreach activities, group mentoring, and training. Our ministry has held forums and extended outreach efforts to address gang activity, mass incarceration of African Americans and other minority groups, and the pros and cons of private prisons. Outreach has included: support from the Church family for inmates in need of clothing, housing and employment; and a holistic ministry to meet the varied needs of the families of those who are incarcerated. Yet among the diversity of pressing needs required to restore “the least of these,” is that one area that, overall, has been little noticed and barely touched by the church.

Christian voices must be heard within the church conversing about justice as it relates to the death penalty. The church must seek God for direction in how to advocate for justice in the workings of this capital system. As Christians and citizens who care we must examine the justice system and question its proper implementation of capital punishment, and learn about the patterns of those being sentenced to death across this country, especially here in Texas.

From a personal perspective, most of those who fill the pews in Baptist churches (particularly in African American congregations) have not in a public Christian setting articulated their positions, or looked critically at their personal belief, or their church’s corporate position on the death penalty. The issue of capital punishment largely has been avoided and often is without a prevalent voice; thus there is a need for intentional,
divinely inspired dialogue and authentic discussions by Christians who seek to develop a moral and spiritual compass that will lead them to action based on justice as it relates to the capital punishment. The Body of Christ has a duty to act based on divine instruction.

As a predominantly African American Southern Baptist Congregation, the Brentwood Baptist Church will assume responsibility by forming a pilot focus group to establish dialogue on justice as it relates to capital punishment from a spiritual and biblical, yet also an ethical and moral perspective. Brentwood Christians must become educated and informed on the issue of capital punishment and make an informed decision on whether to support, abolish, or call for a moratorium. We must generate action that will lead to advocacy with more visibility, discussion, and dialogue at the individual or small group level within the communities of faith. This project’s intervention will facilitate learning opportunities inclusive of instruction, dialogue, discovery, and advocacy experiences for its participants.

At the time of this initial writing, a week had passed since more than 550 religious and spiritual leaders statewide endorsed the Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty presented during the 84th Texas Legislature in Austin, Texas (see Appendix A).3 This group of participants also voiced their support for House Bill 1527, which would repeal the death penalty in Texas. Out of the twenty-five different faith traditions that endorsed the document, Baptist churches represented only 1.2 per cent of the 551 groups. These numbers indicate the lack of advocacy from Baptist churches.4

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4. Note in Appendix A the seven Baptist churches that appear in bold print.
What the Bible says and what the congregation believes about capital punishment are seldom formally studied, discussed within the church, and integrated into the reality of the congregants’ respective lives. Lack of familiarity with capital punishment and too little information and knowledge about the death penalty process along with its biblical implications suggest that church members are not fully exploring and engaging the topic of capital punishment sufficiently.

Both former President George W. Bush and former Vice-President Al Gore, along with former New York Governor George E. Pataki have expressed strong support of the death penalty as a safeguard for society and a deterrent to crime. They maintain that without the death penalty, murders would increase. Pataki used statistics to show that after twenty years, the murder rate dropped by fifty per cent. Yet death penalty critics contend that other factors such as an increase in conviction rate and stepped-up crime control measures had an impact. Since its restoration, a myriad of studies have expressed support for and against the death penalty as a strong deterrent. The approach in the newer deterrence studies involved estimation of regressions with different combinations of variables. It has been noted that:

The most important theoretical misspecification in the new deterrence studies is the omission of the incapacitative effects of imprisonment generally, and Life Without Parole (LWOP) sentences in particular. Of the thirty-six states that

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6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

currently had valid death penalty statues, thirty-five also had LWOP sentences in particular.\textsuperscript{9}

In addition to deterrence being questionable, the question of race, poverty, disadvantage, and equity in the pretrial capital process must be weighed. Two key findings from studies that examined racial disparity in death penalty sentences follow:\textsuperscript{10}

- In the vast majority of cases, the race of the victim tends to have an effect on the sentence outcome, with white victim cases more often resulting in death sentences;

- However, in some jurisdictions, notably in the federal system, the race of the defendant also affects sentencing outcomes, with minority defendants more likely to receive a death sentence than white defendants.

Although the black population represents only fourteen percent of the population, forty-two percent of those on death row are black.\textsuperscript{11} Twenty-eight studies on capital punishment were analyzed by the Government Accountability Office (GAO, known as the investigative arm of Congress, an independent, nonpartisan agency) and found:

In 82\% of the studies, race of victim was found to influence the likelihood of being charged with capital murder or receiving the death penalty, 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.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{9} Fagan and West, “Death and Deterrence Redux,” 321.


\textsuperscript{11} 2013 Census Black Population Estimates: 1) 45,003,665 or 14.1\%: Black Only or Black in combination with another race; 2) 41,623,897 or 13.2\%: Black Only; 3) 41,762,331 or 13.2\%: ‘Black Only’ or ‘Black in combination with another race’ (non-Hispanic); 4) 39,076,459 or 12.4\%: Black Only (non-Hispanic). NOTE: The most common figures used by the Census Bureau and most other public and private organizations are 1) and 2). Since “Hispanic” is an ethnicity and not a race “non-Hispanic” numbers are only available for specific data.

\textsuperscript{12} Sean McElwee, “It’s Time to Abolish the Death Penalty,” in Huffington Post (September 7, 2013).
The accuracy of the capital justice system along with the unequal and seemingly arbitrary application of the death penalty across jurisdictions (among races and between sexes) is a central concern. One could ask, if Christians do not seek to resolve these inequities and injustices that permeate a system that should administer capital punishment fairly, then who will? It is my view that Christians within the Protestant church at large have shared in this silence and urgently need to find their voice and follow with action on this matter. I believe that involvement (especially among Christians) is the key for resolving the issue of injustice. The need to educate congregations about opportunities for advocacy is pressing and will serve to empower the membership and lead to an engaging dialogue, followed by responsible actions that may include: writing letters, occupying space, marching, protesting, rallying, manning phone banks, taking public action, serving as advocates, collecting signatures, participating in scheduled events, volunteering services, responding affirmatively to court summons, or other related peaceful and non-violent responses to effect change and serve as productive citizens.

I wrestled with this issue based on extensive research during the writing of my Foundational Paper and the reality of life experiences. As a result, I entered this intervention in support of abolishing the death penalty, yet I have encouraged the subjects to be true to their convictions and inner spiritual compass. I have remained hopeful and open to peering through the lens of other Believers as they are empowered to process the reality of these issues through research gathered from studies, life narratives, history, and

the Bible. Although this study has not been able to monitor divine guidance, it is my hope that the participants sought to be led and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

The scope of my research was narrowed due to the chosen population of this project. The targeted population is from my local church, an African American Southern Baptist Church, aligned with the greater Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). The participants were encouraged to voluntarily engage in an intervention that addressed the issue of justice as it related to capital punishment through learning opportunities inclusive of instruction, dialogue, discovery, and advocacy experiences. The articulation of the participants’ beliefs based on their moral and spiritual convictions during the course of the intervention provided valuable data. Programmed into the intervention were assigned effective actions (e.g., journaling, research, observations, and advocacy) to be performed so participants would personally process information within a Christian setting.

The Researcher encouraged the participants to individually examine the advocacy recommendations of the Public Policy Department in both the Christian Life Commission (CLC) of Texas Baptist and the Ethics Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention. CLC Director Kathryn Freeman used the terms advocacy and demonstrative Evangelism interchangeably, and referred to this activity as being God’s hands and feet in the world. The intervention inspired participants to form their own beliefs on this issue, and sought to examine the research of these institutions (CLC and ERLC, among others) for intentional resolve, and for additional ideas for advocacy opportunities that reflect Christian love and civic responsibility. As the Researcher, I
identified and documented any significant changes in the participants’ convictions or actions as a result of the intervention.

A component of this intervention included exposing the participants to insight into over fifteen years of work by “The Constitution Project” (TCP), a promoter of pragmatic, bipartisan policies before the courts, policymakers, the media, and the public. In a May 2014 publication, Virginia Sloan, President of TCP, describes TCP’s Death Penalty Committee as death penalty opponents and proponents who working together, and providing a unique voice on death penalty policy. She ends her preface as follows:

The Committee’s fundamental mission has not changed, and it deserves restatement. Committee members believe that individuals who commit violent crimes deserve swift and certain punishment. Some of the members of the Committee believe that the range of punishments may include death; others do not. But they all agree that no one should be denied basic constitutional protections, including a competent lawyer, a fair trial and full judicial review of any conviction and sentence. The denial of such protections heightens the danger of wrongful conviction and sentencing. Reflected in the recommendations is the Committee’s belief that, despite greater public understanding and the progress that has been made, the risk of error in the application of the death penalty remains all too real and much more remains urgently to be done.

Again, one could ask, if Christians do not assume a responsible role with regard to justice and do not advocate on behalf of the voiceless, then who will? Christians working together possess the power to influence the courts (especially the Supreme Court) to pursue the eradication of the systemic inequities pervading this country that impact the just administration of capital procedures in a way that is nondiscriminatory.


15. Ibid., xix.
It is insightful to revisit a statement made on the eve of the retirement of the eighty-five-year-old Justice Harry Blackmun after almost a quarter century on the Supreme Court. Justice Blackmun reversed his position on capital punishment, declaring that “from this day forward” he would “no longer tinker with the machinery of death.”

In a dissenting opinion, he argued that capital punishment as practiced in the U.S. is unconstitutional because it is applied in a discriminatory manner. His views follow and reflect his thoughtfulness:

For more than 20 years I have endeavored—indeed, I have struggled—along with a majority of this Court, to develop procedural and substantive rules that would lend more than the mere appearance of fairness to the death penalty endeavor. Rather than continue to coddle the Court’s delusion that the desired level of fairness has been achieved and the need for regulation eviscerated, I feel morally and intellectually obligated simply to concede that the death penalty experiment has failed.

After wrestling with the matter, he decided that the death penalty, “as is currently administered is contrary to the Constitution of the United States.” He expresses a need for justice in regard to capital punishment. Our nation is in need of clarity and understanding on this issue. At the heart of the nation is the Church, and as members of this body, we have started with fellow worshippers, to discover their perceptions of justice as it is related to capital punishment. That which permeates our minds and hearts is revealed in our actions. These emerging tenets and their outcomes of advocacy are revealed in the results of this project.


17. Ibid.


Statement of Research Questions

a. Problem/Need

There was a need for Christians who are members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for Justice as related to capital punishment.

b. Purpose

The purpose of this project was to study the effect of the intervention on actions of advocacy by Christian participants as related to justice in the administration of capital punishment.

c. Research Questions

1. What effect did the intervention have on the participants’ objectivity related to justly administering capital punishment?

2. What effect did the intervention have on the Christian participants’ outcomes of advocacy?

Statement of Significance and Scope of Project

The significance of this project was to stimulate, inform, dialogue, and initiate discovery about capital punishment among Christians on an individual and a community level that would inspire a response of action and advocacy. The project’s significance and effect upon members of the Brentwood Baptist church as a primarily African American Southern Baptist congregation served as a learning environment for critical thought and spiritual development on justice issues relative to the death penalty in Texas.

Biblical perspectives are divided on contemporary ethical issues regarding capital punishment to the point that the subject of support for the death penalty is controversial. The church as a microcosm of society serves as a test site for this project to examine this
divide and reveal the views of Christians with varying perspectives on justly applying
capital punishment. A need for the Church’s overall positions to surface was also
expressed in the following excerpt from James Patterson and Peter Kim:

Religion has little impact on the moral life of the majority of Americans. Most
Americans aren’t sure of their church’s position on the great moral issues of the
day—from school busing, capital punishment, book-banning, affirmative action,
birth control, homosexuality, teaching creationism in the public schools,
pornography and premarital sex to civil rights.¹⁹

The value of each life and the sanctity of all life among Christians are topics in
need of introspection and dialogue. The increasing numbers of executions in Texas
annually are now among the highest in the U.S., which should inspire a need for
discovery with respect to justly administering capital punishment. Discovery should have
at its core the Bible as the central offering of biblical awareness and insightful education
to stir the spiritual consciousness. Project participants encouraged to engage the history,
data, statistics, narratives, and experiences, were also invited to seek God-given direction
as they were led to a place of resolve and action.

The scope of this project embodied participants who were willing to wholly
experience and share prior to and during this intervention so that their feedback might be
examined. Exposure to historical cases and individual stories of those who had been
convicted of capital crimes (included those wrongly convicted) produced a sensitivity
that was significant. The research process was designed with vital tools for informing and
gathering the reflections from the internal struggles that arose when addressing the matter
of justice in the process and administration of capital punishment.

¹⁹. James Patterson and Peter Kim, “The Decline and Fall: An Alarmed Perspective” in The
The fact that the research was in Texas added an impressive perspective, since Texas is among the states where executions are highest, as approaching 600 persons have been executed since the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976. In my view, the dissonance that exists in the judicial processes surrounding capital punishment must be resolved. The outcome of this intervention provides a view of its own.

It is the hope of the researcher that recommendations will be made that will serve to stimulate dialogue, offer resolve, lead to action, and ultimately advocacy that might encourage resolution. This project promotes exposure to factual and current data, open dialogue among participants, and voicing of convictions along with opportunities for advocacy by participants.

The intervention will highlight the significance of the decisions by Christians willing to be guided and prompted by the Holy Spirit to serve as advocates for justice. These opportunities may include, yet not be limited to, exposing the subjects to areas for action and involvement such as: correspondence with the CLC of Texas Baptist for help in applying faith to life through ethics, public policy, and ministries; interaction with the ERLC of SBC to support their declaration in pursuit of truth and justice; addressing of current legislative bills related to capital punishment and creating new bills; educating others on issues within the judicial process, and identification of injustices in the administration of capital punishment. The subjects will be monitored to identify actions of advocacy that affect change, encourage Christian values, and reflect the love of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
CHAPTER TWO
A Postmodern Biblical View of Justice in the Administration of Capital Punishment

Today’s Church and Capital Punishment

In 2003, the Texas Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention of Texas stated that capital punishment is “a just and appropriate means by which the civil magistrate may punish those guilty of capital crimes.” The committee’s statement was an affirmation of the official stance of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), which has long been vocal in expressing its support for capital punishment. In a resolution passed and published in the year 2000, the SBC’s members stated with conviction, “We urge that capital punishment be applied as justly and as fairly as possible without undue delay, without reference to the race, class, or status of the guilty.” Their resolve implies that the Convention affirms capital punishment as long as it is “applied in a just and fair” manner. This addendum was necessary since numerous studies demonstrate the rampant injustice in the capital punishment process in America.

Overall, the leadership of the Southern Baptist national convention has clearly taken a stand in favor of capital punishment, while expecting all affiliated churches to simply follow the convention’s lead. Meanwhile, despite the strong position asserted by major state and national Baptist conventions on the issue of capital punishment, the

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members of many Baptist congregations appear neutral and uncomfortably silent on this issue. Much too often, congregations fail to address or even touch the issue of “capital punishment” through dialogue, personal research, or forums on the issue, finding it easier to simply support the convention’s designated or chosen viewpoint. Even though capital punishment is a life-or-death issue, churches and conventions seldom sponsor focus groups for congregants on the issue or poll their membership to learn the scope of views held by parishioners. Pew Research Center notes that when polled, most but not all religious groups in the U.S. opposed the death penalty.22 Their poll determined that the Catholic Church and most mainline Protestant denominations, such as Episcopalians and United Methodists, officially oppose capital punishment, while many evangelical churches, including Southern Baptists, support the death penalty.23

To further polarize the religious community on this issue, the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), a parallel Texas convention, publicized their opposition to the use of capital punishment. In 2003, the Christian Life Commission of the BGCT called “for a moratorium on the death penalty.”24 At the core of this stance by the Christian Life Commission of the BGCT is the “belief that biblical teaching does not support capital punishment in this contemporary society.”25

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22. Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan think tank that informs the public about issues, attitudes, and trends shaping both the U.S. and the world.


25. Ibid.
This paper endorses uncovering other viewpoints or perspectives regarding the just application of capital punishment. Postmodernism derives much of its power from the way it deconstructs mechanisms of knowledge production. An exploration of postmodern perspectives assist us in extending our understanding of the frustrations experienced by practitioners as they work in social, community, and organizational contexts. The investigation begins with the power source, the Christian Scripture, and will move to the history, politics and issues of government and criminal justice with respect to capital punishment. It is postmodern in the sense that rather than lean toward a “one size fits all” mentality, it is based on personal truths and realities, individual interpretations and experiences so that positioning and perspective informs and reveals new insight. Since postmodern thought moves us to examine the ordinary and to critically inspect the routine, this biblical research will not take place in a vacuum, but will also provide an examination of the current realities of capital punishment in Texas and worldwide which reveal injustices in the administration of capital punishment.

Although this paper provides background and identifies pros and cons of capital punishment, an underlying and significant purpose is to examine the aspect of the “just” administration of capital punishment. Disturbing disparities and flaws in the capital process are outlined in a subsequent section of this paper entitled, “Evidence of Injustice in the Current Use of Capital Punishment.” By exploring Old Testament texts, personalities, and ideologies that are relevant to the capital process, this study examines the biblical mandate for justice as it applies to the use of the death penalty. As the various


27. Ibid., 202.
phenomena surrounding capital punishment are explored, key questions arise: What is God’s intent for justice as it relates to capital punishment and retribution? How do we hear from Christians as individuals on this permanent and final form of punishment? Is the process for the death penalty just and can it be justly applied? Is the punishment of death motivated by a concern for justice due to the wrong that was committed? If so, do all who commit the same wrong get the same punishment? Although this paper studies Baptist congregants in particular, the questions are relevant to the postmodern Protestant community as a whole. This information sheds light on the issues of capital punishment while encouraging individual members of Southern Baptist congregations to wrestle with the realities and issues (both the positive and negative) involved in the process of administering the death penalty. The goal is to promote an increased awareness and a better understanding of capital punishment from a biblical perspective, and insight into viewpoints on its just application.

One could argue that a progressive revelation of the Bible does not support capital punishment. Although instances within both the Old and New Testaments clearly support the intermittent use of capital punishment, the Bible as a whole advances an alternative view based on the sacrificial death of Jesus that atones for the sins of humankind, rather than the sacrifice of the sinner serving as the atoning agent. Thus, one could argue that both the Old and New Testaments reveal a progressive move away from the affirmation of the death penalty.

In this paper, as capital punishment is examined from a biblical perspective, the dynamics of a two-way relationship between God and humanity remain central. The unfolding relationship between God and His creation reveals both the backlash from the
first capital crime and God’s merciful response. The need for God to deliver His laws of
governance was demonstrated by the rise of a sinful and disobedient humanity. The
poignant cry for “justice” made by prophet after prophet reveals a significant and relevant
message that God continues to transmit. This narrative presents an objective and candid
examination and evaluation of the theological and ethical issues that are associated with
the death penalty. The desired outcome is for believers within the church to be inspired to
action, to discover their personal voice, and assume their civic duty through community
action promoting justice. Such involvement begins with owning an opinion of whether or
not capital punishment should be abolished. Congregants must be discerning as they
examine the process and determine if there is injustice in the administration of the death
penalty. The Church, as individual members of One Body, must be willing to search their
own hearts and souls in search of divine guidance for justly administering capital
punishment across the board. The prophet Micah states that to know the will of God is to
execute it:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require
of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your
God? (Micah 6:8)28

Indeed, it seems to be a given in scripture that a relationship with God and the pursuit of
justice are inseparable.29

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(New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Note: All scriptures referenced in this document, even if not
cited, are from NOAB translation.

29. Bruce C. Birch and Larry L. Rasmussen, Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life (Minneapolis:
Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 165.
Capital Punishment Worldwide

Baptist institutions are not alone in support of capital punishment, as many believers from many denominations support it, as do both faith groups and governments other than the U.S. Even so, although it has not disappeared, the death penalty’s presence in the world is declining. Former Senior Advisor and U.S. Ambassador David T. Johnson identifies three remaining global strongholds that continue to practice the use of capital punishment:

1. Asia, boasting more than ninety percent of all executions (the majority in China).  

2. The Muslim-majority nations of the Middle East (among many who believe it is divinely inspired).

3. The U.S., where thirty-five states (and the federal system) retain the death penalty. Many do not implement it, as the cost remains excessive, and the large majority of executions are concentrated in a handful of southern states.

As an endorser of capital punishment, the U.S. stands alone in the midst of major nations within the Western world that do not support it. Frank Zimring, Professor of Law and 2006 Wolfen Distinguished Scholar, claims that the main reason American jurisdictions, especially in the southern states, retain capital punishment when all other developed democracies except Japan have abandoned this practice, is a long-standing...


Professor of Law Andrew E. Taslitz surveys the history of vigilantism as follows:

America reveals that vigilantism, properly understood, involves the use of violence on behalf of the local community when it perceives itself no longer to be adequately protected by the state. Vigilantism is thus generally extra-legal. Yet why do Americans, who otherwise fear the abuse of government power, embrace the state’s ultimate power of imposing the death penalty? Relying primarily on recent social science literature showing that the actual imposition of the death penalty is highest in states who applaud vigilante values, I conclude that American juries have strangely come to see their role as vigilante-like, protecting the community from outsiders who assail it in the face of an ineffectual state, rather than as the imposition of state violence.

In sum, Taslitz goes so far as to suggest that American juries are much like vigilantes, with their aim being to protect their communities from outsiders. This could appear to be a noble cause, yet the process will suffer when juries arrive with the mindset that they must protect the status quo, rather than seeing themselves as peers of the defendant who are tasked with seeking truth and justice. This may account for some of what is behind punishments generally being harsher in America than in Europe, because the American traditions of egalitarianism and distrust of state power tend to discourage the merciful and respectful treatment of offenders.

The death penalty has survived as a viable means of punishment in political societies from ancient times. During the eighteenth century B.C., the Babylonian


Hammurabi’s Code of Laws established the death penalty for more than twenty different crimes. Lloyd Steffen highlights the impact of the Code of Hammurabi (1750 B.C.), the Egyptian and Assyrian laws (1500 B.C.), and the Hittite legal code (1300 B.C.), which was later introduced as the death penalty during the fourteenth century B.C. The Draconian Code of Athens and the Roman law of the Twelve Tablets served as continuations of this method of capital punishment. The effect of this ultimate punishment was realized with the execution of the Greek Philosopher Socrates in 399 B.C. Ancient laws of China prescribed the death penalty as a punishment, and the late Qing dynasty had named more than eight hundred crimes as capital offenses. Steffen assesses the history of state-sponsored executions from the middle ages to the present, and he notes that the social, historical, and political context of the execution policy and practice have been and remain strongly influenced by issues of race, gender, and class.

Evidence of Injustice in the Current Use of Capital Punishment

Capital punishment has been administered in various forms since medieval times. The idea of abolishing the death penalty emerged as a response to Europe’s eighteenth-

38. Lloyd Steffens is Lehigh Prison Project Center Professor of Religion Studies, University Chaplain, and Director of the Center for Dialogue, Ethics and Spirituality at Lehigh University (p. 31).
41. Lloyd Steffens, Execute Justice the Moral Meaning of the Death Penalty (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998), 31-34. The noted sources point to challenges argued by the NAACP regarding racial discrimination; for example, the Baldus study showing that out of 2,000 cases in Georgia, black defendants had a significantly higher likelihood of receiving the death penalty, and Supreme Court decisions revealing racial minorities disproportionately affected by administration of the death penalty.
The 20th century Enlightenment era, which saw advances in the arts, literature, and science. This idea was supported within the secular world due to the wasteful ineffectiveness of capital punishment. ⁴² Today, economic reasons are still cited for abolishing capital punishment, but the more compelling arguments against capital punishment are ethical. The system is rife with injustice along racial, cultural, economic, and judicial lines.

My interest in this study grew out of a face-to-face, televised encounter with the tragic aspect of capital punishment in connection with an innocent young black man, Troy Anthony Davis. Watching the televised execution of Davis from Atlanta, Georgia, on September 21, 2011, I was overwhelmed by the injustice of his fate as having been determined by the capital process. Although additional evidence of his innocence had surfaced, and seven of the nine original witnesses recanted their testimony, the state of Georgia rejected the request for a stay of execution and, in a televised execution, put Davis to death. The blatant injustice of the case stirred the depths of my concern about the use of capital punishment. Prior to this experience, I had never formed, determined or verbalized a consistent stance on the death penalty, but had permitted the severity of the crime in each case to dictate whether to support the taking of the defendant’s life as a just recompense. Yet, suddenly, as Troy Davis was executed, I felt overwhelmed at viewing the snatching of a man’s life, especially in the face of new evidence and unanswered questions concerning his guilt or innocence. Instantly, the need to be better informed on the biblical stance related to justly applying the death penalty, became of great significance to me.

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Davis’s story is hardly an exception, for as an African American man of low socioeconomic status, he was at far greater risk of wrongful execution than a member of any other demographic. Statistics from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) show that African Americans make up thirteen percent of the U.S. population, yet they comprise forty-two percent of death-sentenced prisoners.\textsuperscript{43} Another LDF study revealed that, in interracial murder executions, ninety-three percent were black defendants with white victims, while only seven percent were white defendants with black victims.\textsuperscript{44} This prevalent pattern of race-of-victim or race-of-defendant discrimination reveals some of the flaws of the system. Further, although defendants have a right to have a jury of their peers, another study showed that twenty percent of black defendants who were executed had been convicted by all-white juries.\textsuperscript{45} Studies show a distinct disparity in the number of black defendants sentenced when compared to the sentences given to others (Anglo/white in particular) for the same crime. The Innocence Project has reported findings that also support this claim of injustice, as seventy percent of the 321 persons exonerated from being wrongly convicted were people of color.\textsuperscript{46}

There are numerous other statistical studies that reflect the existence of a flawed system. James R. Acker, co-director of the Capital Punishment Research initiative at the University of Albany, lists the following issues that contribute to inequity: “the

\textsuperscript{43} NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Inc., \textit{Death Row USA} (Fall 2012).

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

possibility of errors or procedural unfairness, resource constraints due to poverty, and other practical considerations.\textsuperscript{47}

The other causes for the disparity could be attributed to issues of cost, the allocation of resources, the possible conviction and execution of innocent persons, potential unfairness in the death penalty’s administration, and a myriad others that remain in the shadows, clouded by misinformation and political considerations.\textsuperscript{48} In Texas, the inequities are more apparent as the number of executions in the state continues to rise. At the time of this writing, Texas had executed more than 500 prisoners since the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1976 reinstatement of the death penalty.

Even more disturbing than the rise in executions in Texas is the fact that the state leads the nation in wrongful convictions, exonerations, and executions. Some memorable cases of known wrongful executions in Texas include the following:

- Carlos Deluna, executed in 1989, even though throughout his imprisonment he had maintained his innocence. In 2012, the \textit{Columbia Human Rights Law Review} published one of the most exhaustive investigations of a criminal case in U.S. history, \textit{Los Tocayos Carlos}, inclusive of a comprehensive website.\textsuperscript{49}

- Gary Graham, sentenced to death in 1981 at age eighteen, with no physical evidence and only one eyewitness, who had been forty feet away from the site of the crime. Two other witnesses, whom Graham’s court-appointed lawyer failed to call, had seen the assailant and said that he was not Graham. Graham maintained his innocence until the end and was executed in 2000.


• Claude Jones, executed in Texas in 2000 due to a forensic expert’s testimony that a hair found at the scene had come from Jones. DNA testing was denied. In 2007, the Innocence Project and the Texas Observer obtained the strand of hair, and after submitting it for testing, determined that the hair belonged to the victim rather than to Jones.50

• Cameron Todd Willingham, executed in 2004 for an arson that resulted in the deaths of his three daughters, whose conviction was based on faulty forensic science. Later, a witness, also an inmate, recanted his earlier testimony against Willingham. In 2010, the Texas Forensic Science Commission released a report admitting that Willingham’s conviction was based on “flawed science.”51

The disproportionate execution of African-Americans may be due to the presence of any or all of the following: poverty, prejudice, lack of education, mental challenges, and even profiling or discretion, to which this demographic has long been subjected. The following data provides insight into this inequality:

• Impoverished black prisoners constitute forty-two percent of death row inmates, including sixty-six percent of federal and seventy-one percent of military death row inmates.52

• Historically, of the 1,100 persons executed in the United States for rape offenses, ninety-two percent are black.53

• Despite the country’s troubling history of executing mostly black rapists, it was not until 1977 that the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed the constitutionality of executing prisoners for rape. By then, southern jurisdictions had executed 781 black rapists.54


53. Ibid., 373.

54. Ibid., 377.
• Slightly more than sixty-four percent of juvenile executions were of youthful offenders of color, and jurisdictions executed black youth at a rate nearly twice that of white youth.  

• Poverty is an aggravating factor for capital defendants of color because they cannot afford private attorneys, who are often more successful than public defenders at mitigating capital sentences to life imprisonment.

• Poor capital defendants must rely on court appointed lawyers or public defenders; some ninety percent of death row inmates have had appointed lawyers.

Although numerous studies have been conducted and reported, and statistical data has been provided, many members of the government, the general public, and the church—especially in the South—have turned a blind eye to the findings of these studies and the inequality in the administration of capital punishment.

Constitution Project President and Founder Virginia E. Sloan is the editor of *Mandatory Justice Revisited*, a publication of the Constitution Project Committee, which originated in 2001. Since its inception, the project has worked to exonerate innocent people and have them released from death row. Many of the flaws in the capital punishment procedure are elucidated in this overview from Sloan’s publication:

Poor people accused of capital crimes are still represented by lawyers who are intoxicated, sleep during trial, and, no matter how well meaning, lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to defend a capital case. Individuals with compelling claims of innocence are still confronted with obstacles to the testing of DNA and other potentially exculpatory evidence, and they continue to face procedural barriers to presenting exculpatory evidence to any court. It is still the law that if a lawyer fails to raise an issue in the state courts, a federal court is (except in the rarest of circumstances), prevented from ruling on it, no matter how valid it may be.

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56. Ibid., 376.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., viii.
In light of this evidence, it seems clear that records reveal defenders of Capital Punishment who have based their position on flawed assumptions. The states in favor of capital punishment maintain that justice is served when administering the punishment of death for murder or even for lesser crimes such as rape mentioned above. The disparities that exist within the justice system invoking capital punishment, however, indicate a flawed or unjust legal system, which are implicitly endorsed by uncritical proponents.

Reflected among these implicit beliefs or presuppositions that:

- State-mandated execution is acceptable, even if there is not always one hundred percent certainty or even when the judicial process has not been fairly administered.

- Executing a person who is not of sound mind is acceptable if the person broke a capital offense law, even when another law forbids the act.

- Decisions of executions discriminately affected by the poverty of the defendant, rather than wealth, and the race of the victim (for a minority defendant) are acceptable.

Even if these beliefs are implicit, unarticulated, or unintentional, according to the data of capital punishment endorsers versus flaws in the system, apparently they are much too often present within society’s capital process. It seems a given that these are neither Christ-like nor biblically sound motivations.

In a debate with Ernest van den Haag, professor and former Chief of the Center for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation at the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, John P. Conrad unabashedly referred to capital punishment as “moral revulsion at the state’s engagement in premeditated homicide.”\footnote{Van den Haag and Conrad, \textit{The Death Penalty}, 11.} Conrad proceeded to ask if a social good truly can be achieved that cannot be accomplished by a lesser
punishment. The argument has been made that to exist with a life sentence and know that you will have to be imprisoned and live every day reflecting upon your guilt and the wrong you did is a more severe and difficult existence. A life sentence is also the answer because humanity cannot in and of itself create life, for humanity is made by God in the image of God.

The ever-present possibility of a wrongful conviction cannot be ignored; hence the possibility of executing an innocent person must be weighed. It is through the work of organizations such as the Constitution Project in Washington D.C., the Innocence Project, and the Death Penalty Committee that justice is being pursued, and more information and evidence is being uncovered and examined to ensure increasing fairness and equity in the justice system. The Constitution Project (CP) is a committee reflecting the diversity of Democrats, Republicans, conservatives, liberals, judges, prosecutors, policymakers, victim advocates, defense lawyers, journalists, and scholars who share varying views regarding the death penalty. They are, however, all motivated by a common, profound concern, “that in recent years and around the country, procedural safeguards and other assurances of fundamental fairness in the administration of capital punishment have been revealed to be deeply flawed.”

The Innocence Project is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating the wrongly convicted by DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. The Innocence Project, while working valiantly across this nation, has uncovered facts and freed 312 wrongly convicted persons from general population and from death row. Many of those who were wrongfully

accused, charged, and sentenced to die were released from death rows in states nationwide. Others who were wrongly sentenced to death row and executed can never be released, in spite of their innocence.

One example of a convicted felon who was freed through the efforts of the Innocence Project is Michael Morton, who was convicted in Texas in 1987 but gained national notoriety upon his exoneration by DNA evidence in 2011. Wrongly convicted of murdering his wife, Morton served almost twenty-five years of a life sentence. The Innocence Project defended him and discovered evidence that the District Attorney’s office had refused to disclose. Morton stated he was thankful that he had not been convicted of a capital crime and grateful that he had received a life sentence instead. Had he been sentenced to death row, he may not have lived to be exonerated. In 2013, two years after his release, Governor Perry signed the Michael Morton Act requiring the District Attorney’s office to turn potentially exculpatory evidence over to the defense attorney without a court order. This was monumental for the advancement of justice in the judicial process as it served to further level the ground between the prosecution and the defense. The irony of this benefit is that it took the wrongful conviction of a non-minority who had the means to hire a defense attorney (who received an alternative sentence to the death penalty) to usher in change. The next section contains an in-depth analysis of how justice was maintained during the biblical evolution of capital punishment.
Capital Punishment during Old Testament Times

A critical analysis of the Old Testament provides a comprehensive overview of the context out of which capital punishment originated in biblical history. The initial reference to a capital crime can be seen within the Book of Genesis in the actions of Cain after he took the life of his brother, Abel. God’s response to Cain’s sin and violation of His warning will be discussed. God’s response to the collective sin of humanity and his judgments upon their actions are revealed in his sparing of Noah’s family, and in the law he crafted and gave to Moses for the governance of the children of Israel. The presence and process of the death penalty during Old Testament times was traced through the personalities and experiences of Cain, Noah, Moses, David, Micah, and God’s prophets. It is necessary to review the biblical narrative of God’s merciful relationship with humanity and the consequences that occurred as a result of humanity's disobedience in order to grasp the biblical concepts that are relevant to capital punishment.

Adam and Eve

Terence E. Fretheim, Old Testament scholar and Elva B. Lovell Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn., described Genesis as a composite work of three interwoven sources (Yahwist, Elohist, and Priestly).61 His personal view, which I share, is that it portrays a patchwork quilt of traditions from various periods in the life of Israel. The language of Genesis is that of a narrative, reflecting the history and genealogy of Israel. Fretheim refers to it as a retelling of the past, not to find patterns for moral behavior, but to understand our identity as God’s

people who have inherited His commands and promises. 62 My personal view of Creation is that of a literal day and a 7 day week. As humanity’s creator and designer, God sought to integrate order and structure into the lives of His created beings. The presence of disobedience, immorality, sin, and punishment imply that patterns for moral and ethical behavior were addressed.

God maintained an intimate relationship with humanity in the Garden of Eden. After their disobedience, Adam and Eve hid when they became aware of God’s presence with them in the garden (Gen. 3:8). The warning of a consequence for disobedience was expressed in Gen. 2:16–17, as God commanded his created beings to act in obedience:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die.”

Many readers of the Bible have interpreted this divine punishment of death as a physical death, but others including David M. Carr, Old Testament Scholar, Professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary in New York, suggest that the language of being put to death meant that Adam’s perspective on life was forever altered. 63 In this view, it was Adam’s innocence that would die, as he (and through him, the rest of humanity) was awakened to the knowledge of good and evil.

The consequences of the fall for Adam are reflected in the following verses from the third chapter of Genesis, in which the passage describes the new conditions and what man could now expect from his existence: 64


64. Karleen, The Handbook to Bible Study, 308.
I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And to the man he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, “You shall not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

(Gen. 3:15-19)

Carr points out that although this is an act of disobedience, the word “sin” does not yet appear in the text. Although Adam and Eve ignored the single restriction and suffered the consequence of disobedience, as ordered by God, it was the snake (Gen. 3:14a) and the ground that were cursed (Gen. 3:17b), not Adam or Eve directly, although they do not escape without a penalty. Carr uses courtroom language to describe their punishment:

Another interpretation is that the woman is sentenced to endless “toil” of reproduction, much as the man is condemned (in 3:17-19) to endless toil in food production . . . humans here are depicted as having a brief opportunity for immortality.65

Baruch A. Levine, Skirball Professor Emeritus of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, also uses courtroom language to explain this event, “The Eden narrative established the principle that disobedience to God is punishable by death, even though the sentences of Adam and Eve were eventually commuted or suspended.”66 Access to the tree of life was barred. Immortality was no longer an option for humanity.

Just as God had warned, the consequences of Adam’s disobedience were set into


motion. Theologian Charles Hodge outlines the following four consequences⁶⁷ that this rebellious act had for humanity:

1. An immediate sense of guilt and shame.
2. The desire and effort to be hidden from the face of God.
3. The denunciation and immediate execution of the righteous judgment of God upon the serpent, the man, and the woman.
4. Expulsion from the Garden of Eden and prohibited access to the Tree of Life.

The freewill of Adam and Eve triggered the fall because they chose to disobey God. It is for this reason that the Bible associates flawed humanity with the image of the first Adam. God’s desire for an ongoing relationship with humanity led to His extending of “a rod of correction” to govern humanity’s actions. Once Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were admonished severely with a rebuke that changed or even cursed the environment and placed boundaries upon humanity. Following this fall of humanity, Adam and Eve were burdened with the difficulty of labor, both in production of plants and in reproduction through childbearing. Society for humanity would exist in “dis-ease” (without ease, and in struggle).

In the following passage, the writer of Genesis describes Adam and Eve’s banishment from the Garden of Eden by indicating that a sentinel, identified as a “cherubim,” was positioned to guard and secure the garden, preventing Adam and Eve’s return.

Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at

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the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and
turning to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24)

The appearance of both these angels and the flaming sword represented the first
government structure ordained by God within the Bible. The cherubim were there to
enforce the commands given by the Creator. The expression of God’s love appeared to
dim during the eviction of the couple from the garden. A structure, the framework of
government was forming as God set limits and restrictions on His established instructions
ensuring that disobedience has consequences. In addition to banishing them from the
Garden of Eden, God provided order and restoration through their being subject to
following rituals to present offerings and sacrifices to God. Yet even as these sacrifices
and offerings are being made, humanity’s disobedience would continue to increase.

Cain

Humanity’s disobedience unleashed by the fall, was now in motion. They would
be burdened with pain, with the labor of reproduction for the female, and the necessity of
productivity for the male. As expressed in Gen. 3:22, their offspring would not have the
privilege of living forever and remaining in the Garden of Eden; instead, the governing
power of God restrained them from residing there. Now armed with the knowledge of
good and evil, innocence would no longer be an innate component of humanity’s nature.

As this narrative unfolds, a conflict between the two sons of Adam and Eve leads
to the death of Abel, the younger son. The word for “sin” actually appears (for the first
time, prior to the actual murder) in Gen. 4 where God warns Cain that sin is crouching at
the door, but this warning does not deter Cain from committing the first murder to be
recorded in the Bible. After Cain kills his brother, Abel, the Lord speaks to him: “And the
Lord said, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” (Gen. 4:10). God addresses Cain saying that his brother’s blood, this symbol of sacred life, has been crying out to Him from the earth. Fretheim refers to this response by God as an accusation and further suggests that Abel has experienced injustice.\(^\text{68}\) He describes this polluting of the land with blood (Gen. 6:11-13) as what we might see as the first capital crime among humanity, in the following way, “This idea assumes that blood as conveyor of life belongs to God and spilled blood cannot be covered up, leaving the issue of exacting justice in divine hands.”\(^\text{69}\) In this first known homicide, Abel was the victim of injustice and Cain was the aggressor and murderer, committing the tragic capital crime of murder, by shedding the innocent blood of his own brother. In Cain’s desperate case, God determined that it was appropriate to show mercy. From that time forward, capital offenses would evolve and be administered in the face of complex moral judgments. How did God command His created beings to approach this act of injustice among brothers? Could a compromised generation ever come to know how to extend justice? What role, if any, would mercy, kindness, forgiveness, and love play? The journey forward would require more than humanity could give. The road ahead would need mercy, forgiveness, and God himself shrouded in human flesh.

It would seem reasonable that Cain’s act of disdain for life would demand a recompense of death, and yet, God showed mercy to Adam’s offspring. Levine points out that despite the unrequited shedding of Abel’s blood, God chose to commute Cain’s

\(^{68}\) Fretheim, The Book of Genesis, 374.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.
sentence.\textsuperscript{70} Convicted inmate, Jens Soering, discusses Cain’s murder of Abel, and he
notes that even the Father of Jesus refused the option of execution when confronted with
the first crime in biblical history. Soering further remarks, “Yet Yahweh did not make an
example of Cain to deter future criminals, but merely sentenced him to be banished (Gen.
4:12-13). And when Cain complained that even this was too harsh, God reduced his
punishment still further by giving him special protection (Gen. 4:15).”\textsuperscript{71} This was an
early example of God amending government structures to limit and restrict man’s power
to punish with death. Thus, it is reasonable to infer from Scripture that an alternative
form of punishment, other than death, was extended to Cain and could be a
foreshadowing biblical example that will later be extended to include others.

In ancient times, personal identity was deeply rooted in and defined by the
surrounding community. Gardner C. Hanks, the professional librarian at Idaho State
Library and the Idaho State Death Penalty Action Coordinator for Amnesty International,
has served as spiritual advisor for Idaho death row inmates, and is active in the
Mennonite Church. Hanks stresses that without community, ancient peoples had no
protection from the outside world. Cain’s banishment was a separation from the
community, which removed a certain amount of protection, leaving him a fugitive and a
wanderer. Yet God softened even this punishment and reduced the threat of danger by
declaring that anyone who would cause Cain harm would answer to Him.\textsuperscript{72} As Cain’s

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{70} Levine, \textit{Capital Punishment}, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Jens Soering, \textit{The Convict Christ} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 26. Soering has been
incarcerated since 1986 and claims innocence.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Garner C. Hanks, \textit{Against the Death Penalty: Christian and Secular Arguments against
\end{itemize}
}
wandering (an aspect of his punishment) began, and while he was protected by God, humanity’s journey with mercy and justice was set into motion.

Judgment and the Flood

Ten generations after the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden, the extensive and perverse nature of sin upon the earth demanded judgment from God. So Almighty God permitted a flood upon the earth to destroy all of humanity with the exception of Noah and his family. One could perceive that the redemptive act of mercy that spared Noah’s family was more evidence of a benevolent God. Just as God had banished the guilty Cain and later even exonerated him from the penalty of death, He would now (in the face of sinful humanity) spare a remnant from an execution of destruction by the Flood. Following this devastation, God addresses the offense of taking a life in Gen. 9:6, as follows: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed; for in his image God made humankind.” Hanks refers to this as a move from the forgiveness and regeneration shown to Cain by God, to a blessing inclusive of instruction and limitations to Noah and his family. In effect, God passed the baton to humanity, giving them authority to execute “those who shed the blood of a human.” God also extended and enlarged the boundary so that humans could now kill animals for food, and guidelines were declared designating times of separation to be observed and embraced by the culture.

The Lord looked upon Noah with grace (Gen. 6:8), as he would also look upon Abraham as righteous due to his faith in the Lord (Gen. 15:6). Following the flood, the

73. Hanks, Against the Death Penalty, 26.
rainbow served for Noah as a sign (Gen. 9:13–14, 16), a peace offering, and promise from God. In *The Open Secret*, Leslie Newbigin identifies this sign as “the unconditional promise of God’s blessing on His whole race and on the physical following humankind’s second start after the disasters of total corruption and the flood.”

He further paints a literary picture of humankind setting out anew beneath the rainbow arch that represents the sacrament of the primal covenant between God and all creation. As with the royal grant, the covenant pertains to Noah as an individual, but it also is given for subsequent generations.

God’s selection of Noah and his family was strategic in that his sons Shem, Japheth, and Ham would repopulate the world (Gen. 9:17). Shem’s lineage is most significant as they are known theologically as the Shemites (i.e., Semites), who were the Noahic root from which Abraham, Israel, and David were descendants (Gen. 10:22–29). The ark that Noah built to God’s specifications preserved this remnant or selected seed (ancestors) of Abraham, while the waters destroyed all others. This redemptive act provides a picture of salvation, with the ark as a symbol of God’s saving grace.

Following the great flood, God chose to start again. He extended a blessing to Noah and his sons by repeating the same “be fruitful and multiply” charge that He had given to Adam, along with new revisions, “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh

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75. Ibid.

with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof, shall ye not eat’” (Gen. 9:1-3). God had narrowed and repopulated the world from the descendants of a selected righteous man, Noah, a descendant of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. Noah was also from the line of Enoch, “the man who walked with God” (Gen. 5:6-32). God made it clear that the rainbow was to be a sign that the destruction of the world by a flood, a mass execution, would not occur again.

Levine expresses a parallel between 1) the ritual meaning of blood, and 2) humanity’s bloodline expressed in Gen. 9:4–6:

And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man.

In this passage, God speaks of man’s bloodline to Noah and his sons, while stressing His blessing and provision for Noah and his family just prior (vv. 1, 3). Levine points in Gen. 9:4 to a condition placed upon this blessing which required “that man not eat of the flesh of a beast in its blood” and further insisted upon “a life for a life” in verse six of Gen. 9 (also in Deut. 12:23 and Lev. 17:10-13). Christians often cite Gen. 9:6 in defense of capital punishment: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed.” It should be noted that this declaration was made during a time that God Himself purged the Earth of a vile presence. Hanks reminds all that “the Old Testament is the story of a repeating cycle of redemption.” In other words, God, in


78. Levine, Capital Punishment, 25.

79. Hanks, Against the Death Penalty, 25.
love, creates life, and then comes sin, followed by forgiveness and reinstatement, and so on.

In Gen. 9:11-17, God gives His Word (or promise) that the threat of flooding will from that time forth become local and limited:

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This [is] the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that [is] with you, for perpetual generations: and I will remember my covenant, which [is] between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that [is] upon the earth. (Gen. 9:11-16)

Hanks writes, “He will never again destroy the whole world. It is a promise to every creature on earth in every place and for all time. This is God’s free and generous assurance, which he signs as only he can—with a rainbow.”

Noah’s descendants are referenced in the verses that follow as the “nations of the world,” thus providing a global picture of them and their offspring: “The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was people” (Gen. 9:18-19). Noah’s three sons were the ancestors of the people of the whole world, and they were the ones to whom God extended the promise that He never again would destroy all flesh with the waters and the flood.

The narrative of the flood exposes the existence of a perverse generation that was destroyed by God, and a remnant that was spared as a redemptive act of God. A shift then took place, endorsing the shedding of blood with prescribed consequences. Following

80. Hanks, Against the Death Penalty, 25.
this devastation, God offered to man a promise of peace, which was a foreshadowing of a future redemptive act that would reflect God’s saving grace.

Abraham

The patriarch Abraham, a man of faith and obedience, would be ushered in with a promise from God to be extended to a future remnant. Faith was of crucial significance for Sarai and Abram due to the absence of both Sarai’s seed and to the land that Abram sought. Genesis 12:6 reveals that the land was possessed by the Canaanites, and later Abram would discover that Sarai was barren: “And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite [was] then in the land.” The promise of seed would be fulfilled through the birth of Isaac to this infertile, aged, yet faithful couple. Abraham’s faithfulness and obedience would be put to the test, however, when the Lord commanded him to go to Mount Moriah and offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering: “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2). The intent of this command was to teach Abraham that total commitment and obedience were required of him, even to the point of placing his only son on an altar as a sacrifice.

Abraham obediently and willingly prepared to surrender his son’s life, by faith. His submission to the will of God set into motion the fulfillment of God’s promise to him, which was one of prophetic purpose. 81 Eugene Merrill 82 offers an account of the purpose of Abraham’s descendants and the related significance of obedience:


82. Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.
The purpose for the call of Abraham and the covenant promise entrusted to him are carefully spelled out as well. Humankind, which God had created to be in His image and to rule over all His creation (Gen. 1:26–28), had violated that sacred trust and had lunged the whole universe into chaotic ruin and rebellion. What was required was a people called out of that lostness to exhibit Godly obedience before the world, to function as mediators and a redemptive priesthood, and to provide the matrix from which the incarnate God could enter the world and achieve His saving and sovereign purposes of recreation. That people was Israel.\footnote{Eugene H. Merrill, “The Pentateuch,” in \textit{Holman Concise Bible Commentary}, 14.}

Once more, God offered His mercy to a disobedient people. He then redefined a branch of Noah’s descendants as the descendants of Abraham, the Children of Israel. Abraham’s son, Isaac, served as a foreshadowing symbol of a sacrificial lamb on Mount Moriah, the same place, according to 2 Chron. 3:1, where Solomon’s Temple stood, on the threshing-floor where God appeared to David (3:2). Although Isaac was set aside for sacrifice or death, he ultimately received a reprieve. Abraham’s obedience to God drew God’s mercy and the provision of an alternative sacrifice, a ram in the bush. God’s command to Abraham for the sacrifice of his son foreshadowed a similar future event, “the sacrifice of God’s Son,” an act that would open the door of a New Covenant of mercy to all people. God extended mercy to the condemned Isaac by the provision of a symbolic ram for sacrifice. The offering of a blood sacrifice lies at the center of the Christian faith and is reflected in the death of Jesus on the cross and in the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper. The shedding of blood represents the death of the victim. The one making the sacrifice is identified as a symbol of the victim, reflective of the death of the sinner. The penalty for sin is death, but the animal dies in place of the sinner.\footnote{William S. LaSor, David Hubbard and Frederic W. Bush, \textit{Old Testament Survey} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 156.}
The patriarch Abraham’s faith and journey of obedience brought him face to face with the mercy of God, and the promises made by God to him were fulfilled. The once barren, now fruitful seed of Abraham came to life in the form of a son named Isaac, who ultimately would be represented by his descendants, the children of Israel.

Moses and the Law

Moses has been recognized for being the person to whom the “One God” presented the law, His commandments, for the children of Israel. These commandments were carved in stone and communicated in a written form as specific laws that were to be observed by the Israelites. Biblical scholar and writer John Bright describes this “One God” as a moral being who controls nature and history, and in them reveals His righteous will and summons men to obey it.85 It is in man’s interpretation of this righteous will, and the measures used by man to maintain both “obedience and order,” that questions arise regarding the enforcement of the laws that govern the land.

The Hebrew word for “righteous” is tsedek, defined as: “Rightness, straightness, rectitude; justice of a judge, of a king, of God exhibited in punishing the wicked, or in avenging, delivering, rewarding the righteous.” Another Hebrew word is mishpat also meaning righteous judgment as a judge.86 This righteous judgement is often referred to as justice. For those who believe the Bible and who seek to follow the “One God” of the Bible, the question arises, “How can this alignment with His righteous will be achieved and maintained by human beings?” Moses portrays one such human who led with justice.

It was on Mount Sinai that God imposed His covenant and law upon Israel through His prophet Moses, who murdered an Egyptian and had been a fugitive for forty years. Moses was living in a state of self-imposed exile when God spoke to him through a burning bush encounter on the backside of Mount Horeb. God called Moses to return to Egypt after forty years of banishment in this place known as the mountain of God (the same as Mount Sinai). In spite of Moses’ status as a murderer and criminal, God had use for him, and tasked him with leading the Israelites out of bondage. This act of mercy by God sends a clear message of unconditional love and affirms an example of a time when punishment of a capital crime was extended for only a season. This message, during today’s postmodern age, can easily be interpreted as a call for a moratorium on the death penalty. Even so, it should go without saying that at the least, if it must be applied, the act of capital punishment should be administered with justice from every perspective.

Jon D. Levenson, Harvard University Professor of Jewish Studies, refers to the Sinaitic experience as being a “covenant,” which from a Hebrew theological sense is between God and a human party.\(^7\) Levenson believes that there is “a consensus of international and ecumenical scope that the Sinaitic Covenant is a formal analogue or equivalent to the Hittite suzerainty treaties, which may be its source.”\(^8\) The suzerainty treaties of the second millennium B.C. were forerunners to Deuteronomy’s historical prologue. As these treaties set forth the obligations of the vassals to their great king, in the same manner, each had a section containing the covenant obligations or stipulations,


\(^8\) Ibid.
divided into two parts. The first part was a general exhortation to the vassals, encouraging total allegiance to the king or suzerain.\textsuperscript{89} The second part consisted of specific obligations or laws detailing how vassals were to express their complete fidelity to the suzerainty.

The arrangement of Moses’ second address seems to follow the same order as that of the suzerainty treaties, and even the format of their written laws were the same.\textsuperscript{90} The implication is that vassals of the secular community had similar legislation that required punishment as those shared in the writings of Moses, and which most likely preceded his.

Although men obediently wrote God-inspired prose, it is necessary to remember that their writing was filtered through their personalities and life experiences, which included the events of those times. Moses is identified in connection with the Ten Commandments (Deut. 31:9) as having delivered this law to the priests and the sons of Levi. According to James Barr, Mosaic legislation was a restatement of customary law that was already ancient.\textsuperscript{91} Deuteronomy 31:24 ascertains that it was Moses who, upon receipt of the completed law, wrote everything in a book: “When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end.” The following passage found in Exod. 24: 3-7 presents a clear depiction of the Mosaic Covenant, the law for God’s remnant:

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as of well-

\textsuperscript{89} Levenson, “The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters,” 205.

\textsuperscript{90} J. D. Hannah, \textit{Exodus}, in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 1, 137.

being to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do, and we will be obedient.” (Exod. 24:3-7)

This submissive action came at a time following the people’s disobedience and act of rebellion when they were tempted to participate in idolatrous worship of the golden calf during Moses’ absence. Thus, while Moses was on Mount Sinai with God, a test for the prematurely instituted Mosaic Covenant was underway. The Lord, as the projected Suzerain of Israel, could have destroyed Israel and terminated the covenant due to the subjects’ resistance and their hard hearts. Instead, God exhibited His faithfulness in the face of Israel’s disobedience. The die was cast and the consequences of the curses spoken of in the covenant were at hand. Thomas W. Mann notes:

Yahweh is still willing to call them ‘My people’, as He had called them before they even knew of Him (Exodus 3:7-10). That relationship is rooted in Yahweh’s unconditional love for the people and, his love for the world to which they were appointed, as a ‘kingdom of priests’. As severe as the punishment of this people under the divine curse may be, here and subsequently in the Pentateuch, the text will never suggest a final and complete abandonment of Israel by God.92

Moses acted as a mediator on behalf of God, and the people accepted the terms of the law as presented to them by Moses on behalf of God. As stipulated in the law, it was the sprinkling of the blood from animals that ratified the agreement and offered a public proclamation of its worth. Thus, this blood gave evidence of the atoning sacrifice that had sealed or sanctified the agreement.

J. Kerby Anderson suggests that although the concept of capital punishment preceded the Old Testament code of law, it is in the Mosaic Law that God institutes the

penalty of capital punishment. Anderson outlines the Mosaic Law’s influence in support of capital punishment, and attributes the life-altering principles of retribution, restitution, and rehabilitation to the Law. He introduces this biblical perspective with biblical principles regarding:

- Retribution for capital crimes (acts of punishing as in Exod. 21:23-25, Lev. 24:17-21, and Deut. 19, 22, and 25) and
- Restitution (repaying the victim as in Exod. 21:18–22:17).

Anderson also acknowledges this presence of capital punishment in the Old Testament theocracy as God’s method of dealing with Israel’s sin and the sin of surrounding nations. Levine observes that provisions such as those found in Deuteronomy are traced to the northern Israelite Kingdom of the eighth century B.C. and are similar to the laws credited to Moses in Exod. 18 on the administration of justice.

Moses was advised by his father-in-law, Jethro, in Exod. 18:21-23 to share the responsibility of righteous judging and justice among others who also feared God and were men of truth. Because the hard cases were brought to Moses, it is most likely that he sat as judge in the capital cases. Walter Brueggemann outlines the new system of justice and delegation proposed by Jethro:

Jethro thus proposed a judicial system, distinct from the primitive practice of one-man adjudication. The proposal includes (a) the recruitment of good people (v.21); (b) their training and preparation (v. 20); (c) a system of courts for different social units (v.21); (d) a “high court” over which Moses would preside (v.22); and (e) continued affirmation that the entire system would be referred to the will of God (vv.19, 23).

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Brueggeman identifies other related scriptural references, such as Deuteronomy 16-19, as having served like a constitution in ancient Israel, and 2 Chr. 19:4-11, where King Jehoshaphat in the ninth century instituted an important judicial reform in Jerusalem.97 Brueggeman describes the way to avoid injustice:

You must not distort justice, you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (Deut. 16:19-20 NRSV; cf. Deut. 1:9-18).98

Levine notes that several collections of laws preserved by the Torah demonstrate the significance of capital punishment to biblical justice.99 As well, Eugene Block notes, the rabbis’ exhaustive interpretation of biblical law led to the gradual evolution of Jewish jurisprudence.100 It is along this same line of reasoning that Hodge offers as a two-edged view of capital punishment that it is “not intended to gratify revenge but to satisfy justice and for the preservation of society."101 This same act of preservation is the merciful regard shown by Moses for his rebellious followers, and is poetically proclaimed in Ps. 106:7a-9a, “They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt, miracles in the land of Ham and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. So he said he would destroy them—had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to

98. Ibid., 829.
101. C. Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol. 3.
intercede so that His wrath would not destroy them.”102 The Israelites were sentenced to death but because of Moses interceding, mercy was extended in the form of a reprieve. They were not destroyed as the law would prescribe but were instead spared by God.

David

The governmental shift represented by the rise of Israel’s monarchy is embodied in the person of King Saul and his successor David. Each of their monarchical roles included judicial duties because they, as rulers, were replacing the judges who once governed Israel. The counseling and deliberating by the judges set the bar for the kings to follow. In Capital Punishment, Levine shares that during this era, kings had the right to impose the death penalty.103 Church and state were not clearly separated as they are today, and scripture supports this view as is seen in Psalm 72:1, where he calls upon God to give both justice and righteousness to the king, while Prov. 29:4 provides a description of the dishonest monarch’s outcome.

- Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King’s son. (Ps. 72:1)
- The king by judgment establishes the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it. (Prov. 29:4)

The Davidic king was God’s adopted son, who ruled in the name of the Lord and enjoyed God’s providential care. This covenant promise to David became the Messianic hope of God’s people (see Ps. 2:6-12). The Messianic expectation was a source of great comfort in Israel’s darkest days (see Isa. 9:1–7; 11; Am. 9:11–15; Zech. 9:9–13). This promise was later confirmed in the New Testament by Luke and fulfilled by the birth of David’s


greatest Son, Jesus Christ: “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1:31-33).

Indeed, this promise echoes and affirms the words of Isa.55:3, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, [even] the sure mercies of David.” Just as God promised to keep His good hand, the right hand of blessing, on David, so He assures those who come to Him that He will never remove His good hand of blessing from them. He will always be with them and consider them His people.104 This assurance comforts the sinner and those guilty of wrongdoing, for it suggests that there is a provision of pardon both now and in the future.

The concept of “innocent blood” is referred to in 1 Sam. 19:5, described by Levine in this way: “Innocent blood must be requited; someone must pay for it!”105 In the following passage Jonathan, the son of King Saul and friend of David, helped King Saul to see that David did not deserve to be slain due to his good works toward him:

And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works [have been] to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest [it], and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, [As] the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. (1 Sam. 19:4-6)

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105. Levine, Capital Punishment, 27.
In this passage, Jonathan stands in the gap to deter the shedding of innocent blood. Surely this is a role similar to that of the ram caught in the thicket that deterred Abraham from shedding the blood of his son. Saul, the reigning king, was enraged and envious that David had been victorious, and desired to take David’s life. Yet David survived, for he had provided Israel a great salvation by accepting the challenge to act on God’s behalf, and by slaying the Philistine. This act by David early in his life is another of the recurring biblical images of shedding blood for salvation.

Many years following the marriage of King David to Bathsheba, it was Nathan the prophet who would deliver a divine oracle of judgment against David for his sin with Bathsheba (Gen. 12:1–23). God also judged David for his pride in Israel’s military power (2 Sam. 24). Although these sins could have been punishable by death, according to the law, the reason that God could call David “a man after His own heart” and be merciful was that David was remorseful and confessed his sins before the Lord rather than dismiss them as Saul had done as highlighted in the following:106

- And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. (1 Sam. 12:13)

- David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. (1 Sam. 24:10)

In spite of David’s mistakes and missteps, God in his infinite wisdom, power, and unconditional love chose to make David a prominent part of his salvific plan. The prophet Isaiah captured memorably that God promised to David and his heirs an eternal lineage that would rule over an everlasting kingdom: “And he said, Hear ye now, O

house of David; [Is it] a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:13-14). In addition to the coming of Immanuel, Isaiah foretells in 2 Sam. 7 that God would establish through David a throne and a kingdom that would remain forever:

Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. He shall be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took [it] from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever. (2 Sam. 7:11-16)

In both verses 13 and 16, the Lord promised that David’s lineage would continue forever.

The word “mercy” (see checed, “love,” or “mercy” in 2 Sam. 7:15) also translated “mercy or kindnesses,” refers to God’s “loyal love,” which relates to His loyalty to David.107 David’s lineage is significant because it represents a road to salvation. David had courageously acted on behalf of God, providing salvation to Israel by slaying the Philistine and he brought the old and the new together, serving as both judge and king, with a heart for God. It was foretold that King David would transfer his throne and kingdom to Immanuel, the coming Savior, and it would be established forever. Although David followed the law and ruled with justice and righteousness, he was tempted and yielded. He committed adultery, conspired to kill, and was filled with pride. His saving grace was that in the face of rebellion and disobedience, he was remorseful, and so the Lord declared via his prophet, “my mercy shall not depart away from him” (2 Sam. 7:15).

107. As defined in Strong’s Concordance, H2616.
The Prophets Speak on Justice and Mercy

Throughout the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the complex theme of God’s justice and mercy continued to develop. These anointed men spoke with conviction of the constancy of God’s mercy. This recurring godly attribute permeates the relationship between the Creator and Old Testament personalities who faced the fallout from disobedience and blood guiltiness. The Hebrew language has several words for “mercy,” of which the most frequently used is *hesed*, or *checed*, which means goodness, kindness, and faithfulness. In the Old Testament, “mercy” is associated with the covenant obligation between God and humanity. Humankind was required to be faithful to the covenant, and God bound himself to fidelity to the covenant, by mercy and by grace (another Hebrew word used to mean mercy). A faithful humanity thus is portrayed as being good and also in possession of mercy. P. J. Achtemeier observes that divine mercy and human mercy are closely associated with justice and righteousness because all make reference to a behavior appropriate to a relationship. He also notes that another Hebrew word for mercy, *hānan*, and the Greek word for mercy in the New Testament both refer to the emotion aroused by contact with undeserved suffering, that is, compassion and a deeply felt love for a fellow human being. This is a relationship motivated by love.

108. As defined in *Strong’s Concordance*, H2617.


110. Ibid., 626.
The Old Testament prophet Micah revealed the motivating dynamic of God’s justice in his often quoted requirement of justice (i.e., what is good) from man: “He has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic. 6:8). Daniel J. Simunson insists that “justice” is something that people “do,” and that rather than wish for it or complain that it is lacking, God’s people must work for fairness and equality for all (particularly the weak and the powerless who are exploited by others).111 The prophet’s use of the term “walk” is referring to our life pilgrimage, as a walk with God as our constant companion (living in conformity with his will). These key verses from Micah addresses one’s total outlook on life, the way one lives and one’s ethical values.112

Although Micah does not speak of the death penalty, his argument is based on the principle of guilt. He opts to extend mercy and justice rather than the deemed punishment to the Israelites, who were guilty of wrongdo ing just as Cain and his parents had been. The Israelites were punished, not by death as the law would require, but by being banished from their land in a similar way to that of Cain, who was banished from his community. After predicting this captivity through His prophets, God chose to permit the enemies of the Israelites to serve as an instrument of retribution by forcing them into captivity.

In this scriptural passage (Micah 6:1-8), the prophet uses the language of the courtroom in an exchange between man and God, portraying the tensions of guilt and punishment. The prophet Micah promotes justice when he eloquently captured the


113. Ibid.
courtroom maneuvers between the marred souls of mortal man in the presence of the mercy of Almighty God. Gregory Mobley, Oxford Bible contributor and professor, refers to the words of the prophet spoken in Mic. 6:8 as “the punch line during a divine lawsuit.” Mobley identifies the shift of speakers and their roles in the verses of Micah’s account of this lawsuit enactment:

- The Lord insists that man plead his case before the creation (v. 1).
- The prophet responds by speaking of the controversy to the creation (v. 2).
- The Lord demands an explanation after all His merciful acts (vv. 3-5).
- A spokesperson seeks to be told what offering will remove the guilt (vv. 6-7).
- The punch line, reminding man that he has been told what is good and what is required . . . to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (v. 8).

Mobley refers to the requirement of justice and righteousness stressed in v. 8, as “the epitome of the entire Israelite prophetic tradition” and this movement of mercy as from “a legal indictment of the guilt of Israel to a liturgical affirmation of God’s mercy.” He further describes in Mic. 6: 9-16 what appears to be a speech, an oracle, or a judicial sentence following the indictment. Jerusalem was being looked upon as a corrupt city, and now the dreaded curse or sentence was being delivered. Micah poses questions on behalf of a righteous God about the wickedness of the Israelites: “Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights?” (Mic. 6:10-11). Justice is expressed in the need for retribution (rather than the death penalty) and is reflected in the tone of Micah’s writings.


114. Ibid.
An intervention prompting justice can similarly be heard as the prophet Jeremiah pronounces God’s verdict on the Israelites who have transgressed the Mosaic Law. In Jer. 6:19, he laments: “Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, [even] the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.” God then makes the following severe indictment as retribution upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Micah:

Therefore I have begun to strike you down, making you desolate because it is Abraham’s son who becomes a symbol of a sacrificial lamb of your sins. You shall eat but not be satisfied, and there shall be a knowing hunger within you; you shall put away, but not save, and what you save, I will hand over to the sword. You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine. (Mic. 6:13-15)

The sentenced captive, Israel as the offspring of the sacrificial lamb Isaac, experienced an emptiness while remembering and longing for an earlier opportunity that was no longer accessible. Just as Adam and Eve were sentenced after “The Fall,” the inhabitants of Jerusalem were declared unproductive following their captivity. Instead of being “struck down” or executed, most were instead condemned to be isolated wanderers, separated from a proper relationship with a merciful God. The punishment was not omitted, yet neither was it terminal or final. Unknown at that time, such a condemnation would later be lifted and canceled by God’s divine act of mercy and grace.

God’s justice is sought by the prophet Jeremiah as he prayed in the temple to the Lord and admitted that a person’s life is not his own but must be under the control of God who directs his way (Jer.10:23-25). Because Judah’s judgment was inevitable, Jeremiah pled that it might come only with God’s justice and not with His anger. Essentially, Jeremiah was asking for God’s patience and leniency in dispersing judgment lest the
nation be reduced to nothing. In addition to Micah and Jeremiah, other Old Testament prophets such as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah would also record and offer affirmations of the mercy and justice of God.

It was the prophet Amos who spoke of death for Israel as he emphasized the destructive activity of God. War dominated the content of the book of Amos and God was the main participant directly involved in many passages. Amos is the only book that presents this dominant aspect of God without balancing it with faithfulness and mercy. This overstatement of the judgmental aspect of God can be understood as the natural accompaniment of Amos’s discovery that it was all over for Israel. In this book God’s primary role is that of judge and executioner of those who have refused to obey divine standards of justice. At the same time Amos shares a message with a threat of exile at a time when “the theology of exile” has not yet appeared. The materials reflected in the writings of Amos during this time revealed that the idea of redemption and resurrection were unthinkable.

It is in Amos 5:24 that a glimpse of God’s justice and righteousness is revealed, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” This chapter began with a funeral song (5:1-2) then spoke of a remnant (5:3), and death in the Sanctuaries (5:4-6). The prophet painted a word picture of Yahweh (5:8-9) in the

118. Ibid., 346.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
midst of no justice (5:7, 10-13), yet asking, Is there a chance (5:14-15)? Mourning (5:16-17) is followed by day overtaken in darkness (5:18-20). Then in verse 21 – 23, Amos lists the faults of the people, highlights their deceitful worship and then insists upon justice and righteousness. Gowan describes it in this way:

Amos does not intend to replace ritual with social action. Rather, what goes on in society must correspond to what is said and done in worship. Amos tells us that God does not accept the worship of those who show no interest in justice in their daily lives.\textsuperscript{120}

Again we see the compassion of God, even as he permitted “the exile” as an alternate route for His rebellious and disobedient children. It is an opportunity for a more lenient sentence.

In the first Chapter of the book of Isaiah, the prophet (like Micah) also employed the language of the courtroom as he charged Israel with wrongdoing. He pointed to the sufferings of Jerusalem and highlighted the divine complaints (c.f. Deut. 32:1 and Mic. 6:1-8) against Israel as the rebellious children of God. He spoke of them as defendants of their meaningless prayers and insincere rituals, and he asked them to reframe from evil (v.1:16).\textsuperscript{121} He then declares “Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow.” (Isa. 1:17) Clearly we see the prophet Isaiah outlining the facets of seeking justice: to do good, to rescue the oppressed and to defend and plead for those who are helpless.

The prophet Hosea lived out this premise of seeking to act justly in response to wrongdoing in his own relationship which was lived out in his tragic marriage to Gomer, his promiscuous wife. Hosea’s life experience served as a metaphor that highlighted the

\textsuperscript{121} Gowan, \textit{The Book of Amos}, 394.

covenant between God and Israel, and revealed Yahweh’s tumultuous union with Israel as His faithless wife. Justice and mercy is shown in the reconciliation extended to both Gomer by Hosea, and to Israel by God. Hosea revealed the motivation behind God’s justice, “For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” (Hos. 6:6) Although God warned the people through the prophets and threatened destruction upon them, in the end His retribution was exile. Yee describes the effects of Hosea 13 by saying, “We cannot fashion God into our own image and likeness and put God in a box . . . God can abolish death and be death’s own agent as well.”

It was the mercy of God that kept these captives from experiencing an eternal separation; and yet they did experience separation as captives for a season. This future event would unfold as the New Covenant, spoken of in Isa. 55:4-7 and would foreshadow and be prescribed by numerous other passages as a response to the moral and legal dilemmas posed under the Old Covenant. Isaiah foretold of this future covenant that was necessary because of humanity’s free will and sinfulness:

Behold, I have given him (for) a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation (that) thou knowest not, and nations (that) knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isa. 55:4-7)

In this passage, the word “Him” does not refer to Israel but to the Messiah (David’s descendant, per Matt. 1:1), for He would be the world’s leader and commander. It is the Messiah, of whom it would be foretold in the book of Isaiah, that He would have the


124. Ibid., 293.
government upon His shoulders (Isa. 9:6). This implies that the nations would be subject to the Messiah’s governance and leadership. The passage addresses a particular population within the world, “the wicked” and “the unrighteous.” The wicked are commanded to seek and call on the Lord, and to do so “while He may be found,” because when His judgment comes, it will be too late. The judgment referred to here would be performed by God and not by man.

This implicit act of seeking and calling means to repent and turn from one’s former evil ways, thoughts, and behaviors. This text indeed implies that even after having been convicted of a crime, no matter what the crime, there is an opportunity for the condemned to seek and call upon the Lord and thus to be forgiven. The passage suggests that the wrongdoer might one day turn to the Lord and receive mercy and pardon. The continuity is consistent; the Lord declares that there is a definite requirement or prerequisite for salvation, which is to trust in Him and to walk by faith.

The Old Testament makes numerous references that foretell a future time with a new mindset based on the higher thoughts of God rather than the lower thoughts of man (Isa. 55:8-9). Jeremiah wrote of the coming transition that would usher in the new covenant offering the fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day (that) I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this (shall be) the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)
As indicated in v. 33, there was to be a new consciousness that would reveal, illuminate, and serve as a guide or compass to lead rather than a law preserved on a tablet. Thereafter, it would be this inner consciousness that would drive ethical and moral decisions and judgment.

The Old Testament prophets spoke forth revealing God’s promise of justice and mercy, that which would later come to pass. These prophets told of a coming time (e.g., Jer. 31:34), when humanity would have access to a direct communication with the Spirit of God and could be taught and forgiven directly by the Lord. This inner presence of the Holy Spirit would come as a teacher to guide and lead in all truth, yet also would be present to empower, seal, sanctify, and preserve. The prophets’ visions and utterances thus reveal a tension on the horizon between the letter of the law, which kills, and the Spirit, which gives life. Yet, they spoke by faith believing that the Divine God of justice and mercy would open a door of salvation and give a gift of grace to a people in need of deliverance and restoration.

Reconciling Old Testament Positions on Capital Punishment

In a word, the Old Testament treatment of capital crimes is enigmatic. On the one hand, crimes could be penalized with death and condemnation, but on the other hand, they could be forgiven and punished only with banishment or separation from society. One could argue that the evolution of the concept of a just capital punishment is reflected through the progressive revelation of the Word of God. This revelation transitions the quest from a place of shame and guilt to one of forgiveness and regeneration. It has been in the fullness of time that God’s order, divine appointments, revelation, and Spirit have provided rich insight for discernment and understanding by going full circle. In Paul’s
words to the Romans, he gives insight into the human feeble capacity to interpret scripture: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” (Rom. 11:33). Humanity is not and has not always been on target.

In the Old Testament, the phrase “eye for an eye” did not literally call for the death penalty, nor for a physical removal of an eye; it simply expressed a general desire for balanced justice that did not exceed the crime. John Howard Yoder points to three distinct passages of scripture (Exod. 21:24-27, Lev. 24:19-22, and Deut. 19:19-21) that “an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life” appears in the entire body of Mosaic legislation. These three references to the “law of retaliation” (*lex talionis*), which are in keeping with the tradition of oral recitation, offer insight into the workings of primitive and ancient societies. Yoder insists that this law, rather than being an unchanging legal code, had a particular significance for that time and culture because it was “recited as a celebration of the poetic fittingness of letting every punishment fit the crime, it is one more reminder of the ancient near eastern vision of deep cosmic symmetry.”

The death penalty was the prescribed legal punishment for many crimes, which ranged among varying degrees of seriousness, including adultery, rebellion, and bloodguilt, which covered the shedding of both animal and human blood. Bloodguilt was a serious crime. The person upon whom the death penalty was imposed was labeled as having “bloodguilt,” which made reference to the legal guilt incurred basically by the


125. Ibid., 8.
shedding of human or animal blood (see Lev. 17:3-4 regarding sacrifices outside the tabernacle). The death penalty also was extended to other forms of murder (Lev. 20:18; Josh. 2:19; 1 King. 2:37; and Ezek. 18:13), among which were the following:

- The “deliberate murder” of a thief who broke in during the day (Exod. 22:2–3);
- An “accidental homicide” such as the homeowner’s slaying of a thief breaking in at night;
- The “accidental death” of a person (Deut. 22:8);
- “Blood vengeance” against a manslayer both within and outside a city of refuge (Deut. 19:10; 2 Chron. 19:10; Num. 35:27).

As this list shows, even those who acted in self-defense or who were the executioners of the death penalty were labeled to have bloodguilt. Status did not exempt the rich or powerful from the death penalty, even royalty were subject to the regulations of bloodguilt. This infers that when the death penalty was administered in the Old Testament, it was done in a more equitable manner (socially and economically) than is practiced in contemporary America.

Although the term “bloodguilt” does not occur in the New Testament, the implication (Matt. 27:24) is present when Pilate attempted to absolve himself of all responsibility for Jesus’ death by shifting the blame, declaring to the Jews, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Gk. haima, Matt. 27:24–25). The multitude understood what he meant and responded, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” This multitude assumed the blame rendered through “bloodguilt,” upon them and their children. Although they acted as a mob out of control, they acted as both jury and executioner by demanding that Jesus be sentenced to death. The Jewish leaders, the crowds, and Pilate also released the guilty Barabbas from death row. They all knew Jesus
was innocent, but for their own self-centered, ambitious reasons, they allowed Barabbas to go free and executed the innocent Son of God on the cross.¹²⁶

In Acts 5:28, the council accused the apostles of making the Jewish leaders responsible for Jesus’ death.¹²⁷ Specific detail in Num. 35:6–34 establishes guidelines for the enforcement of these laws. The initial verses, 6–8, define safe houses for those who were subject to the death penalty as “cities for refuge”:

And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inherited. (Num. 35:6-8)

These cities of refuge were places that provided safety to those who committed unintentional homicides.¹²⁸ The motive or intent of the one seeking refuge would ultimately play a major role in determining his or her guilt.

Although capital punishment was certainly imposed during the Old Testament era, it was restricted by other principles that were equally important to the entire judicial process. Under the Old Covenant, no one could be convicted of a capital offense on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Two or three eyewitnesses were required, and their testimony had to agree (according to Deu.17:6 and Num.35:30). When the witnesses who testified in a capital trial were found guilty of perjury, the penalty for bearing such false


witness was itself the death penalty (Deu.19:18 – 19). These are a few of the checks and balances that existed during that period to ensure fairness and justice within the judicial capital process.

In his essay, “Ancient Biblical Laws and Modern Human Rights,” Barr identifies the Ten Commandments and human rights as two distinct “excellences.”\(^\text{129}\) He observes that the commandments are excellent in that they refine the Word of God and thus can function as a guide to His will. Human rights are excellent in the sense that a personal commitment to them is a commitment to the achievement of justice, equity, and understanding on behalf of the weak, the deprived, and minorities.\(^\text{130}\) The two entities work together to more fairly provide balance and ensure justice.

During Old Testament times, church discipline was an important practice premised on the belief in humanity’s free will. Pastor V. Verbrugge of the Southern Heights Christian Reformed Church in Michigan studied the sources of the early church’s ideas and practices of church discipline; in particular, he compares the developmental line for discipline in the emerging New Testament Covenant Community to the Old Testament Covenant Community. Verbrugge contends that much Jewish Old Testament discipline is reflected in the New Testament, for rabbis worked to interpret biblical law. In order to do away with capital punishment, he observes, Jewish scholars drafted so many restrictions on the death penalty that it became unenforceable.\(^\text{131}\) This unenforceable law appears to be a diversion from the death penalty. It acts as an


\(^{130}\) Ibid.

alternative punishment of being sentenced to incarceration for life. In another article, “The Roots of Church Discipline,” he investigates two strands of discipline from Old Testament crimes, the first of which called for the severe and final punishment of death, such as was imposed on Jesus. The second strand of discipline that emerges into the New Covenant Community is one that originated in the Old Testament practice of disciplining by calling for the separation and expulsion of the wrongdoer, leaving the possibility of a future restoration.132

It is this alternative, a second strand of discipline that offers a new way of reconciling the system that judges the guilt and determines the punishment for those who are convicted of capital crimes. A definite shift occurs from the former life-death, or black-white systems. In sum, this journey through the Bible revealed three main points that surface when reviewing God-given judicial laws and processes related to capital punishment: 1) it is not easy to determine who deserves death for their crimes and who does not, 2) God’s Word requires the presence of both fairness and justice throughout the legal process and justice system, and 3) according to biblical standards, a life sentence can become a merciful alternative to the death penalty, and at the same time provide a possibility of rehabilitation and restoration.

_Jesus, the New Testament, and Capital Punishment_

The New Testament relates the Gospel—the story of the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—as a symbol of both the great shepherd of the flock, and the Lamb of God who was the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Hebrews 13 presents this Gospel in an abbreviated form, which points to an eternal blood covenant and its

132. _The New Oxford Annotated Bible_, 2118.
everlasting life-giving attributes: “Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20-21).

Just as the first recorded homicide in the Old Testament took the life of the first Adam’s son, so too, in the New Testament, an execution (in the form of a crucifixion) took the life of the Son of God. His death atoned for the sins of humanity, for His shed blood was a total sacrifice, and a fulfillment of the law. The New Testament community embraced a resurrected Savior who fulfilled the letter of the law covering a multitude of sins with His shed blood. Jesus offered a free gift of grace and forgiveness of sins to sinners. This New Covenant offered to the believer everlasting life and eternal citizenship in the Kingdom of God. This self-sacrificial New Testament work of Jesus bridged the gap for the children of Israel, so that they could transcend the entrenched Old Testament law and its threat of the penalty of death. This New Covenant ensured justice to a compromised generation through the unfolding and progressive revelation of God through His Creation, His Spirit, and His Word.

The presence or absence of justice and its role among those who are subject to the instruction of God and who participate in the governing process of society can be traced to God’s promises, both conditional and unconditional. Jesus satisfies these conditions with his righteousness as the Redeemer. It is He who seeks to correct and console the sinner, having seen the destruction caused by the debilitating disease of sin. Rather than condemn, Jesus bridges the chasm of chaos with love and compassion. An image of grace
is presented as a gift in Rom. 4:16, and it is through Jesus Christ that believers have access to this grace: “For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us).”

This new perspective offers forgiveness and justification to repentant sinners. The verses that follow from Romans point to the sin of one man who brought judgment onto all humanity. It reveals to the world that redemption is accessible to all humankind through grace by faith in Jesus Christ, as He is the source of this free gift:

- Therefore as by the offence of one (judgment came) upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (the free gift came) upon all men unto all men unto justification of life. (Rom. 5:18)

- There is (therefore now) no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1)

Jesus Christ, the righteous one, offers justification of life and asserts, “There is no condemnation.” Jesus wiped the sin-stained slate clean and removed the blame.

The narrative of the woman caught in adultery serves as an example of Jesus Christ intervening to offer merciful justice to sinners. He defended a woman caught in the capital crime of adultery, and thus prevented her accusers from executing her by stoning, which in those days was a primary form of capital punishment. All at once, when Jesus intervened, there was no worthy executioner, for Jesus had declared, “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” One could argue that the right to take a life belongs only to those who are blameless, which perspective taken literally would bind the hands of the executioner because no one could possibly meet this standard of being without sin.
The Cross as the Intersection of Justice and Mercy

Later in His ministry, Jesus Christ demonstrates the proper response to those who take an innocent life, uttering in the presence of His executioners, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” J. Kerby Anderson reports that although capital punishment existed in the Old Testament, “some Christians believe that it did not apply to the New Testament and the church age.”  

It is clear that initially there was a time during the New Testament age when capital punishment was practiced as a punishment. After all, it is factual that Jesus was executed after being sentenced to the death penalty, and positioned between two thieves who had been condemned to crucifixion and were also executed. Hanks reminds Christians to refrain from giving up on sinners and to follow the example of Jesus, who paused to receive the man who was, according to the standards of secular humanity, a condemned thief, but according to the Word of God, a repentant sinner.

The execution of Jesus activated a gift of grace to be extended as a result of His death on the cross and His innocent blood that was shed.

On the cross Jesus, referred to by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God, fulfilled the sacrifices that were necessary in the Old Testament. Professor, author, political philosopher, and ethicist J. Budziszewski is adamant that “on the divine side, the reconciliation of justice with mercy lies in the cross.” It was because of the work of the cross that Jesus extended mercy and atoned for the inequities of sin. One could argue that, for the believer, this act provides a template for extending mercy to the murderer.

133. Anderson, Moral Dilemmas, 92.
134. Hanks, Against the Death Penalty, 47.
Applying the work of the cross ensures justice and opens the door to alternative punishments. Jesus stated that “the old things are passed away,” and He promised a new way and a new life. Even if the punishment cannot be halted, as was the case with the thief who repented, the biblical emphasis remains on mercy, which is the purest form of justice.

**A New Paradigm: The Kingdom of God**

The New Testament introduces another social order, inaugurated by Jesus Christ and referred to as “the Kingdom of God.” This new social order is not dependent on the use of political, social, or police power. Love, rather than violence, is paramount under this new social arrangement. Since, in his view, the Old Testament’s laws allowing the death penalty as a punishment are inherently incompatible with the New Testament’s covenant of grace and mercy, Hanks makes the argument that capital punishment is out of place within the reign of God inaugurated through Jesus Christ.\(^{136}\)

During the inaugural appearance of Jesus in the Synagogue following his baptism, He read a prophetic Old Testament scripture revealing the essence of the new paradigm for society: “to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”\(^{137}\) Jesus Christ spoke these words to portray a picture of the relationship between the governing authorities of society and the spiritual and religious laws and responsibilities. Capital punishment had until this

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137. In Lk. 4:18 as prophesied in Isa. 61:1.
time been imposed as an alternative punishment of the government, originally ordained by God. In contrast, Jesus stressed healing, deliverance, recovery of sight, and liberty.

The new paradigm of the Kingdom of God has still another dimension. In Rom. 13:1-7, Paul articulates a “theology of the state,”¹³⁸ which places the Christian in subjection to governing authorities. At the same time, Rom. 13:4 makes clear that there is no authority apart from God and that authority does not “bear the sword” in vain. In Rom. 3:5-7, Paul instructs the saints in Rome that they are to be subject to the governing authorities. Budziszewski refers to this “giving to each what is due to him” as the common ground between Peter and Paul in 1 Pet. 2:13-14 and Rom. 13:3-7, respectively. It is good to bear in mind that during the New Testament times, the governing authorities of church and state worked together vastly different from today, as these verses illustrate:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13:1-4, 10)

This passage in Romans implies a local governing body subject to global governing networks that in turn are subject to God’s sovereign spiritual authority, with or without man’s permission.

It is in local government that people of faith respond and act out their God-given beliefs and conscious issues of the heart. Within this network of governance and principalities, the Christian theological community wrestles with opposing views

concerning capital punishment. People generally agree that society has a shared responsibility and is authorized to punish those who do wrong. This shared authority was declared in Scripture as God-given among emperors and governors to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. The weightiness of the law and justice leaves little room for mercy, however, as Paul reminds the reader: “But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer.”  

So why did God give man such executive power as “the authority to enforce the law”? The secular world often accepts the exercise of this God-given authority without question, yet the same secular community fails to embrace other mandates by God, such as forgiveness and love. Karl Hertz notes that the “Two Kingdoms” alluded to by Augustine were the city of God and the city of the devil, and he spoke of men being lovers of either eternal things or temporal things. Luther and Augustine agree that the Christian can be transferred from the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God by the grace of God.

Paul transitions from keeping the letter of the law, which is a reminder of the legalism of the Old Testament commandments, to a new paradigm. This new paradigm is “the Kingdom of God,” which actually is a fulfillment of the former. God’s grace and mercy are the keys to this fulfillment, which is the epitome of “love.” It is fitting that the new commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor


141. Ibid., 32-33.
as yourself,” fulfills every aspect of the law. Indeed, Paul insisted that love was the fulfillment of the law (Gal. 5:14).

The Sanctity of Life and Blood Vengeance

The issue of the sanctity of life and the need to recognize that humanity is holy, sacred, and created in the image of God is central to the capital punishment debate. The principle also applies to the project’s focus on the aspect of just administration within the larger debate.

It was Almighty God who spoke creation into existence as the Word of God, and who also became flesh and dwelt among created humans in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It was the Word becoming flesh and shedding His blood for the sins of humanity that continues to represent the new covenant written on the hearts of humanity. His shed blood is symbolic of life, mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

The writer of Hebrews foretells of mercy for the unrighteous, and speaks of sins and iniquities that are forgotten. He speaks of laws that are not on stone tablets but within the heart. It is this New Covenant that he describes as making the first one (law) old. Regarding the first and second Covenants, found in the eighth and ninth chapters of Hebrews, the writer proposes that the first Covenant was made and given to the Israelites after they were led out of Egypt. The second was made accessible to all, from the least to the greatest, after the crucifixion of Jesus. The invitation to receive the New Covenant represented a widening of the base, inviting all into the Kingdom of God:

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this (is) the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I
will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, a new (covenant), he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old (is) ready to vanish away. (Heb. 8:9-13)

A definitive picture of the nature of the blood sacrifice for sin, as expressed in the Mosaic Law, is compared with the blood shed by Jesus in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, “But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect. He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). It was through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ during the crucifixion that humanity was reconciled with God and provided access to the Holy of Holies. This action is symbolic of having access to the ultimate sacrifice, an offering of eternal redemption. His entry into the Holy of Holies gave “all believers” direct access as a “priesthood of believers” to God, who had been formerly accessible only by the high priest. This New Covenant promised to transcend all previous covenants by fulfilling their purpose and “obtaining eternal redemption” and “eternal life.”

The “reward of eternal life” is a reminder that life itself is a prize of tremendous value. Capital punishment has the capability of denying access to this precious treasure of life to the previously unrepentant convicted person, while giving the executor the power to take life. This irreversible issue of ending life is at the core of the argument that a life sentence, which extensively limits the scope of life rather than eliminating it, is a viable alternative to the death penalty, which the judicial process can put into place with a stipulation that a life sentence not be commuted, thereby retaining life without parole. In
cases where there is neither a chance of the life sentence being converted into a lesser sentence nor exoneration through DNA evidence, the life sentence can be seen as a biblically acceptable alternative to the death penalty.

Clemency, which is showing mercy or leniency, should remain a moral possibility in particular cases, according to Budziszewski, rather than being extended in all capital cases.\(^\text{142}\) It was Budziszewski who insisted earlier that law and justice are more weighty matters than mercy. Yet, the author of Hebrews addresses the justice that extends clemency by offering forgiveness: “there is no forgiveness” without the “shedding of blood” (Gk. *haimatekchysis*) per Heb. 9:22. This is referring to the stipulations of the Mosaic legislation effecting a covenant that offered cleansing and sacrifice, whereby the blood of “calves and goats” was required to be shed for purification (vv. 19-21; cf. vv. 25-26). This practice, however, was superseded by Christ’s own blood (v. 14), which was “offered once to bear the sins of many” (v. 28). This eternal covenant required the death of the mediator in order to become effective.\(^\text{143}\) As an eternal covenant, it accomplished the following purposes:

- The sacrificial death on the cross of Jesus Christ crucified for humanity’s sins;
- Jesus Christ resurrected and His imminent return as the Messiah;
- The introduction of a new commandment to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul and to love your neighbor as yourself” (as the fulfillment of the former commandment).

Jesus modeled for humankind the value of life and the significance of forgiveness. He even forgave Judas, who conspired in the plan that led to His execution and death. It

\(^{142}\) Budziszewski, “Categorical Pardon,” 117.

is through such examples of valuing life, of recognizing that man is made in the image of God, and through observing the mandate to follow Christ, that the biblical concept of justice becomes a practical reality. Through the fulfilling ministry of restoration and wholeness, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God demonstrated mercy and took away the sin of the world. American theologian and ethicist Stanley Hauerwas offers insight on punishment and forgiveness through observations by Scottish theologian Duncan B. Forrester:

> We discovered the necessity of hope. We noted that although offense involves guilt, this is not recognized today as something with which the penal system can or should engage. And, most important of all, we noted that in the Christian tradition, offense, crime, and sin are met with forgiveness which wipes away the guilt and the memory, while our society remains highly punitive and former prisoners rarely experience real forgiveness and reconciliation at the hands of their neighbors and colleagues. We concluded that any Christian account of punishment must see it as discipline directed to the good of society and of the offender. Most of those working in the system or in academic criminology found the notion of forgiveness a fresh and exciting, and challenging idea. In Christian theology it is of course rooted deeply in the understanding of God, and theologians would wish to affirm that it is a universal truth that God is a God who forgives.144

The Christian tradition in general embodies and endorses the response of forgiveness of sin, which would include even the sin of committing a capital crime. Hanks introduced a refreshing and unique perspective from the New Testament when he spoke of the one without sin, Jesus Christ, and describes how His appearance closed the door on any opportunity for capital punishment.145 Budziszewski stated that “both mercy and harshness miss the mark of justice.” He reframed the argument of abolishing capital punishment as “an argument to extend clemency to all who deserve death for their


Psalm 119:156 reminds us, “Great is your mercy, O Lord; give me life according to your justice.”

In sum, the Old Testament mandate for blood vengeance points to the source of a fitting blood sacrifice, which would be fulfilled by Jesus’ shedding His blood on the cross. Jesus assures the crowd that he has come to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17). He reveals that the new commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” One could argue with much biblical support that the sacrificed blood of Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the former commandments that sought blood vengeance. Jesus paid the price so that all could be included and forgiven of every sin because of His love and atoning sacrifice.

A Postmodern Christian View of Capital Punishment

The postmodern era is marked by a rejection of absolute truth and the bringing together of different cultures and perspectives. In this era, both globalization and localization are important, and both differences and commonalities are embraced. In a postmodern approach, one builds a case to support an opinion or standpoint, while also being aware that there are other valid and legitimate views, so that absolute certainty does not exist. The postmodern era represents a cultural shift from absolute certainty to the embracing of different views that contribute to an acceptable level of certainty.

As the capital punishment process is viewed through the lens of postmodernity, the question may be posed, “Are proponents of capital punishment so consumed with absolute certainty of guilt that they are actually insensitive to this shift that validates other views?” It is the postmodern suspicion of absolute certainty that calls into question the

capital process, for the existing process has led to wrongful convictions, and even death, for many who have been innocent. In 2010 Tim Cole was the first convict exonerated posthumously on the basis of DNA in Texas. In the face of rejection of claims of absolute truth and certainty, the legitimacy of the views of others become paramount. These views, when offered by eyewitnesses, expert witnesses, attorneys, jurors, defendants, judges, and others within the capital process, should not be discounted or disregarded as individual biases. The holistic or complete view thus becomes arguably valid and should be taken into account along with the recognition of the thread of agreement that runs throughout the varying accounts. The tension then lies in the collective certainty of the jurors as a group to determine whether the case is beyond a reasonable doubt of guilt or innocence. It becomes necessary to look at the holes in the eyewitness testimony as proposed by a fellow juror. It must become essential that jurors and judges look beyond the credentials of an expert witness, to ask why not permit DNA testing when evidence will allow for it. It is the absence of this scrutiny and the unfounded claims of certainty that are responsible for many of the outcomes for those wrongly arrested, charged, convicted, and even sentenced to the death penalty.

This postmodern society is called upon to appraise capital punishment and address it from its cultural, social, and spiritual frame of reference. Through the historic and progressive journey from creation, postmodernity supersedes the former age of modernity. Steven Seidman, a social theorist, argues that the shift to postmodernity is a

part of recent Western history and does not negate the ongoing presence of modernity. Jean-François Lyotard, French philosopher and author, argues in The Postmodern Condition that the value of postmodern knowledge lies in making the public aware of and tolerant toward social differences, ambiguity, and conflict. In the text, Lyotard expresses the value of each life and its existence in community and in communication, vertically with God and horizontally with humanity:

A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at “nodal points” of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. Or better: one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass. Lyotard is expressing the value of each member within community and his or her vitality through effective communication with others. Humanity’s humble beginning, depicted in Genesis and expressed by God throughout history, stressed the value of existing in community over isolation. Communication is a necessity within community, and has served to herald the story of creation and the Gospel through harmonious narratives penned by divinely inspired writers of the Word of God.

American religious scholar, J. Gordon Melton, argues that major Christian denominations have become open to arguments regarding capital punishment because of the continued development of modern biblical interpretation. In his view, Christians are seeking to understand from fresh perspectives. He relates the Word of God and the new covenant to the lives and actions of humanity, by starting with broad biblical principles,

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and insisting that “they must be applied to each new generation as new light is shed upon old issues.”

Seidman, on the other hand, paints postmodernity as the turmoil inclusive of a broad social and cultural shift that embodies a resurgence of religious fundamentalism, the declining authority of key social institutions, the enfeeblement of western political ideologies and parties, and the cultural wars of literary and aesthetic canons and paradigms of knowledge.

Arguably, this new perspective can be seen as indicative of the progressive and multifaceted nature of the Word of God, under enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, as well as the witnessing of prophecy that has come to pass. This new thinking also might be seen in the range of perspectives reflected through interpretations during this postmodern era, which can inform rather than restrict knowledge of the death penalty revealed in scripture. Such increased understanding would be based upon a reexamination of the application of the capital process as related in scripture. Thus, during this postmodern era, a more holistic experience can be prone to stimulate change upon the capital process that will effectively communicate and speak from the viewpoint of one who has not in the past had the ear of the majority. If our goal is to promote justice in administering the death penalty, then we must seek to advocate for a change from that which has failed to deliver justice throughout the process.

It has been part of the intent of this paper to explore the shifting application of capital punishment throughout the ages, but primarily it was to examine the presence and the balance of justice within its application. The perspective of interpretation that sees an


151. Seidman, The Postmodern Turn, 1.
evolving and unfolding revelation of God’s law in the Old and New Testament exercises influence on both sides of the discussion. Following are some of the questions that surfaced during the project regarding the effectiveness of capital punishment:

- How the first homicide recorded in the Bible was resolved;
- How God’s portrayal of justice is reflected in biblical history;
- Details of the justice (or lack thereof) in the administration of capital punishment, with emphasis on the church community and king/emperor/state;
- The outcome from the act of capital punishment on Golgotha;
- Disparities and injustices that existed in the implementation of capital punishment during the biblical era.

These issues continue from biblical times to be discussed during this postmodern period by the community of faith and the secular community, and by people with varying beliefs, viewpoints, ideals, recommendations, and perspectives.

The biblical/theological foundation part of this paper, with its self-consciously postmodern perspective, peers through the lens of the Bible and endeavors to determine whether and how justice can exist in the process of administering capital punishment. It is from within the dual existence of the spiritual and the secular that tension arises, pressing and pulling against the need and cry for justice. The Bible speaks of justice rolling down like a mighty river or mighty waters. If justice can have the properties of water, then it implies that capital punishment must be immersed and submerged in justice. If justice is to roll down, then is it conceivable that the status quo of capital punishment may no longer need to remain an option for Christians, but thinking about it perhaps might undergo a transformation. The presence and power of God, the love and example of God, combined with the role of God's justice, have been seen in the analysis of biblical
literature as a core scriptural theme of “justice and mercy.” It is necessary for these twin values, justice and mercy, to be present to balance the scales of justice whenever the death penalty becomes an option in the judicial process.

*Church and State, the Two Kingdoms*

A second set of twins, or key scriptural theme, deserving of a prominent role in this discussion is the matter of “church and state.” H. Wayne House, Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies and Apologetics, Professor of Law, and author describes the ongoing association of church and state in the following way:

> The nature of the relationship of the church to the state has been an issue ever since the inception of the church in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago. In that history, the spectrum has ranged from virtual identification of church and state to radical separation. In America’s history, the relationship of church and state may be said to have come from near the identification pole to the radical separation pole today. The closer some governmental institutions (e.g., the U.S. Supreme Court) have moved toward the latter pole, however, the more volatile this issue has become in recent years.\(^\text{152}\)

In his book, *Christian Ministries and the Law*, House refers to the “two kingdoms” paradigm (Luther’s terminology) of church and state. He differentiates the views of the two kingdoms held by Christians of various traditions throughout history (inclusive of Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anabaptism).

Roman Catholicism views the church as being greater than the state.\(^\text{153}\) The church is deemed superior because it is eternal, and the state is temporal; therefore, the church answers to God for the conduct of the state. The Episcopal Church was later viewed as “a national church” in the Anglican tradition.


\(^{153}\) Supported by the perspective of Augustine.
The Lutheran view is of the state as having the responsibility to restrain evil, but with Christians belonging to both the church (by faith) and the state (by reason). This view sees Christians with no right to use the state to promote Christianity, while also affirming that Christians in government should use Christian principles to show that they are justified by reason.¹⁵⁴

The Calvinist view is that the state’s authority comes directly from God, not through the church. The Christian is a citizen of, and under the authority of, both the church and the state. The state’s authority is limited to the area of authority given to it by God. According to the Calvinist view, the church affects the world by its Christian principles through the vehicle of the state.¹⁵⁵

Then there is the Anabaptist (or Mennonite) view, which supports the belief that the state is part of the evil world system ruled by Satan. Their belief is that Christians do not get involved in government matters, meaning no voting, holding public office, serving in the armed forces, and so forth (these values are also practiced by Mennonites, Quakers, and others). They affirm that the state has no authority over Christians, and the church has no authority over unbelievers.¹⁵⁶ This view is considered to be extreme.

As citizens of church and state, there must be some common ground for a postmodern society of faith. In the same way that Barr held up both the commandments and human rights as two patterns of excellence, it follows that they are also essentially the same as church and state. Just as the commandments represent devotion to the Bible

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¹⁵⁵. Ibid., 36.

¹⁵⁶. Ibid., 37.
as the source of God’s will, human rights as stated earlier reflect that personal
commitment to a society that upholds justice, equity, and stands on behalf of the weak,
the deprived, and those who are part of a minority. God’s commandments can clearly
be identified as being representative of the church, while human rights can be seen as a
reflection of the state.

It is interesting to see that even among Christians, there is no clear agreement
concerning the workings of church and state, and yet common knowledge is that the
authority comes from God. God has given the state the sword, the power to punish, and
often Christians must live with two sets of values. Luther’s doctrine of two kingdoms
established that the Kingdom of God means living by virtues such as faith, forgiveness,
and compassion, while the kingdom of Satan reflects secular values that are evil and
covetous, with neither forgiveness nor mercy. Thus, for many, there is an inherent
conflict of interests, such as when a Christian judge, a person of faith, works within
secular society and upholds the taking of an offender’s life via government execution. An
option for some Christians might be to submit to the Spirit as they initiate and support
legislative changes through new and/or amended laws. Christians who operate in a
secular society must participate in changing laws that may be unjust or no longer of
value. Christians must live out their beliefs by speaking up in the face of injustice,
whether serving as a Defense Attorney, the District Attorney, a Judge, or serving as a
juror. This delicate balance describes the act of taking a stand by speaking the truth for
Proverbs reminds us to buy truth and not to sell it (Proverbs 23:23).

Another Option to the Death Penalty

As early as 1764, the first influential modern opponent to capital punishment, Cesare Beccaria, promoted the option of life in prison. He felt that the death penalty was both immoral and ineffective, and he argued that, psychologically, being imprisoned for life and at hard labor would serve as more of a deterrent than capital punishment. 158 He asserted that the “certainty” of punishment rather than its “severity” was a more effective deterrent. Other individuals who campaigned against executions during this same period include French authors Voltaire and Denis Diderot, British philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith, and U.S. political theorist Thomas Paine. Many other modern and postmodern opponents of the death penalty are also in agreement that it fails to deter crime. Beccaria argued further that the death penalty might actually induce crime due to its brutalizing effects on society. 159 Of course there are proponents of the death penalty that argue that it “is” an effective deterrent, yet the actual statistics on crime in states that continue to implement capital punishment do not show a lowered crime rate. The thirteen states without the death penalty had an average murder rate of 3.7 per 1000,000 in 1997; the thirteen states with the most executions from 1977 to 1998 (384 in all) had an average murder rate of 8.2 per 100,000 – more than twice as high as the murder rate in non-death penalty states. 160

There are strong secular arguments against capital punishment as well. First and foremost, my position along with these opponents is that to intentionally end a life is

158. Hanks, Against the Death Penalty, 60.
159. Ibid., 62.
always wrong, except when it is in self-defense. Capital punishment is not a necessary method of defense. Additionally it is quite clear that there does not currently exist a consistent process for administering the death penalty to the rich and poor alike, or to minorities in an equitable manner. The Constitution Project uncovered counties that restrained from capital convictions at year-end due to budget constraints, while defendants with similar cases received the death penalty earlier in the year (due to the budget). A difference in variables renders those charged with the same crimes to receive totally different sentences and outcomes based on the defendant’s ability to secure adequate legal defense. This cost issue is just another reason to give credence to the benefit of life without parole as a compelling reason to call to support a moratorium on the death penalty or to abolish it. After millions of dollars had been spent to execute Timothy McVeigh, a surviving family member of the murder victim responded:

Yet, we are no safer now that he is dead than if he had been incarcerated for life. But we are certainly poorer. Money desperately needed for police, crime prevention, hospitals, damage restitution, and counseling for victims’ families all went instead to death row personnel, security, lethal injection drugs, court costs, and lawyer’s fees.161

The strength of the life without parole sentence is that when guilt is certain, the vilest of criminals would certainly be forced to come to terms with their actions in a life without parole environment. The death penalty might be providing an expensive escape, and possibly prevents the appearance of the true component of retribution, a repentant heart. Life in prison could serve to bring the guilty convict face to face with a realization of the heinous act. Years of reflection, often in isolation, could be a catalyst for remorse.

Life without parole could also be seen as a return to the concept of banishment, as there is an extended separation from society (as was with Cain). If guilty, the convict must come to terms with the impact of his or her dreadful act, apart from society. The overarching caveat with this option is that if the person is found to have been wrongly convicted, then release would remain an option or possibility (as opposed to it being impossible with an execution).

The current reality of the capital judicial environment reflects inequities ranging from: arbitrary and subjective charges during intake, to jurors selected through the elimination of minorities along with those who may show compassion, and finally the exhibited biases that exist due to judicial and prosecutorial discretion. Added to these issues is the inability to consistently gain access to DNA testing, which is often blocked due to laws that have been interpreted too narrowly, and which also have been inconsistently applied. A problem in the area of “prosecutorial discretion” prevalent in the past has now been somewhat rectified in Texas due to the 2013 Michael Morton Act requiring the District Attorney’s office to turn potentially exculpatory evidence over to the defense attorney without a court order. This mandate forces the sharing of findings and other information pertinent to the case. In the past, innocent men and women have been convicted in capital cases, while proof existed on file, yet was unknown to their counsel, and could have secured their release. It does not help when the record of the District Attorney’s office is under pressure due to a need for it to reflect a high percentage of victories.

Unlike the Kingdom of God, secular society chooses from whom to withhold love, mercy, and forgiveness. Yet, as a person of faith, I believe that good will overcome
evil, and the light looming at the end of the tunnel shines with hope for those who have been wrongly convicted and those who are doomed to death. Although I believe that a sentence of life without parole is a far better option, it is still difficult for the person who was wrongly convicted. The lurking shadow is the continuous reminder that the time spent in prison can never be recovered.

Ideally, the judicial process must serve each person involved. Is justice equally administered for each person who is arrested, indicted, and taken to trial? Can capital punishment be justly applied in this spiritual/secular postmodern hybrid society? The uncertainty arises at the question of whether or not justice is being applied during the judicial process. Why? Because humanity is born into sin, shaped in iniquity, and biased by nature. Therein lays the root of the problem, that humanity is not omniscient or omnipresent, but instead sees dimly, partially, and incompletely. Humanity is unable to apply capital punishment with clean hands and be one hundred percent certain, so why play God, especially when there is another option?

The Need for Reform

There is certainly no question that this postmodern culture is in need of reforms to address the inequities currently present in the administration of capital punishment. At the same time, one must remember the context of church and state into which Jesus was born. In the Jewish culture, the law was God’s law so that faith and culture were one. Yet, Jesus was clear that humanity must seek the Kingdom of God, and he promised to do a new thing—that the “first shall be last” and “the last shall be first.” A shift was taking place. Your faith was no longer dictated by your birth, but a rebirth in “Christ.” It became essential for believers to scrutinize the order and the value that is designated within the
Christian belief system, especially since believers were struggling to exist in both the church and the secular world.

The late author and lecturer, Avery Cardinal Dulles (1918 to 2008), a priest, theologian, and cardinal of the Catholic Church, believed that the influence of execution on the deterrence of crime stressed an incompatibility with human dignity. It was his contention that “in our day the State is generally viewed simply as an instrument of the will of the governed. In this modern perspective, the death penalty expresses not the divine judgment on objective evil, but rather the collective anger of the group.”162 It is conceivable that this retributive or punitive aspect of capital punishment is anger motivated, group inspired, and an act of vengeance. In contrast, the motivation reflected by Jesus Christ (and His Church) is love rather than anger, as his followers are called to demonstrate love even to those who “despitefully use them” (Matt. 5:48), for Christians are called to “be angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26). The tragic results of an angry society that must enforce the capital punishment process are reflected in disturbing ways:

- Innocent people being sentenced to death;
- Those sentenced to capital crimes fitting a common profile of existing in poverty, with little education, mentally challenged, and/or being minorities;163
- Misguided motives seeking revenge rather than showing a desire for true justice;


The sacredness of life is devalued; and

Failure to extend forgiveness.

The implication points to a violation of one’s Human rights. After contrasting human rights with moral imperatives, Barr made the distinction by calling them “limitations of freedom,” and stating that “freedom is limited to not infringing upon another’s freedom.”

A previous statement made by Barr bears repeating, that a personal commitment to Human Rights is “a commitment to the achievement of justice, equity, and understanding on behalf of the weak, the deprived, and minorities.”

As the title of his book reflects, Anderson labels the tension involving the administration of capital punishment as a “moral dilemma.” As he further discusses the scope and cost of crime in today’s world, he points to ignorance and apathy as enemies and roadblocks of Christians and of the faith community. It is interesting and somewhat of an oxymoron that Anderson is a proponent of a final and permanent punishment, yet he also affirms a solution that is rehabilitative and transformational. One in support of the latter may ask, “Why end a life that may ultimately be transformed?” He compares the concepts of rehabilitation and retribution with New Testament principles and even he notes a particular view among Christians that “the New Testament does not support capital punishment.”

In sum, the varying views on capital punishment from within the Christian church point to the need for reform, and they are evidence of the need for postmodern Christians

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166. Anderson, Moral Dilemmas, 78-79.
to question, examine, and explore their underlying motivations for their positions both for, and against capital punishment.

**Conclusion: The Paradox of Capital Punishment**

The purpose of this paper was to understand capital punishment within the context of God’s Word and to examine whether it is being justly administered. The research shared in this paper identifies capital punishment as being more likely the sentence given to the poor, the uneducated, the mentally disabled, and the minority (blacks and browns). This lack of consistency within the capital system in this country suggests a need for a solution such as a moratorium on, or even the abolition of, the death penalty in Texas. At the least, reform is needed regarding just administration in every phase, from arrest to conviction to execution.

The Introduction revealed the divergent views of the SBC in their support of enforcing the death penalty, in contrast to the BGCT, which has called for a moratorium on capital punishment. Although the views appear opposing, the SBC adds a caveat to this declaration of support, with the condition that the death penalty be affirmed only when carried out in a just manner. The challenge lies in the fact that studies and statistics continue to show that there are imbedded and systemic inequities and injustices that permeate the capital process. There have not, however, been ongoing outcries when justice is miscarried, and when, for example, the wrongly convicted have been executed and are posthumously exonerated. Closer to home, neither have there been passionate challenges and outraged voices from SBC congregations and conventions in objection to this and other stark absences of justice.
The biblical evolution of capital punishment unfolds during the progressive revelation of the Bible, and as God’s order and balance is reflected in His central themes of justice and mercy throughout this evolution. Although the death penalty is used in the Bible, there is no consistent logical pattern or rationale to its implementation. According to Rita Simon and Dagney Blaskovich, considering the biblical text as a whole, the death penalty has little support.\footnote{Rita J. Simon and Dagney A. Blaskovich, \textit{A Comparative Analysis of Capital Punishment} (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 8.} Capital punishment functions throughout the Scriptures as a paradox, acting as both a stimulant assigned to correct a wrong and as the pronounced penalty. The same death penalty that is pronounced upon the perpetrator arguably resembles the crime that solicited this punishment. In this light, capital punishment could be seen as both crime and punishment; surely the ultimate paradox and irony.

Although humanity had been empowered with dominion and endowed with free will from the beginning, humankind has continued to live in disobedience to God. So He provided a standard in the form of the law to serve as a teacher and show humanity what was right. Throughout the Old Testament, although God proposed the death penalty, he also continued to provide alternative sentences for the guilty bound for “death row.” Beginning with Cain, God moved on to Noah, Moses, and David, permitting each of these murderers to not only avoid execution, but to have the opportunity of being involved in God’s work. It was through the witness of the prophets that time and again “alternative punishments” were provided that released the hopeless from despair. God chose to give the murderous David a place in the ancestry of the Messiah and even provided the Apostle Paul, the murderer of saints (including Stephen), an opportunity as a
prolific writer of much of the New Testament. God’s acts of justice and mercy were gracious, serving the purpose of modeling for humanity a better way.

Throughout history, there have been those who have responded to capital punishment with an echoing cry to “stop the killings.” This is an acknowledgement that to take a life, by judging prematurely or unfairly, is to ignore God’s mandate for humanity to fully accept the responsibility that is required of the “dominion mandate.” Human-kind’s “offerings upon altars” for sin was an expression of virtue being restored and pardon being extended through sacrifice and penance. In the New Testament, this pardon was fulfilled through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Valuable insight can be gained through the examination of the lives of those who have wrestled with the forgiveness that is made available through the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. Desmond Tutu is one such insightful person who was faced with the pressing need to extend pardon while juggling his various roles as archbishop emeritus of Cape Town, Nobel peace laureate, social rights activist, retired Anglican bishop, apartheid opponent, and author. As anti-apartheid champion, he was able to separate the heinous act from the person. He shared his reasoning by saying that although the act was monstrous, the person was not a monster. The following narrative reflects his logic:

The point is that if perpetrators were to be despaired of as monsters and demons then we were thereby letting accountability go out the window by declaring that they were not moral agents to be held responsible for their deed[s] . . . Theology says they still, despite the awfulness of their deeds, remain children of God with the capacity to repent, to be able to change . . . because our God is pre-eminently the God of grace . . . Ultimately, no person or situation in this theology is an irredeemable cause devoid of all hope.168

When seeking to forgive, without condoning, the grave injustices wrought by perpetrators

of apartheid, Tutu sought to see the perpetrators as children of God and to place himself in their shoes. He continues:

Each of us has this capacity for the most awful evil—all of us. None of us could predict that if we had been subjected to the same influences, the same conditioning, we would not have turned out as these perpetrators. It is to be filled more and more with the compassion of God, looking on and weeping that one of His beloved had come to such a sad pass. We have to say to ourselves with deep feeling, not with cheap pietism, “There but for the grace of God go I.”

The Word of God clearly indicates that two kingdoms are at war in the world, each with its own sword—the spiritual sword of God’s divine rule from above, and the secular sword of worldly governance by humanity. I believe that the issue of capital punishment presents a paradox by illuminating the conflict between the two kingdoms and the distinct views of the spiritual and the secular. It clearly points to the challenge of incorporating agreement between those who view capital punishment through the lens of either church or state. Hertz observes that the basis for a unified and effective government must rest upon the circumstance that the state is the realm of external justice, but posits that external justice cannot be carried out without internal justice. This internal justice is the innate presence of a spiritual or moral disposition. The assessment from the research is that this tension between the external and internal dispositions often prevents the fair and just administration of capital punishment.

In the face of a flawed humanity and a broken judicial system, the Bible reveals a relational God who remains involved with man and his horizontal relationships. It is the universal purpose of God that takes mankind to the cross and offers a free gift of grace.

169. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 76.

170. Hertz, *Two Kingdoms and One World*, 145.
that will release, renew, reconcile, and restore humanity from a sinful past. Even as humanity and the church stands on both sides of the death penalty debate, it is the grace of God, not the guilt of humanity that has true healing power. George Orwell expresses the tensions between the proponents and opponents of capital punishment in the form of a paradox:

> I watched a man hanged once. There was no question that everyone concerned knew this to be a dreadful, unnatural action. I believe it is always the same - the whole jail, wardens and prisoners alike, is upset when there is an execution. It is probably the fact that capital punishment is accepted as necessary, and yet instinctively felt to be wrong, that gives so many descriptions of executions their tragic atmosphere.\(^{171}\)

Within the debate, one hears it repeated so often, “The debate concerning the death penalty is a tug of war.”\(^{172}\) Echoing Orwell’s quote, even those who take for granted the necessity of capital punishment often feel ambivalent about the practice.

When looking at the condemned man hanging next to Jesus in the first century version of capital punishment, one sees a convicted criminal who is intent on making a change. This death row convicted criminal, experienced the presence of justice as in the midst of his execution, grace was extended to him as he believed on Jesus Christ and received salvation. Here was a self-confessed guilty man, rightfully condemned, who chose to receive grace and experience the virtue (that was to come through the shed blood) offered by the Savior. Although this man died on the cross in the physical realm, he received eternal life in the Spiritual realm. This seems to be a reversal of what took place in the Garden of Eden. There, God commuted the physical lives of Adam and Eve,


yet declared a spiritual death upon humankind. At the cross we see a coming into balance of this tension presented by external justice and internal justice as Jesus makes known the certainty of eternal life for this sinner, who is crucified as the consequences of the crime are necessary. Then Jesus pays the ultimate price and lays down His life. Now after the death of Jesus, is the physical death necessary? The Bible states, “Vengeance is mine says the Lord, I will repay” (Rom. 12:19). It is God alone who has the power to give and take life. God is also the essence of love, an advocate of peace, and the original proponent of justice and mercy.

**Recommendations**

Christians must stand out in this secular society by being active in areas of advocacy, public reform, and public education initiatives. The significance of humanity’s God-given dominion must be reflected in the pursuit and desire for justice, especially in the moral dilemma of capital punishment. This severe and fatal punishment requires overt scrutiny. God has gifted humanity with an internal, spiritual, and moral quality prompting compassion for those found guilty by an imperfect system. Before Christians and Christian conventions support execution at the state level, the believing community must be willing to dialogue and explore the evidence that proves justice exists in the process. The Church must assume responsibility and ask their membership to adopt a stance that reflects justice in the death penalty process. Christians must be willing to ask whether this current system justly and fairly administers capital punishment, and where is the outrage when injustices prevail in the judicial systems all across this country?

The need for an alternative form of punishment, representing a more just form of retribution, is made evident by the growing number of exonerations, even posthumously,
of those who have been wrongly convicted. It is therefore in the best interests of all people that Christians act with accountability to regain their voices as citizens. We as Americans believe in genuine “justice for all,” per the Pledge of Allegiance, while also protecting the civil liberties of all people. Jesus reminds Christians that when they extend human rights to the least of these, they in essence have served God (Matt. 25:45).

Congregants willing to seek the facts on the issues of capital punishment often grow to be more conscientious about the issue. Members of the church must be encouraged to participate in think tanks, seminars, and town hall meetings on the subject of capital punishment so that they might be aware and adequately informed. Every member must learn to weigh the available facts and prayerfully determine their position on the death penalty.

As a resolution for change and increased justice is sought, it is fitting that believers be reminded of the recommendations by House, exhorting four forms of action in which Christians should engage as citizens of both the state and the church:

- Voice opposition to unjust or immoral actions;
- Provide solutions as a demonstration of true concern for existing problems;
- Be faithful in obeying biblical injunction to pray for leaders and institutions;
- When necessary, engage in civil disobedience when prevented from doing as God has instructed.173

By extension, one could argue that these earnest acts toward advocacy start with the pursuit of changing legislative policy.

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The Christian is no stranger to living by a legal document that promotes action. The Word of God is the source and resource as believers seek a resolution to the issue of capital punishment. The underlying message is that Christians, as disciples of Jesus Christ, are able to impact change. As people with Christian values who are instructed by and obedient to the Word of God, believers are to go forth making a difference in the world by living as salt and light. Just as Gowan suggested in reference to Amos, what goes on in society must correspond to what is said and done in worship, God does not accept the worship of those who show no interest in justice in their daily lives.\textsuperscript{174}

Yet the question arises as to why either Christian values or faith values would be embraced by the secular community. The answer comes to me quite clearly that, even in a secular society, made up of people of different beliefs and faiths (or no faith), a pluralistic and political fabric of the government is formed. These are the people who participate in governance and support law enforcement through the filter of their varied experiences, ideologies, and beliefs, from the ethical to the spiritual. Society is a great melting pot where faith matters and is significant; if this is true, then surely actions will follow when inspiration and information impact beliefs.

\textsuperscript{174} Gowan, \textit{The Book of Amos}, 394.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

a. Problem / Need

There was a need for Christians who were members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for Justice in the administration of capital punishment.

b. Purpose

The purpose of this project was to study the effect of the intervention on identifying actions of advocacy by Christian participants as related to justice in the administration of capital punishment.

Description of Intervention

Orientation Forum

The Orientation Forum was the gathering of those who responded affirmatively to an invitation extended to participate as subjects in the research project. It was from this forum that the potential participants were obtained and were provided an overview of the intervention’s requirements and purpose.

Pre-Intervention Interview

This Pre-Intervention Interview consisted of a set of questions that participants were requested to answer. A transcribed verbatim of this interview was recorded and retained for reference using the online recording tool Rev.com, which has as an option,
the capability of using time-stamps to reference statements made by subjects during the pre-interview. The identity of the participants remain confidential and private, as participants are referred to as Subject Z, Subject Y, Subject X, etc.

**Pre-Intervention Interview Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>More than average</th>
<th>Middle of the Road</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What is your personal belief as a Christian on justice as reflected in the current capital punishment process?

2. What is the position of Brentwood Church on capital punishment? What is the official position of either Southern Baptist Convention or Texas Baptists on capital punishment? Is this also your personal position?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excessive and 1 being never, indicate the number most closely reflecting your level of interest in the issue of justice as it relates to capital punishment.

4. Share any activities that you have participated in to advocate for justice or fairness with regard to capital punishment.

5. When was the last time that you exchanged perspectives on justice as it relates to capital punishment? (If your response is none, proceed to 6.)
   a. What was your perspective?
   b. Describe the situation that prompted this exchange.

6. How often have you participated in a discussion at your church on justly applying capital punishment or the death penalty? (monthly, multiple times annually, total of times)
   a. How often have you been involved in this discussion in another setting?
   b. What were the circumstances that initiated the discussion at your church on justice and the death penalty?
   c. What were the circumstances that initiated the discussion in another setting?
   d. What value do you ascribe to these discussions?

7. Have you voiced openly in any setting a view on capital punishment?
   a. Share your view.
b. What has influenced your current position on justice in the capital punishment process?
c. How (if at all) has the Holy Spirit guided you in your view?

8. Share how the Bible has influenced you to advocate for justice within the capital punishment process?

9. Do you see a need for Christians at Brentwood to be more involved in advocacy regarding the just administration of capital punishment?

10. In what way are you involved in advocacy (pro or con) related to justice in administering the death penalty?

Statement of Research Questions

1. What effect did the intervention have on the development of the participants’ beliefs on capital punishment?

2. What effect did the intervention have on the participants’ outcomes of advocacy or activism as related to justice in the capital punishment process?

Description of Method

This Project was composed of Intervention Sessions I and II, including a guided journaling activity. Both Sessions revealed insightful information and data related to “Christians advocating for justice within the administration of Capital Punishment.” The Sessions were meant to be reflective of its administration, history and current reality, along with expert views and perspectives, along with those of the subjects. This intervention reflected the attitudes and actions of Christians as they examined, reviewed, engaged, and challenged the issue of justice within the framework of their individual spiritual beliefs on capital punishment process. The pivotal question at the core of this intervention is: “How can a proper alignment with God’s righteous will (justice) be achieved and maintained by human beings administering capital punishment?” This pull
or tug toward being in alignment with the will of God takes place in every arena of our life, yet for the sake of this project we will focus within the arena of capital punishment.

In addition to the description that follows, an outline of the Intervention’s format is found in Appendix D. Each of the two Sessions consisted of two 90-minute segments and were presented on two consecutive Saturdays between 9:00 am and 12:30 pm. The outlined components of each Session follow.

Sessions of the Intervention

Session I (Day 1)

Segment 1 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

- The viewing of two videos: 1) *Amnesty International (AI) Video, Death Penalty Facts & Figures 2014*, and 2) *To Kill or Not To Kill in Ohio* followed by discussion. Information from APPENDIX E, *Facts about the Death Penalty*, will be used to depict current reality;

- Review of the outlined Laws in America (abolishing and reinstating the death penalty); Texas and US statistics on capital punishment after reinstatement;

- A brief overview and discussion from selected scenarios of death penalty cases.

- Perspectives on Capital Punishment from other institutions
  - Southern Baptist Convention 2000 Resolutions;
  - BGCT’s call for a moratorium and issues on this stance;

Segment 2 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

- A Centering Moment; The Holy Spirit & Spiritual Guidance; The significance of Journaling; Reflections on what the Lord requires of humanity; What is meant by “to do justice”?
  - Micah 6:8
• An overview and discussion of the biblical Old Testament implications of capital punishment.

• An exercise and reflection on retribution, mercy and forgiveness;

Session II (Day 2)

Segment 3 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

• Viewing of AI Video, My Last Day, followed by further discussion;

• An Exercise and Theological Reflection; Presentation of “retribution,” “mercy and forgiveness”;

• An overview and discussion of the biblical New Testament implications of capital punishment.

Segment 4 (90 minutes) – Highlights on Studies addressing:

• Deterrence and inequities of the capital system; and

• Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty Presented During the 84th Texas Legislature; Endorsed by 551 Texas Faith Leaders; (see APPENDIX A)

• Justice & Planning of Advocacy Activities and Opportunities

These two 180-minute events are crucial components of the intervention and provided information for insight, discovery, communication and dialogue on the realities of capital punishment. Listening was key as dialogue among peers revealed an interactive engagement of ideals and experiences that brought the views and concerns of the subjects to the forefront.

Each participant was encouraged to engage in at least one advocacy opportunity before completion of the project and prior to the post interview Session. The participants were encouraged to select one or two activities from the list (or equivalent to those listed) in Appendix D.
The participants’ journals were made available to each for their use, yet they were used sparingly. Five of the seven (71%) of the subjects made journal entries. These entries, recorded during the week following Session I and/or Session II, revealed that the intervention had served as the source of thought provoking entries. This additional form of input from the participants provided snapshots of the thoughts and perspectives of critical thinking subjects. Directions for the “Guided Journaling” may be found in Appendix D. Research data from the Journal is displayed under the same caption with varied entries. This data-gathering instrument served as a matrix (with instructions given in Appendix D) relating Reason to the respective research questions.

The qualitative research took place in a natural setting, and served as the primary instrument involved in data collection. The data is descriptive (words and pictures rather than numbers). Referencing J. W. Creswell’s plan, the focus was on the participants’ perceptions and experiences, the process that occurred, as well as the product or outcome. Just as well, the qualitative method provided flexibility in the following:

1. Viewing the study through a theoretical lens, organized around the concept of culture (identifying the spiritual, social, political, or historical contexts of the issue).

2. Interpretive inquiry with interpretations by researcher and participants along with readers offering multiple views.

3. Developing of a holistic account that encompasses a complex and overall objective multiple perspective of the issue. It is an account of the larger picture.


176. Ibid., 176.
Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I will be transparent and reveal information from my personal background and will state my biases that are specific to the issue of capital punishment. Prior to and upon completion of the intervention, subjects will undergo in-depth interviews as a primary source of data for the intervention.

During the intervention, participant observation will be a significant method for collecting data as the participants engage in a deliberate process of investigation and inquiry to extend their understanding of capital punishment and the issues that emanate from its administration. Ongoing small focus group interactions will contribute to the data pool as ideas and/or opinions are communicated during discussions. Additional data will be obtained from their profiles, and guided journals. The participants will be made aware during the intervention of a summary of information related to the history, current reality, administration, and scope of capital punishment in Texas.

As the researcher, I will assume the role of the project practitioner or facilitator by providing leadership and direction to the participants who also serve as researchers in their own right.\textsuperscript{177} I have received permission to use media products from \textit{Amnesty International Video} that are available for the project. Since I am the primary researcher and will use the qualitative instrument of data collection, participant observation and focus group discussions. I will be vigilant in taking the proper steps to validate and assure the accuracy and significance of tables and charts used to analyze the data.\textsuperscript{178}


\textsuperscript{178} Creswell, \textit{Designing Research}, 195.
The Sample

The targeted population is from my local church, a predominantly African American congregation operating as a Southern Baptist Church that is also aligned with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. The targeted participants for the project are active members, meaning they financially support the church and exhibit ongoing involvement and participation in at least one ministry or Bible Study event at Brentwood.

Thirty subjects reflecting the makeup of the congregation will be identified and selected as reflecting the makeup of the congregation (gender and age demographic of congregation included in Appendix G). These subjects will be active in at least one church organization. Letters of invitation will be sent to twenty-five members who meet the criteria.

The persons whose names are on the invitations will be randomly contacted and offered an opportunity to participate in the intervention. An administrative assistant will make the calls to extend the invitations, and will identify the first ten who accept as participants. The Intervention will proceed with the attending subjects from the ten. The participants will complete a profile form, and answer open-ended questions in a pre-intervention interview. The researcher will probe when necessary.

Entering the Field of Research

The Researcher has been a member of the Brentwood Baptist Church for over forty years. She has worked in a fulltime capacity as a Staff Pastor since 1994 and has served as a Minister of the Gospel since 1986. The Researcher was among the founders of the Brentwood Criminal Justice Ministry over thirty years ago. The Senior Pastor, Dr.
Joe Samuel Ratliff provided a letter of support which will be included in Appendix K as the document of authorization from the participating church.

Data Collection

Those from the targeted population who accept the invitation to participate will be asked to complete a profile/demographic form, sign a consent form, and to complete a pre-intervention interview. A post-intervention interview will also provide data for comparison and add information. Both the pre-interview and post-interview will be transcribed (using Rev.com), organized, and prepared for analysis. The audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed and will include timestamps.

The triangulation method of research using multiple sources of data, and data collection methods is the gathering tool to be used to confirm emerging findings. The sources of data will include data from the journals of the participants, the completed profiles, and pre-interview and post interview, along with Researcher notes from both observing subjects and focus group discussions during the intervention. The data will be presented in matrix form, and listed in the Appendices. The structure and information gleamed from the two-part intervention (made up of four 90-minute sessions), and at least one experience of advocacy or activism will contribute to the data collection process.

Data Analysis

I (the Researcher) read all of the transcribed interviews and prepared an Excel spreadsheet with the responses (data) from both the pre interviews for use in matrix form.

The post interviews were scripted by basic and complex associational questions for each subject. Rich descriptions were used to inform and record information in order to gain a general sense of the relational association of the data. I processed the declarations, responses, revelations, ideas, similarities, and as a result was able to differentiate and discover and identify existing relationships between variables that provide resolution for the research questions. I made note of and shared the tone, depth, and extent of the data.

Validity and Reliability

I proceeded with objectivity in the execution of this project by recognizing the necessity for supporting each participant’s engagement of justice as it related to capital punishment. I also documented the data with strategic questions and accurate and precise information. I pursued an outcome that reflected an untainted view of the current reality from the feedback from participants related to the various issues and the viewpoint of the subject. The data reflected the subject’s perception of encounters and experiences related to the inclusion of justice in the capital punishment process. I listened and recorded (in notes and audio) a true reflection of the narrative from each participant.

I was transparent, and shared my position of passionately agreeing with the stance of BGCT with regard to the absence of fairness within the process of justly administering capital punishment. In their words, “The practice of capital punishment in our nation and state is an affront to biblical justice, both in terms of its impact on the marginalized in society and in terms of simple fairness.”180 In spite of this, in no way did I seek to

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180. Excerpt from an article stating BGCT’s stance on capital punishment, posted on Jan 23, 2003 by Staff in *Dallas Baptist Press*. 
influence the subjects to share this view but encouraged them to seek to be directed and guided by the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit within them.

Post-Intervention Interview Questions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>More than average</th>
<th>Middle of the Road</th>
<th>Low</th>
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<td>10</td>
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1. What is your personal belief as a Christian on justice as reflected in the current capital punishment process?

2. What is the position of Brentwood Church on capital punishment? What is the official position of either Southern Baptist Convention or Texas Baptists on capital punishment? Is this also your personal position?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excessive and 1 being never, indicate the number most closely reflecting your current level of interest in the issue of justice as it relates to capital punishment.

4. Contrast your tendency to voice your view on justice as it relates to capital punishment now as compared to before this intervention.
   a. What is your perspectives on justice as it relates to capital punishment?

5. What was your most valued lesson as an outcome of the intervention that is related to justly applying capital punishment or the death penalty?
   a. How has it moved you to action?

6. Is there a difference in the consistency of your advocacy since the intervention?
   a. Share if and how your planned activities for advocacy have expanded.

7. How would you describe your engagement during the Intervention with the issues of capital punishment as compared to previous discussions on this topic in a church setting?
   a. Would this experience be something you would recommend for other Christians?

8. Share whether you feel more informed, less informed or the same as before the intervention with respect to what the Bible says about the capital punishment process?
9. Have you formed a personal view or perspective that you would say is a result of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and provision of peace regarding God’s justice and capital punishment? Share.

10. Do you see a need for Christians at Brentwood to be more involved in advocacy regarding the just administration of capital punishment?
   a. In what way will you remain involved in advocating for justice in the capital punishment process?
   b. What part of the Intervention had the most effect on your being moved to act as an advocate?

*Ethical Issues Related to the Study*

All subjects were asked to sign a consent form (as found in Appendix J) to acknowledge that they willingly agreed to participate in this project. They were not coerced, and all expectations were shared prior to beginning the project. The consent forms were provided by Researcher.

The information gathered during the Intervention is securely locked away in a file cabinet in a locked closet at the Brentwood Church exclusively assigned to the Researcher. The audiotape recordings and transcriptions are stored in a password-protected, stand-alone hard drive in my office at the Brentwood Church. All data will remain confidential and will be destroyed after 3 years. The names of the participants will not be used in the analysis.

*Conclusion*

The need for Christians who were members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for Justice in the administration of capital punishment was the catalyst for this intervention. The purpose of the intervention was to study its effect upon the subjects by
identifying outcomes and the resulting strategies by the participants for advocacy related to justice in the administration of capital punishment.

The two sides of the Capital Punishment issue is reflected in the divergent views of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). The former supports the death penalty and the latter supports a moratorium on the death penalty. The Brentwood Congregation being dually aligned with both of these institutions served as the sample pool from which the subjects for the intervention were taken. The overall position of the Brentwood congregation on the issue of justice and/or capital punishment in the administration of capital punishment had not been officially acknowledged or formally revealed. The most pressing requirement of the project was for an introspection of: 1) the effect of the intervention and 2) the efforts of advocacy by the subjects for justice in this process?

The “just administration” of capital punishment is an issue because SBC declared its support with the condition that the death penalty be affirmed only when carried out in a “just” manner. The challenge lies in the fact that studies and statistics continue to show that there are imbedded and systemic inequities and injustices that permeate the capital process. Justice is the standard by which the benefits and penalties of living in society are distributed. The pervasiveness of the concept of justice in the Bible can be veiled from the English reader by the fact that the original terms most approximating justice have been frequently translated in English as ‘righteousness’ and ‘judgment.’

The intervention sought to facilitate a dialogue between subjects from the Church and to seek input and strategies from these subjects on opportunities to personally act to

better integrate justice into the capital process. As the Church is challenged to advocate for justice in the administration of capital punishment, the findings from this intervention would offer a starting point. The subjects were invited and compelled to honestly and earnestly answer questions and share beliefs to reveal answers to these research questions: 1) “Can capital punishment be justly administered?” and 2) “How can you advocate for this justice to exist within the administration of capital punishment?”

Starting here, in Texas, and reaching across this nation and then worldwide, the Church is required to seek justice. Why must the Church take on this task? *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8) When the choice to seek justice is ignored, then the Church is not seeking what is good. H. H. Hobbs quoted Joseph Addison regarding justice and adds to the quote, placing it in perspective:

> Joseph Addison wrote, “Justice discards party, friendship, and kindred, and is therefore represented as blind.” It is true that justice is blind, but it is not deaf or mute. Justice hears the cries of the helpless—and the voice of God. Justice cries out against a person’s inhumanity to another person.\(^ {182} \)

It is this inhumanity to man that is reflected in injustice. When injustice permeates the capital punishment system, we certainly hear the cries of the helpless. The Church is called to first and foremost hear the voice of God, and to act and obey His instructions.

As the project was concluded the most profound effect that it had on the subjects was that it served as a catalyst to heighten their awareness and expose them to pertinent information, and valuable and insightful dialogue among Christians. Although the pre interviews uncovered very little dialogue on the topic of capital punishment and justice

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prior to the intervention, the journal of Subject S revealed the following entry of a dialogue with a bible study member prior to the intervention that was of interest:

A paper (the Chronicle, Sunday Jan. 20, 2013) that I saved has a quote that should apply today, by Sir William Blackstone in *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 1765–1769, “It is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer.” How true. The reason I kept this paper is that in our weekly Bible Study we were studying the 10 Commandments, in Exodus 20, which I call the framework of the Law and Chapters 21 -23, how the Law is applied. When we came to the part on Capital Punishment one member of the group presenting that day was related to the family that Anthony Graves (who had been exonerated) had been accused of killing a family member. She brought the paper to class and talked about her feelings. It made the Law so very REAL!

If this execution had happened, indeed an innocent person would have suffered. The family would then have been burdened by guilt. This miscarriage of justice can be avoided when all parties freely share in the pursuit of justice. Obedience to God is key to encountering and experiencing His presence. As advocates of Christ Jesus, we must participate in more of these dialogues on justice and capital punishment within our Church and the Body of Christ. Although the issue of advocacy cannot be neatly wrapped up and presented, I am now aware that a seed has been planted and will need to be watered and tended. Indeed God will give the increase.

In the midst of this juggling for justice, there are those who are praying for God to reveal His will for their lives and for the work of the Church within the arena of capital punishment. There is a thirst to know more, to delve deeper, to do further research, and to keep on top of the statistics. A bible study led by one of the Subjects has taken place, so interest is growing. There is a plan, or initiative for a Task Force to design a survey and ballot to gather more information about our Congregation. Then there are those who are sharing within their concentric life circles whether on Social Media or in person.
As the Researcher preparing this conclusion, just as I wrote the previous sentence, I overheard an interview that I am compelled to include. Bill Whitaker of “60 Minutes” was interviewing Glen Ford who was released from prison due to new evidence after spending nearly 30 years on Death Row in solitary confinement in Angola Prison. For 30 years, this wrongly convicted man spent 23 hours a day in a 5 by 7 foot cell, with 1 hour a day outside the cell. Ford became one of the 150 inmates exonerated and released from Death Row since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the Death Penalty in 1976. This case stands alone, as the original Prosecutor, Marty Stroud took responsibility for his part in this miscarriage of justice. He was horrified upon learning that he had convicted the wrong man, describing himself to have been a 32 year old young, arrogant, narcissistic man looking to boost his career, and caught up in the culture of winning. In deep remorse, Shroud went to Glen Ford confessed his guilt and begged his forgiveness.

In contrast, Dale Cox, the Caddo Parish Prosecutor at the time of Ford’s release was unwilling to accept any responsibility and even refused compensation for his being wrongfully confined for 30 years. Cox said the Justice System worked and did not fail. From 2010 to 2014 he and his Caddo Parish office put more people to death per capita than anywhere else in the Country. Cox insisted that the Parish was not in the compassion business. Yet Marty Stroud motivated by compassion took action. He is petitioning the Louisiana Bar Association for his own discipline by confessing, “It was a train to injustice, and I was the engineer.” Although Glen Ford died of cancer shortly after being released, Marty Stroud insists, “Glen Ford will be a part of me until the day I die.” Truly this compassion is the heartbeat of advocacy. The Church “is” in the business of compassion. Christians must pursue justice in the administration of capital punishment.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Analysis

Statement of the Problem

This project addressed the problem of there being a need for Christians who are members of Brentwood Baptist Church to advocate for Justice in the administration of capital punishment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to study the effect of an informative and interactive intervention related to Justice in the administration of capital punishment on enabling members of Brentwood Baptist Church as Christian participants to find their position and voice regarding this topic, and to become more engaged in engaging other voices within the Congregation, along with identifying actions for advocacy.

Case Boundaries

The case study and intervention was limited to persons over twenty years of age and active participants of Brentwood Baptist Church. Thirty subjects were identified and selected as reflecting the makeup of the congregation. These participants were among those who are active in worship and involved in at least one church organization. The gender and age demographic of the congregation is included in Appendix G. The breakdown of those who volunteered for the intervention is 25% from age 20-50, 37.5% from age 51 -65, and 37.5% above age 66. The high percentage of participation among senior adults is most likely due to them being a representative population of the church, in leadership roles, and having more time because they have retired.
Letters were sent by the Researcher’s admin to the thirty participants initially identified to inform them of the opportunity that existed for them to serve in the upcoming intervention. The admin began to randomly contact each of the persons whose names were among the thirty, to extend an invitation and an opportunity to participate in the intervention. The actual invitation to attend the Orientation Forum was limited to the first ten individuals who accepted.

The Orientation Forum was held on a weekday night in the Staff Conference Room of the Brentwood Baptist Church, and lasted for forty-five minutes. The Researcher gave an overview of the intervention, shared the Problem/Need Statement along with the Personal Purpose of the project, and provided the expectations and requirements for participation. Ten participants expressed an interest in committing to the intervention, yet due to conflicts in scheduling and unforeseen events, eight subjects actually completed the profile form and signed the consent form. The profile of these eight subjects are reflected in table 4.1 below.

### TABLE 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Ministry Involvement</th>
<th>Monthly Worship Service Attendance</th>
<th>Monthly Sunday School Attendance</th>
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<td>Ed. D.</td>
<td>Sunday School, Missions</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Widowed</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Bible Study &amp; Sunday School</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Missions, Bible Study</td>
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<td>4 or 5</td>
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<td>AIDS Respite, Angel Tree</td>
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<td>Married</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Sunday School, Missions</td>
<td>4</td>
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Pre-Interview Questions and Responses

Following the orientation, the eight subjects set appointments to return and answer open-ended questions in a pre-intervention interview. The Pre-Interview questions and a summary of their responses follow with a brief overview of the overall responses for each question.

1. **What is your personal belief regarding justice as reflected in the capital punishment process?**

   **Subject R** - I do not support capital punishment. We do not serve our community well by killing people, no matter what the crime. Lock them up, life without parole. The present system has a dis-proportionate number of Blacks given the Death penalty. I have real concerns about justice for people of color.

   **Subject S** - The current capital punishment system is totally unfair because the poor do not get the legal representation that they need. Defendants in poverty who cannot afford to hire an attorney are indicted and receive unfair outcomes as compared to defendants with money who have identical cases and a better attorney.

   **Subject T** - I believe that we live with an unjust capital punishment system. Our elected officials find themselves in the midst of a capital punishment system that is not fair, but is instead a system that needs to be fixed.

   **Subject U** - I believe that there is a lack of justice in the system. The use of the word justice is a way of alleviating the temperament of the public relative to an incident. It is most often about placing blame rather than uncovering the truth.

   **Subject V** - It's hard to say that I am in agreement with capital punishment as a Christian, because the Bible teaches that only God can judge. And this is not just judging whether a person is right or wrong, but whether the person should be condemned to death. Capital punishment means you receive the death penalty.

   **Subject W** - I think capital punishment works although in light of events in the news recently, they don't always get it right. I don't think it's possible to always get it right. Because criminals are crafty, I don't think you will always get the right person. My view is mixed, I could not be the one carrying out the order to execute, yet I do support it. When a loved one is harmed, I think that most people would want the steepest justice penalty. I just could not be on the end to carry it out.

   **Subject X** - If it were personal and had affected my family, I would be in support of capital punishment. I would want the ultimate because they were wrong and would deserve to be punished.
Subject Y - Justice within the current capital punishment system is unfair in areas of race and money or status. If you cannot hire the best representation and if you have court appointed representation you get a defense more in favor of the prosecutor than the defendant.

Overview – Six of the eight subjects had a predisposition which recognized capital punishment as being carried out in an unjust manner. Each highlighted a perspective on an aspect of the injustice (i.e. Blacks were more likely to be sentenced to the death penalty, or that those in poverty received poor legal representation resulting in the death penalty). Two of the eight were in support of the death penalty, especially when it is personal, and yet this did not mean they would be willing to serve as executioner.

2. What is the position of Brentwood Baptist Church on capital punishment?

Subject R - I don't know but I suspect we are not a Church that supports capital punishment.

Subject S - I really don't know.

Subject T - I am not sure about Brentwood's position on capital punishment. We are taught “Thou shall not kill,” yet are also taught that we must forgive. It's the times that I see a child or infant that has been mistreated or abused that I feel the offender needs to rot in hell. So it's a challenge.

Subject U - I do not know the position of Brentwood Baptist Church on Capital Punishment.

Subject V - I am not sure about Brentwood's position on capital punishment.

Subject W - Looking at the Brentwood Church as a whole, I am not really sure how it stands on its belief in capital punishment. Nor do I know how other related ministry or religious organizations stand on the issue of capital punishment.

Subject X - I do not know the position of Brentwood Baptist Church on capital punishment. I have not ever heard it discussed in the Church setting.

Subject Y - I think that Brentwood is against capital punishment.

Overview – All except one participant expressed that they were not in touch with the Church’s view on capital punishment. The one that suggested that the stance of the church was against capital punishment was clearly giving an opinion. This implied that there had been a lack of open dialogue for the members with regard to capital punishment.
2a. **What is the official position of SBC and Texas Baptist on capital punishment?**

**Subject R** - I have no idea.

**Subject S** - I don't know either of them.

**Subject T** - I am not aware of either.

**Subject U** - I do not know their position.

**Subject V** - I do not know the position that SBC supports regarding capital punishment. Because Texas executes more people that almost any other state, I would think that Texas Baptist are in agreement with capital punishment.

**Subject W** - Since Southern Baptist Convention & Texas Baptist fall in that category, I don't know what their view or stand is. Until it hits home, I think most religious groups don't believe in it. Then when it hits home you are so angry you want some-thing done about it.

**Subject X** - I do not know the position of Texas Baptists (BGCT) nor the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Subject Y** - I think that both (Texas Baptist / BGCT and SBC) are against the capital punishment.

**Overview** – It was clear that the subjects were not certain about the stance of the Southern Baptist Convention or Texas Baptists on capital punishment.

2b. **Do you share or agree with either as your personal position?**

**Subject R** - I do not support the death penalty.

**Subject S** – Since I am not aware of their view, it is not applicable as to whether it is shared. I personally am struggling with not wanting capital punishment, although there are people serving life like Charles Manson who I think don't deserve to be alive, having committed a heinous crime.

**Subject T** - I cannot say.

**Subject U** - I believe that the death penalty is necessary.

**Subject V** - No I do not share the view of Texas Baptists, I do not agree with capital punishment.

**Subject W** - Indicated agreement with those in support of capital punishment.
Subject X – NA

Subject Y - Yes, my personal position is anti-capital punishment.

Overview – The subjects were unable to articulate how their stance matched that of the SBC or BGCT. Four clearly expressed that they were not in support of the death penalty.

3. If 10 is excessive and 1 is none, what number between 1 and 10 reflects your level of interest in justice as related to the capital punishment process?

Subject R - My interest would be an 8.

Subject S - Seven (7) most nearly reflects my level of interest.

Subject T - I say 10 reflects my level of interest as it relates to capital punishment.

Subject U - I would say 10 plus reflects my level of interest.

Subject V - I would say my interest level would reflect a 5. I have been blessed to not have it to affect me directly. So I am neutral, right in the middle.

Subject W - Because I actually worked as a federal officer for 20 years on the inside seeing so much and was able to retire, I have no desire to look back so I would identify with a low number, I say a 3. Note: Subject indicated that working inside had really become a burden and could easily cause depression among those who work inside and see so much.

Subject X - 5 or 6 (on a scale of 1 to 10) reflects my current interest in the administration of Justice within the capital punishment process.

Subject Y - 8 of 10 is the number reflecting my interest in justice as it relates to capital punishment.

Overview – Four of the eight subjects had an interest of 8-10; three of the eight expressed an interest of 5 – 7; while only one person expressed a low interest of 3. This informs the researcher that there is clearly agreement that this is an important issue.

4. Share activities you participated in to advocate for justice or fairness as related to the capital punishment process.

Subject R - Nothing specific except to complain about it in conversation at the barber shop.

Subject S - I have signed petitions to show my support.
Subject T - While in Ohio I was somewhat of an activist. Since living in Houston, I have been active attending rallies on social issues sponsored by the local Black Leadership organizations and community centers. I have attended vigils to pray for those about to be executed.

Subject U - About a year ago I served on a panel for an Inter-faith coalition of churches that discussed topics such as the death penalty, abortion, the legalization of marijuana, and gun policies.

Subject V - If I had to share activities it would probably have been back during my college days. My Fraternity was very active and I volunteered to serve in many ways.

Subject W - While working in the federal system, I questioned the expense of housing for "Lifers" on Death Row. This was more in support of CP. But no formal advocacy.

Subject X – none

Subject Y - I have not directly served as an advocate in that area. I have worked with and counseled students who have parents who are incarcerated (few on Death Row).

Overview – The subjects share patterns of scarce and scattered participation in advocacy such as: signing petitions, attending rallies (in the distant past), praying at a prayer vigil, serving as a panelist, and sharing their positions in conversations. Although the advocacy is far from being extensive in the area of justice related to capital punishment, there are additional activities of advocacy within the area of criminal justice and social issues.

5. When was the last time that you exchanged views or perspectives on justice related to capital punishment?

Subject R - In addition to conversing in the Barber shop, I have shared my perspective in an Educational setting. I taught African American Studies at a University for 15 years and during that time, I expressed my view when the subject came up.

Subject S - It was probably during the last few weeks, since the invitation to join this project. Prior to that it has been a long time, I can't remember exactly how long. It's a topic that is seldom talked about.

Subject T- It has been a while in regard to capital punishment. Yet with regard to justice about 3 days ago I posted an article reporting the death of 362 jail inmates in Florida.

Subject U - Earlier this month as I prepared to join others in prayer over the phone, we dialogued about the occurrences of offenses in the justice system against minority groups, and sound-bites in the news media related to executions along with the incarceration of a growing number of minorities.

Subject V - Never, I have never voiced openly a perspective on capital punishment.
Subject W - As a former worker in the system most of my conversations on this issue were with others that worked in the system. It's been two or three years. After retirement, when socializing or talking with friends that were former co-workers, the Subject did not feel that the issues should be discussed publically because you never know how someone in hearing distance may have been affected by the administration of justice. There are different views on fairness and more than one side among workers and families of those incarcerated.

Subject X - The last time that I exchanged views on justice as it relates to capital punishment was during one of the publicized police killings of a young black man. I think it was Trayvon Martin's death, I stated that the killer should get capital punishment but he got off with no conviction.

Subject Y - It was just this past week while attending a workshop session at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference (a national annual event on social justice) that was held here in Houston.

Overview – The level and frequency of interaction for the subjects to share views on justice as it relates to capital punishment was minimal. However most had participated in a discussion of some type that was due to the inequity of the criminal justice system. An awareness, repeatedly expressed, was that the continued pursuit of justice within the process of capital punishment would improve our current criminal justice system.

5a. What was your perspective on justice as it relates to capital punishment?

Subject R - I am not in support of the death penalty.

Subject S – Reflecting over the past few weeks, I do not agree with the Death Penalty.

Subject T - I felt that others needed to be aware, because if it was happening to them, then it was happening to me since we are connected.

Subject U - The focus for me was to be a Christian by praying first in order to enact and apply Christian principles. Intercessory prayer is a form of advocacy.

Subject V - I think it is not fair for a person to determine to put someone to death. There are so many circumstances that may have contributed to the crime. Life in prison should suffice. A human being should not have that much power over another.

Subject W – Even talking with friends and they inquire as to whether I thought CP was fair, I shared that it provided justice. Fairness and Justice cannot be mixed, they are not the same. I remain neutral, because it is the perpetrator who is the cause and who drives one's perspective of fairness.

Subject X - The killer of Travon Martin should receive the death penalty.
**Subject Y** - I express a view against CP, as we noted how the Prison System is all about the money and making a profit.

**Overview** – Four (R, S, V, and Y) subjects do not support of capital punishment as being justly administered. Two (T and U) avoided the question. One (W) actually claimed to be neutral yet the reasoning was unclear. Only one (X) was in support of the death penalty as being justly administered, however the case that Subject X used was one that has been at the midst of controversy stressing a need for justice. The overall perspective of the subjects as a whole is against capital punishment and expressed a desire to pursue justice.

5b. **Describe the situation that prompted this exchange on justice as it relates to capital punishment.**

**Subject R** - I don't remember the particular event.

**Subject S** - This approaching project, prior to that I cannot recall the details.

**Subject T** – When I was confronted with injustice due to the presence of racism. Having served as a docent or guide at the Holocaust Museum, I am very sensitive to the injustices of this society.

**Subject U** – In conversation due to the reoccurring injustices to young black men in the news from the local police and the unfair sentencing as reported in the news.

**Subject V** – While working with children and youth, and realizing that life is so precious. Then seeing police who unnecessarily take the lives of young black men, it is wrong. I am not excusing murder, but to then take that person's life (as punishment) does not reflect the New Testament teaching.

**Subject W** - It came about as a result of general conversation among former co-workers. When those who formerly worked within the Federal system get together, and a discussion of a recent event comes up along with various views on that topic. Actual details cannot be reconstructed.

**Subject X** - Conversation in Salon and among friends.

**Subject Y** - A conversation about inequity and unfairness in sentencing; especially for those who are in the minority. In addition, without money, fair representation is unlikely. This extends to the capital punishment.

**Overview** – The situations prompting the subjects’ exchange about justice occurred in their own concentric circles, at work, teaching, with friends and co-workers, and at the salon. The injustices within the Criminal Justice system was more at the core of the conversation than was capital punishment. Subjects were in agreement that justice is missing in many aspects of the Criminal Justice system.
6a. At your Church, how often have you discussed "justly applying CP"? 6b. In other settings, how often have you discussed this topic?

Subject R - a. Not until this intervention. b. Not often

Subject S – a. I have never participated in a discussion at my church on justly applying capital punishment. 6b. I have not been involved in such a discussion in another setting either.

Subject T - a. I haven't. 6b. I began with discussions on CP in other settings over 20+ years ago. Most often at Rallies and Discussions initiated by Shape Community Center.

Subject U –6a. I joined the Criminal justice Ministry at our Church thinking that the executions might be a concern however, other issues were always center stage. I have not had the discussion at my church. 6b. Yes I have had discussions in other settings.

Subject V – None at my church until asked to join this project. 6b. About once every 3 Months in other settings (as the need arises).

Subject W - Never that I am aware. 6b. I cannot recall discussing it in another setting.

Subject X - I have not had that conversation at Church. The closest thing to it was after retirement and deciding to volunteer in the Criminal Justice Ministry so the subject shared with the Facilitator of that Ministry about his work as a federal officer and desire to work with Angel Tree to assist families of inmates.

Subject Y - I have not had that conversation at my Church. I ask why? In other settings about once a year.

Overview – 6a. None of the subjects expressed affirmatively that there had been discussion at their Church over justice in the application of capital punishment. 6b. Most subjects have had very little or no discussion in other settings (R, S, W, X). Four Subjects (T, U, V, and Y) have had reoccurring dialogue in other settings.

6c. What initiated the discussion in the other setting? 6d. What value do you ascribe to these discussions?

Subject R – The discussion in the other setting that I was involved in was after I met a man and his brother and invited them to attend Church. Following their attendance with me in Church, I discovering that the man’s brother was convicted of capital murder and sentenced to Death Row. The fact that I could now put a face to the situation and was able to talk to the man and hear his concern for his brother inspired me to seek more information on the death penalty. I discovered that inmates are kept on Death Row for 15 years and more waiting. This extensive time spent awaiting death is punishment enough. 6d. I ascribe a significant value to the needed discussion.
Subject S - 6c. NA 6d. NA

Subject T - 6c. Coverage by the media KPFT, EXECUTION WATCH; Other settings/discussions motivated at the grassroots level on CP; At events such as open markets, Kwanza, etc. hosted by Shape Community Center among friends, leaders & activists sensitive to the execution of innocent people, and seeking more representation from the community. 6d. I ascribe a high value as it means that someone cares.

Subject U - 6c. As the news media broadcasts the injustice that exists, ideas were ignited that would lead to prayer. We prayed about the deep rooted problems rather than the symptoms. 6d. Of a massive value; we must be honest and not suppress the truth.

Subject V - 6c. Not Applicable 6d. Not Applicable

Subject W - Only in work environment. Initiated by things that might happen in the course of a day. Often came up among workers inside on a regular basis. Currently I ascribe a low value in respect to my interest because I really try to disconnect from its former impact by watch it on the news or read about it. Reflecting on an unfair system, "The system is only as good as the people in the position.” I ascribe a low value because it’s a tough system.

Subject X - The other setting referred to takes place with a proactive Foundation that I work with which sponsors an annual crime preventive event for youth, which held discussions on staying out of the Criminal Justice System. It is valuable because it is a way of educating those not connected with the Criminal Justice system. Overview – 6c. The other settings that these discussions occurred within were: real life crime situations, Community Center initiated grassroots’ events, Federal Prison work environment, and a Foundation’s annual crime preventive youth event. 6d. The exposure to these happenings and the interaction and resolution engagement that followed were of significant value.

11. Have you openly voiced a view on capital punishment? 7a. Share it. 7b. What influenced your current position?

Subject R - Any time the subject has come up, I have been the one to say "I don't think we ought to be killing people.” 7a and 7b. The government should not sanction killing people, and in particular when they are our citizens.

Subject S - Yes in normal conversation especially when a Texas execution is approaching. 7a. I do not support capital punishment on the whole, yet there are some exceptions (such as Charles Manson). 7b. My position has been influenced by the findings of the Southern Poverty Law Center and the innocent people that are imprisoned.

Subject T - No I have not openly voiced a position on capital punishment.
Subject U - I have, but I can't recall the actual conversation. It's not fair to put a person to death.

Subject V – It’s not that simple. We must weigh the circumstances and motives of a capital crime as they vary. Life without parole is sufficient punishment rather than to decide to end another's life.

Subject W – I have never voiced openly a view on CP.

Subject X – I am in support of capital punishment. Subject would not say the system is unfair, rather suggests the people who run it may fail. It takes people to run it. For certain, the numerous years of working on the inside in the Justice System and hearing stories of inmates have had an influence.

Subject Y - Yes I have a view on CP, it is that I am totally against the CP system due to the inequities that are embedded. My view has been influenced by current events, real life narratives from students who have parents in the system. After 30 years in Education.

Overview – Three Subjects (R, U, and Y) do not support capital punishment. Subject V believes “life without parole” is sufficient, yet we must weigh each circumstance. Subject S does not support capital punishment overall. Subjects T and W did not voice a position on capital punishment. And only Subject X supports capital punishment. Overall the group appears to be more against than for the death penalty, although there are restrictions that are implicitly expressed.

12. How (if any) has the Bible influenced you to advocate for justice as related to the Capital Punishment process?

Subject R - The Bible clearly says, "Thou shall not kill."

Subject S - In the Old Testament, God did not tolerate wrong doing and yet the punishment had to fit the crime (eye for an eye…). Also the punishment was immediate, not years later. Today's process is more complex and drawn out.

Subject T - The Bible admonishes me to learn to forgive. Even though those guilty of a capital crime may have committed a horrendous act, I have be reminded that God has forgiven me on so many levels. As hard as it might be to think that some people never need to see the light of day, if I truly claim to be a believer of Christ and a recipient of his forgiveness, then I have to apply that to my life. The Bible also teaches that when there is someone in need of our help, and no one is responding to them, that God’s Word tells us that “in as much as we do it for the least of these we have done it unto Him (God).”

Subject U - It has not.

Subject V - I can't say that it has influenced me because I have not been an advocate.
Subject W - The Bible gives me strength to deal with things. When I struggle with unfairness and injustice, the Bible gives me strength to accept the ways of the world of man. Trust in Christ removes the need for me to worry about it. Having worked in the criminal justice environment, and having to supervise staff and offenders, I had to remain neutral. The Bible provided me with strength to do my job objectively and effectively.

Subject X - No response.

Subject Y - The Bible says to serve your brother or fellow human beings. When you come before God, it's all about what you have done.

Overview - The Bible is the standard for Christians so the Subjects admitted that there were biblical mandates that they adhere to in general, yet they had not particularly been influenced to advocate for justice as related to Capital Punishment. Yet since those on Death Row could be considered the least of these, helping them is equivalent to doing it for God.

13. Is there a need for Brentwood to be more involved in advocacy related to justly administering Capital Punishment?

Subject R - Yes, just because of who we are. I do not believe that Jesus Christ presides over the death chamber. So we must speak out against those things that our convictions tells us are not right.

Subject S – I think so.

Subject T – Yes, there is. I'd like to find out why we aren't more open to getting involved. We should advocate by holding our leaders that can make decisions on this level more responsible.

Subject U – Yes, there is never a time to be silent. There is always work to be done. Christians are called to occupy until Jesus comes again.

Subject V – I think that both those who are at Brentwood and outside of Brentwood should get involved in advocating for justice in the CP process. This is one of those topics that ruffles feathers.

Subject W - I think that what Brentwood does in their Criminal Justice Ministry is very supportive to those on the inside whether on Death Row or not.

Subject X – Yes, I see a need for Christians at Brentwood to have an understanding and knowledge of the capital process and how it works.

Subject Y – Yes, I see a need for involvement with CP by Christians at Brentwood. I could see advocating by communicating info regarding CP in a quarterly newsletter.
Overview – The overwhelming response is in favor of the Church to be more involved in advocating for justice in the administration of CP. The publication of a quarterly newsletter was suggested by Subject Y.

14. How are you currently involved in advocacy (pro or con) related to justice in the CP process?

Subject R - This project will be my first formal venture in that area. It has always been in my mind and heart but this is the first time that I have been invited to discuss it.

Subject S - I have signed petitions in the past. I support both Project Innocence and the Southern Poverty Law Center by making substantiated donations.

Subject T – I would advocate by voicing my opinion through social media. In the past I have gone to Austin to march to get a stay of execution for Gary Graham, yet he was later executed.

Subject U – I can advocate with the power of my vote and by inquiring of people in positions such as judges and similar positions of authority and decision making to offer them my view. I think that the best way of advocating is to keep the conversation on that topic, keep communicating.

Subject V – I am not involved at all currently.

Subject W - Not involved.

Subject X – I am involved in communications on the subject in the beauty shop or among family, and friends. As I express my view, it helps to gain understanding of the perspective of others and for them to be exposed to another perspective and have a different insight.

Subject Y - Currently I am not involved in advocacy. I would entertain future advocacy involving a newsletter on CP issues of justice.

Overview – Two subjects (S and T) have clearly advocated in the past at some point regarding justice and capital punishment. Two subjects (T and X) suggested that through conversing with associates and on social media they could advocate. The remaining four admitted to no previous involvement in advocacy in this area.

Intervention Overview

The intervention exposed the subjects to information related to the reality of capital punishment and the balance of justice in today’s society and during biblical history. It served as a
point of exchange for the subjects as they engaged each other representing the voices and views held within the Church. This dialogue revealed that the majority of subjects had not been directly affected by capital punishment and as a result had not previously questioned the presence of justice within its administration. In Appendix D, an overview and description of the two (2) sessions is presented. An abbreviated outline follows.

**Sessions Overview**

Session I - Segment 1 included:

- Viewing of an *Amnesty International Video, Death Penalty Facts & Figures 2014*, followed by discussion;
- Presentation of other statistics related to the death penalty depicting current reality with considerations of pre-interview & open dialogue;
- Overview of the outlined Laws in America and Texas, and US statistics on capital punishment after its reinstatement;
- A brief overview from selected scenarios of death penalty cases.
- Perspectives on *Capital Punishment* from other institutions
  - Southern Baptist Convention 2000 Resolutions;
  - BGCT’s call for a moratorium and issues addressing this stance;

Session I - Segment 2 included:

- Discussion on subjects’ centering Moments, and their experience related to the Holy Spirit & Spiritual Guidance; Journaling;
- An overview and discussion of the biblical Old Testament implications of capital punishment.
- An Exercise and Theological Reflection; Discussion of “retribution,” “mercy and forgiveness”;

Session II – Segment 3 included:

- Introduction of information regarding Exonerations of The Wrongly Convicted (even Posthumously) from Death Row;
• An overview of the biblical context of the New Testament application of the death penalty.

• Discussion of Advocacy Opportunities among Subjects

Session II - Segment 4 (90 minutes) included:

• Highlights on the study, Constitution Project findings and recommendations;

• Presentation of LDF video, *A Broken Promise in Texas: Race, the Death Penalty and the Duane Buck Case. (Discussion)*

• Presentations of effective ideas for Advocating for Justice in the CP Process.

This forum (of two sessions) provided a unique opportunity for the subjects to express perspectives and to pose questions among other Christians related to the just execution of capital punishment. Overall the participants seem to have a keener awareness of the risks that exist for innocent people to be sentenced to death row, and better recognized that there is a population of society that is more vulnerable according to studies and statistics. Under the scrutiny of facts and scenarios depicting real life events, the participants identified the populations most prone to be among those sentenced to the death penalty. The group dynamics exposed an energy that was both inquisitive and amazed at the statistics related to capital punishment and how this segment of society had been invisible to some of the subjects prior to this intervention.

The question of whether justice might be more effectively incorporated into the capital process caused the participants to wrestle for truth, and to empathize with both those who work in this venue and those who are the perpetrators (or the accused perpetrators) of the crime. The intervention presented the subjects with an opportunity to examine various scenarios and to engage a variety of perspectives from other Christians, yet keep mercy and justice at the center.

At the core of the intervention was a need for the subjects to come to terms with the meaning of justice in relationship to administering capital punishment and for them to determine
and identify actions of advocacy that resonate within their lifestyle and from their personal experience as a Christian. They were encouraged to examine the capital punishment process and identify injustices that exist within the various components of the system, from arrest and probable cause, to the jury, courtroom, sentencing, and the appeal process. The subjects reviewed actual data and statistics representing the innocent that were wrongly convicted and later released from Death Row nationwide. A power point (exhibited in Appendix L) was shared with the Researcher by Texas Baptist Director of Public Policy of the Christian Life Commission (CLC), Kathryn M. Kase. The subjects were presented with the information in the power point from the CLC, and there was overwhelming expressions of surprise concerning the photos in Figure L.13. The question of justice rang out as they viewed the youthful faces of all new death sentences handed down in Harris County since 2004, which happened to be all men of color. These discoveries by the subjects sparked exchanges of opinions and concerns from quiet disbelief to lively rebuttal. Following the intervention, seven remaining subjects set appointments to return and answer Post Interview questions.
CHAPTER FIVE
Discussion and Reflection

Discussion of Research Questions

I. What effect did the intervention have on the development of the participants’ beliefs on justice as it relates to capital punishment (CP)?

II. What effect did the intervention have on the participants’ outcomes of advocacy or activism as related to justice in the capital punishment process?

These two Research Questions were addressed and analyzed by examining and comparing the responses from selected pre and post interview questions along with other comments or statements recording during or after the intervention. Some post-interview follow-up on subjects who expressed further interest is included in additional comments.

Research Question I

What effect did the intervention have on the development of the participants’ beliefs on justice as it relates to capital punishment (CP)?

The determination of the effect of the intervention on the participants’ beliefs about justice as it relates to capital punishment can be seen by comparing various facets of the perception of the subjects before and following the intervention.

Pre-Interview & Post-Interview Overview Summaries were examined, analyzed and compared to answer the research question. Pre Interview Questions 1, 2-2b, 3, 5, 6, and 7; and Post Interview Questions 1, 2-2b, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 were the targeted questions used to provide resolution and resolve for Research Question 1.

Pre-Interview Question 1: What is your personal belief as a Christian on justice as reflected in the current capital punishment process?

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 1 – Six of the eight subjects had a predisposition which recognized capital punishment as being carried out in an unjust manner. Each subject began by highlighting a perspective on a given aspect of the injustice (i. e. Blacks were more likely to be sentenced to the death penalty, that those in poverty received poor
legal representation resulting in the death penalty, etc.). Two of the eight were in support of the death penalty, especially when it is personal affecting someone directly related to them, and yet this did not mean they committed to the point of serving as executioner.

Post Interview Question 1: What is your personal belief as a Christian on justice as reflected in the current capital punishment process?

Post Interview Responses of 1:

Subject R - I oppose the death penalty because man is infallible, and with the death penalty, there is no correction for error. Even the heinous crimes should require life in solitary confinement rather than death.

Subject S – As a Christian I see the current CP process as being so flawed that the death penalty should not exist. When I consider the innocent on Death Row, I am reminded of a quote that pricked my consciousness by William Blackstone, “It is better that ten guilty escape than one innocent suffer.” Taking one life is too much. As the former, innocent death row inmate Anthony Graves said “…sentencing innocent men to Death Row and prison has gotten us off track in seeking justice because we have placed politics over it.”

Subject T - The United States justice system today is not fair. I feel it's unjust. Using the principles of Christ, I think we should be forgiving people. I do feel there should be some form of punishment. I've embraced the idea of restorative justice, it's what I think we should be striving for, as Christians, to restore a person, not to take their life.

Subject U – I think that justice is certainly appropriate but its execution is far below the standard I would think acceptable, and below the God’s standard.

Subject W - As a person who has worked within the Prison system, I tend to straddle the fence. As promotions came, the level of titles and responsibilities increased, my beliefs had to evolve due to my position. Doing your job, even though you are a Christian requires you to put on a different hat, I never would have wanted to get to the position of having to execute a person. An early retirement out of law enforcement was good for me because I had started to see things that caused tension.

Subject X – I feel that killing a person because they committed a crime is not justified. They will have to deal with God, and he will punish them for their wrong. They could be taught a lesson by being given a long sentence or even life in prison.

Subject Y – My Christian belief is that only God can determine that a person must die. The only thing man can do is try to reform a person. The power to decide on death for a person should not lie in any man's hand, because the consequences are too costly a price.

Post Overview Response of 1 - The intervention merely served to reinforce the already formed beliefs of the subjects that there is an imbalance of justice that exists in the capital punishment process. Five subjects (R, S, T, X and Y) remain in
opposition to capital punishment. Two subjects have kept the same position as during the pre-interview in support of CP. Subjects R and X feel strongly about life without parole for those who commit heinous crimes. The point that there is no correction for an error once the death penalty is implemented was a major concern.

Pre-Interview Question 2. What is the position of Brentwood Church (BBC) on capital punishment? 2a. What is the official position of either Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) or Texas Baptists (TB) on capital punishment? 2b. Is this also your personal position?

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 2 - All except one participant expressed that they were not in touch with the Church’s view on capital punishment. The one that suggested that the stance of the church was against capital punishment was clearly giving an opinion. This implies that there’s been a lack of open dialogue for the members with regard to capital punishment. 2a. It was clear that the subjects were not certain about the stance of the Southern Baptist Convention or Texas Baptists on capital punishment. 2b. The subjects were unable to articulate how their stance matched that of the SBC or BGCT. Four clearly expressed that they were not in support of the death penalty.

Post Interview Question 2. What is the position of Brentwood Church on capital punishment? 2a. What is the official position of either Southern Baptist Convention or Texas Baptists on capital punishment? 2b. Is this also your personal position?

Post Interview Responses of 2:

Subject R – 2. I believe that the majority of our congregation is opposed to capital punishment in light of what is happening in America. 2a. I know they wrote some papers. I've read some of that during the intervention. I'm not sure whether those were position papers or they were just for information so I do not know. 2b. Well I concur with the Texas Baptist, who support a moratorium on the death penalty.

Subject S - 2. I still do not know the Brentwood congregation’s position on CP. I think that most of us have not thought about our position unless it affects us directly. I have a cousin serving life on Death Row for committing murder. He is where he should be. 2a. I think it was interesting that SB (although presenting a smokescreen of rhetoric in its resolutions) was for CP and yet the TB in a state known for a majority of executions stood against CP. 2b. I am in agreement with Texas Baptist, not in favor of the death penalty.

Subject T – 2. I consider Brentwood a very progressive church that looks and listens to things that are going. As for the position of the church as a whole, I think we're probably divided. Some probably believe in the capital punishment, and some probably wouldn't. I would love to know the percentage. 2a. I get the position of the two confused. 2b. I'd have to agree with the Texas Baptists. I'd like for there to be a moratorium on the death penalty.
Subject U – 2. I am uncertain, I did not know the position of Brentwood Church as a whole. 2a. I confused the two and their positions. 2b. I remain in support of capital punishment so I am in agreement with SBC.

Subject W – 2. I still don't know the church position itself, but I would say that the best action to take is to pray for those who have life in prison, or those sentenced to die on Death Row. Prayer is always a good thing. I believe the church’s position is to always keep praying. 2a. The SBC after going through all those scenarios, said at the end, as long as it's fair and just, they're for capital punishment. The Texas Baptist (I had forgotten) is anti-capital punishment. 2b. I agree with the Southern Baptist, in support of capital punishment as long as it's done fairly. I agree with that, but I am not convinced it can possibly be fair.

Subject X – 2. I don't know about the Church as a whole, I think that our membership may probably be tied. If however, it were directly related to them and hit home, they would likely want something more severe or more extreme as punishment. Often this is a kind of revenge and they may not necessarily see forgiveness or other options. 2a. The SBC were kind of iffy, I think. I believe they were iffy, and understood that it's not a perfect justice system. They were ready to go by whatever the courtroom decides or the jury decides, but they know that things might not be just. But in the Texas, the TB did not support capital punishment. 2b. I agree most with Texas Baptist.

Subject Y – 2. Brentwood position on capital punishment is along with that of Southern Baptist and their position because they're Southern Baptist. 2a. This subject confused the two positions and did not have clarity on the distinction. 2b. Did not select one.

Post Overview Response of 2: One subject (Y) said Brentwood supports the death penalty, while one subject (R) said that Brentwood was opposed to it. Two subjects (T and X) were certain that the congregation was divided. Three (S, U and W) admitted that they were totally uncertain. This diversity of views indicated that the participants did not have a firm grasp as a whole on their local Church’s outlook on capital punishment.

Pre-Interview Question 3: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excessive and 1 being never, indicate number most closely reflecting your level of interest in the issue of justice as it relates to capital punishment.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 3: Four of the eight subject had an interest of 8-10; three of the eight expressed an interest of 5 – 7; while only one person expressed a low interest of 3. This informs the researcher that there is clearly agreement that this is an important issue.

Post Interview Question 3: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excessive and 1 being never, indicate the number most closely reflecting your current level of interest in the issue of justice as it relates to capital punishment.
Post Interview Responses of 3:

**Subject R** - My interest would be 10 (8 prior). The intervention focused me to give more thought to the issue. I'd never supported capital punishment but I'd never taken a position, and so the intervention helped me to reflect, think, and relate to that, and to be able to clarify and articulate my stance, my opposition.

**Subject S** – I would say about 8 or 9. (7 prior)

**Subject T** - My interest would be a 10. (10 prior)

**Subject U** – My interest would be 12 meaning I am very interested in this topic, and my interest has increased with the intervention (prior to the intervention I said 10+).

**Subject W** - I would probably be at the halfway point of 5. (3 prior)

**Subject X** – Probably a 6 or 7. (5 or 6 prior)

**Subject Y** – I say 8. (8 prior)

**Post Overview Response of 3:** Subjects Y (8) and T (10) were the only ones that remained the same. All other subjects’ interest in the issue of justice increased. They indicated that the intervention stirred their interest and increased their desire to gain more knowledge about the injustices present in the administration of capital punishment.

**Pre-Interview Question 4:** Contrast your tendency to voice your view on justice as it relates to capital punishment now as compared to before this intervention. **4a.** What is your perspectives on justice as it relates to capital punishment?

**Post Interview Response of 4:**

**Subject R** – Since this intervention, I've talked about capital punishment in my Sunday school class with young people, trying to get them to better understand it. They took a biblical approach going directly to the Ten Commandments and saying, what about “Thou shall not kill?” I was satisfied with that. **4a.** The same as before. This reinforces an anti-death penalty belief that there are too many injustices within the capital system.

**Subject S** - I think the awareness that I'm getting will make me speak more about it, but I find that most people don't seem to have any interest in it. Possibly because it doesn’t affect them. **4a.** I don't think its justice when the rich are exceptions to the rule. Justice is for sale if you can buy your way out of a death penalty.
Subject T – It’s about the same, yet now I have had more opportunity to gain knowledge, understanding and a wider perspective. It has enhanced by thirst for more information on this topic. 4a. The same as before.

Subject U – I am a very direct person and firm in my view, yet I believe the contrast since the intervention is that I am more approachable and softer in my directness concerning the other side of capital punishment (not that my view has changed but my openness to hear the other side and engage the option ). 4a.

Subject W – Prior to the intervention, the subject voiced a belief that these issues on the administration of justice should not be discussed publically. This had much to do with the environment that he had worked in previously. In contrast subject w now has had somewhat of an epiphany asking the question stating that bad justice (injustice) is “just us” making bad decisions. In the beginning interview, I stressed that the justice system is just a system that is sometimes unjust. Do we say “Justice is bad,” or do we credit the people,” just us,” making poor and bad decisions? We make bad decisions. Is it justice, or is it just us? 4a. It heightens my awareness every time I see on the news that someone is about to be executed or that it's their last day. Just the other day I paused to hear an inmate about to be executed. Normally I wouldn't even have any interest in seeing that or I would turn away, but now it heightens my awareness to see what that person has to say on the eve of his execution. I take notice of his statement on this his last day on earth after spending years in the system. They've spent a lot of years, and now I want to see what they say.

Subject X - Before, I felt that if you did something wrong, then you're supposed to have whatever the punishment is that you're given. But, thinking about it has led me to ask, even if the years of waiting were not a consideration, “Is executing them within 2 months or 3 months of the sentence, would that do anything to people versus just keeping them in prison for 30, 40 years or more? The time could give them more time to really sit in it. 4a. I feel that there could be so much more required as far as making sure the evidence proves that this person without a doubt is the person that committed the crime. Reform needs to be publicized. Execution or the death penalty should not be the first option because it is definitely more on the extreme side.

Subject Y – 4. I have become more vocal, as I feel more relaxed about talking about capital punishment. In the past it was something you really didn't want to talk about or even think about or discuss. Now I see the relevance to real life issues at hand and I pay more attention to it now. 4a. Possibly because I have not been affected personally, I have this perspective but I believe that the power to invoke capital punishment shouldn't lie in any one man's hands or any system's hand. I think only God gives a life, so I think it's his to take and I don't think any man should take any life. I know a lot of times when things happen to you, it causes you to react differently. I'm praying and hoping that I'll continue to be consistent with this perspective and in expressing my opinion.

Post Overview Response of 4: 4. Across the board, the subjects reflected that they communicated more on this topic and were more vocal rather than guarded as they
were prior to the intervention. Subject R identified a youth Sunday school class as a targeted audience for sharing some of the newly acquired information in an effort to offer awareness and be preventive. Although the subjects did not discuss a change in position, most did indicate that they are more open and willing to engage and to reflect upon the opposing side of view. Subject W, having previously worked within the system, expressed an epiphany in being liberated to more freely speak about capital punishment and even listen to the stories of those on Death Row. 4a. Most of the subjects expressed their support of the need for justice to be a present and a major component of the process, as compared to injustices due to economic or racial status. Subject S pointed out the weakness in the system that accommodates the rich and shields them from capital punishment. The subjects seemed to be in agreement that the notion of justice existing in this process was a diminishing one.

Pre-Interview Question 5: When was the last time that you exchanged perspectives on justice as it relates to capital punishment? (If your response is none, proceed to 6.) Pre/5a. What was your perspective? 5b. Describe the situation that prompted this exchange.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 5: The level and frequency of interaction on the subject of justice as it relates to capital punishment was minimal. Less than half of the subjects could respond with an actual occurrence. What is repeatedly expressed is an awareness that the continued pursuit of justice would serve to improve our current criminal justice system. 5a. Four (R, S, V, and Y) subjects do not support of capital punishment as being justly administered. Two (T and U) avoided the question. One (W) actually claimed to be neutral yet the reasoning was unclear. Only one (X) was in support of the death penalty as being justly administered, however the case that Subject X used was one that has been at the midst of controversy stressing a need for justice. The overall perspective of the subjects as a whole is against capital punishment and expressed a desire to pursue justice. 5b. The situations prompting the subjects’ exchange about justice occurred in their own concentric circles, at work, teaching, with friends and co-workers, and at the salon. The injustices within the Criminal Justice system was more at the core of the conversation than was capital punishment. Subjects were in agreement that justice is missing in many aspects of the Criminal Justice system.

Post Interview Question 5: What was your most valued lesson as an outcome of the intervention that is related to justly applying capital punishment or the death penalty?

Post Interview Response of 5:

Subject R – I valued being exposed to the statistics and information on the number of black men on death (from Texas Baptists). I knew that there were a number of them there, but when you see the figures, and you see the faces it really impacts you. One of the things that is impressed upon my mind is the need to work to stop the death penalty. As an educator, it has been always my desire to be preventive and keep our youth out of the system.
**Subject S** - Probably, like I said the awareness that I'm getting will make me speak more about it, but I find that most people don't seem to have any interest in it.

**Subject T** - To go ahead and be confident, and to speak up. This is one way to combat injustice.

**Subject U** – 5. To be aware of other people (fellow Christians especially) who have the same interest and to discuss more areas that we might be participatory with and be more cohesive at moving forward to address a common goal and make a difference.

**Subject W** – 5. It just heightened my awareness to listen a little bit more now to people that are on death ... It strikes my interest a little bit more where before I had no interest. It was largely due to my working in a prison setting. (Subject W revealed an increased sensitivity with regard to the offender’s perspective, before it had been non-existent;)

**Subject X** – 5. I think it was learning just how much Texas plays a part in the volume of executions and injustices. I was amazed to learn that all new death sentences in Harris County since December 2004 until January 2015 have been handed down against men of color. The picture that we saw, showed that they were so young, and they seem to keep getting younger.

**Subject Y** – 5. My most valued lesson was looking at the rate of executions in the various states and looking at the execution statistics among different races and among the different nations.

**Post Overview Response of 5:** Across the board, the participants agreed that the intervention provided heightened awareness. The subjects extended affirmations of lessons provided through exposure to execution information, along with facts and figures revealing inconsistencies within the system. Both Subjects R and X were dismayed by the high percentage of young black men sentenced to Death Row from Harris County and were struck deeply by the pictures of their youthful faces.

**Pre-Interview Question 6: 6.** How often have you participated in a discussion at your church on justly applying capital punishment or the death penalty? **6a.** How often have you been involved in this discussion in another setting? **6b.** What were the circumstances that initiated the discussion at your church on justice and the death penalty? **6c.** What were the circumstances that initiated the discussion in another setting? **6d.** What value do you ascribe to these discussions?

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 6: 6.** None of the subjects expressed affirmatively that there had been discussion at their Church over justice in the application of capital punishment. **6a.** Most subjects have had very little or no discussion in other settings (R, S, W, X). Four Subjects (T, U, V, and Y) have had reoccurring dialogue in other settings. **6c.** The other settings that these discussions occurred within were: real life crime situations, Community Center initiated grassroots’ events, Federal Prison work environment, and a Foundation’s annual crime preventive youth event. **6d.** The exposure
to these happenings and the interaction and resolution engagement that followed were of significant value.

Pre-Interview Question 7: Have you voiced openly in any setting a view on capital punishment? Pre/7a. Share your view. 7b. What has influenced your current position on justice in the capital punishment process? 7c. How (if at all) has the Holy Spirit guided you in your view?

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 7: – Three Subjects (R, U, and Y) do not support capital punishment. Subject V believes “life without parole” is sufficient, yet we must weigh each circumstance. Subject S does not support capital punishment overall. Subjects T and W did not voice a position on capital punishment. And only Subject X supports capital punishment. Overall the group appears to be more against than for the death penalty, although there are restrictions that are implicitly expressed.

Post Interview Question 7: How would you describe your engagement during the Intervention with the issues of capital punishment as compared to previous discussions on this topic in a church setting? /7a. Would this experience be something you would recommend for other Christians?

Post Interview Response of 7:

Subject R – 7. Before the intervention, you could chat about the death penalty, or read about it, but when you're in a focused setting like the intervention sessions were, and you're being presented with the numbers and the pictures, and the positions that your church body, not our congregation but the Southern Baptist and the Texas Baptist hold, and you're looking at all the statistics from the state, the national stuff, it just makes you really want to further explore the topic. The areas that drew my focus and interest were the statistics and the pictures. 7a. I absolutely recommend it.

Subject S - 7. The intervention was so much more engaging because typically "That's not a subject that you get a lot of ...." Outside of the intervention, most of the folks I've talked about it with have been people outside of the church. I haven't talked really to anybody in the church because for the most part we good Christians don't care. 7a. Yes, I highly recommend this experience because the more we know, the more we might be willing to move in a direction to do something. Most of what I learned while I was here were things I hadn't thought about it before the intervention.

Subject T – Previous discussions involved minimum talk, as compared to the extensive sharing during the intervention. When the subject did come up, it was personal for someone, as a prayer request ... or maybe just speaking with someone after service and expressing concern, about sharing, maybe I've been through this ... but it didn't go any further than that. My comments are on discussions that occurred outside the prison ministry meetings. 7a. Yes, definitely, it’s an eye-opener. Sometimes I think others go around with blinders on.
**Subject U** – The intervention provided me with the opportunity to get to know some people that I didn't know before, so that gives me a broader base in which to have a different type of dialogue in order to become more educated myself on this topic. This dialogue did not happen prior to the intervention. 7a. Most definitely, because everything needs to be based on the Word of God. If you have people with that like mindedness, not necessarily agreeing on content, but the fact that this experience is based on the foundation, and you know you're going to get the right outcome if you trust in and believe in God to get you where he wants you to be. For me, it's all about fulfilling His purpose.

**Subject W** – 7. I felt that due to the variety of backgrounds among the intervention participants, and their lack of experience working in the prison system that my being there placed me in a totally different situation than everyone else because of my career on the inside. I often reminded the inmates doing life that those of us who worked on the inside were also doing life with them. They reminded me that we went home to our families and yet I reminded them that we also return day after day. I feel like my presence at the intervention table revealed the distance that separates us due to our career choices and life experiences. I was hesitant to share entirely because mine was the only view from the inside. 7a. Moving forward, I think that there should be more discussions with younger people and other people on the subject at hand on justice and how the church plays a role in it, and that you can't allow your spiritual beliefs in it to overtake the system itself, to be angry at the system.

**Subject X** – The intervention provided access to a different mix of people, so you got different perspectives from people that really, really knew the Bible and then you have people that work with kids and things like that, so you're hearing different perspectives. It's interesting, because I'm one of the younger ones in there. But just seeing that although we're all Christians, yet we have different views on things, still much of what we agreed on was about what's fair and what's not fair. Then there is the discussion outside of the church, where there are probably even more different views, and not necessarily what the Bible says, but the views based more on emotion. 7a. I definitely would recommend it. Initially, I didn't know what to expect. It gave me a view of both sides, the people who were guilty, along with the people who were innocent and yet still had to go through the whole experience. I heard from the people who committed the crime of taking a life, and how it affected them. It was definitely interesting. I didn't expect to hear the various stories from most of those on Death Row or released from Death Row (due to being wrongly convicted) and what they shared via the videos.

**Subject Y** - Previously, it was like a conversation that never happened (or maybe it happened and I wasn't listening). During the intervention, it seemed as though people felt freer in talking about justice and capital punishment. In settings outside the church, the news stories on the inability to get the drug used for executions, has contributed to the press and conversations among people about its just application. People are a little more at ease when talking about capital punishment and justice than in the past. Also, since I have been a part of the intervention, and I go back and communicate with past coworkers that were a part of the system, I can refer to some things that we've talked about. We have
to be able to share information that is accurate and based on research and studies. 7a. I would, I really would recommend the experience because it's an eye opener and it gave us an opportunity to really hear some facts that shouldn't be hidden or covered up. Capital punishment and justice shouldn't be something you are afraid to discuss in a Christian setting.

Post Overview Response of 7: 7. Most of the subjects made reference to conversations that occurred prior to the intervention on justice and capital punishment being almost non-existent and shallow compared to the extensive information, statistics, and real life videos shared, along with the stimulating dialogue by participants from varied perspective, backgrounds, and experiences. The dialogues within the environment of the intervention in comparison with those before the intervention were described as being much freer and more focused. 7a. Each of the participants were emphatic about recommending for others both highly and absolutely the experience of the intervention. Subject Y described it as exposure to eye opening facts and as bringing awareness of biblical scripture to the discussion. Subject T also described the experience as an eye opener, like removing blinders. Subject X acknowledged its revealing views from both sides. Especially informative and interesting, were the videos by those released from Death Row who had been wrongly convicted. Subjects W and X affirmed a need for people of different backgrounds that are different ages to join the discussion within the Church. Subject S insisted that the experience was positive and necessary because the more we know, the more we might be willing to move in a direction to do something. Clearly to do something is to advocate.

Post Interview Question 8: Share whether you feel more informed, less informed or the same as before the intervention with respect to what the Bible says about the capital punishment process?

Post Interview Response of 8:

Subject R – 8. I am more informed.

Subject S - 8. Probably about the same. I looked at it from the point of view that I had been informed by studying the Law in the Old Testament. Then in the New Testament, submission to authority was stressed so that the framework surrounding what’s happening today is that people haven't been taught to submit, because if they were there would be less violence.

Subject T – 8. I feel more informed, and I'm wanting to seek more truth especially from scripture. For instance there is the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," but at the same time there is a call that, “…the fight is yours,” and “you've got to fight the battle…” I believe it's how we fight. To fight does not necessarily imply “to kill.” Learning is key, and being educated on how we fight the ills of this world means learning about capital punishment. Education is a good tool.
Subject U – I think I'm more informed simply because the conversations caused me to go back and reaffirm, "Okay, yeah, I know that's what I said before but let me go back and see," and so I reinforce that which I have embraced in the past by applying new facts and truths.

Subject W – I think I'm more informed because of scriptures that I read during the intervention and embraced more. Genesis 9:6 provided me more insight as I understood that God offered capital punishment as the repayment of blood for the blood that one has caused to be shed. It made me be more aware of what God was teaching us about the lives taken during the great flood. It helped me to have an “aha” moment.

Subject X – More informed, and I think that's kind of tied into the detailed viewpoint of capital punishment offered by the Texas Baptist. This was quite a contrast to that of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Subject Y – I am more informed. It has brought me to the point where I now look for more information and I listen for more information on this subject and I share more.

Post Overview Response of 8: Six of the seven (86%) participants in the Post Interview expressed that they felt more informed since the interview. Each subject depending upon their interest and background highlighted different areas of interest.

Post Interview Question 9: Have you formed a personal view or perspective that you would say is a result of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and provision of peace regarding God’s justice and capital punishment? Share.

Post Interview Responses of 9:

Subject R – I am led by the Holy Spirit to believe that a life in prison rather than the death penalty makes more of a difference for Christians.

Subject S - Well my personal view for a long time has been that we have an injustice system, not a justice system. I am led to be in disagreement with past governors who have said, "No innocents." and "No innocent person has ever been executed in Texas ..." I am led to strongly disagree. This subject expressed a strong sense of discernment on this view from those in leadership, and attributes it to being led by the Holy Spirit.

Subject T - I would not want to do this on my own, because I could easily put my personal feelings out there. I feel led to view it from a Biblical historical stance. I am led to believe that it has to change, because we have generations ahead of us. It has to change.

Subject U - I think the Holy Spirit has me in training. I have taken in a great deal of information, and now it's being narrowed down so that I am able to collect from the
multitude of ideas, then focus and formulate what the Holy Spirit is leading me to believe. I seek whatever God’s end product is that He wants me to pursue. The whole thing in this is about being balanced. I am being led to pursue the goal of being effective and living a life of balance.

Subject W – As for me, the Holy Spirit leads me, to not be swayed more for or against capital punishment. I am definitely led to be more of a Christian by praying for those that are on death row to have, at some point, some relief and comfort in their lives. As I accept this system, which we call just, and the final decision on having life in prison or capital punishment, then I can pray that the Holy Spirit will help those on death row to accept it, embrace it, and pray and ask for forgiveness.

Subject X – I think originally I had the view, “if you did something wrong, that's what's supposed to happen.” I felt they deserved it. Since the intervention and in consideration of how the Holy Spirit is leading, I am able to see the other side, “the compassionate side.” They did something wrong, but killing them is not going to allow it to reverse. It's not a quick fix. It's not going to be something that's just going to easily let them learn their lesson or give the victim’s family relief. Like I said, I felt like if it was my family, I would instantly want them to pay for what they did, yet I am led to ask, “Where's the forgiveness part? Where is the compassion on my part, being a Christian?”

Subject Y – I am led by the Holy Spirit to the same position as in the beginning. I just don't feel that I can separate God and death. I am not led to believe anyone should direct death for a fellow man. I don't think anybody has that authority.

Post Overview Response of 9: Each subject when asked about how the Holy Spirit is guiding them in this area spoke from a deep and genuine desire to please God. Each seem to have a strong affinity to a certain point. Subject R spoke of life in prison rather than the death penalty. Subject S is adamant about the presence of injustice and disagrees with Texas governors who have proclaimed that no “Innocents” have been executed in Texas. Subject T is led to address the biblical history and to seek change for the benefit of generations to come. Subject U speaks of being in training and seeks to process the acquired information and to pursue the goal of being effective and living a balanced life. Subject W is clear that whether there is a sentence of life or death, the Holy Spirit guides Christian to pray and to offer forgiveness. The sharing of Christ and the liberty He offers is key. Subject X has gone from an attitude of they get what they deserve to one of seeking to be compassionate and offering that compassion and forgiveness. Subjects W and X are similar. Subject Y feels led by the Holy Spirit to hold the same position as prior to the intervention in recognition that only God has the authority to take a life. The death penalty is unable to remedy an injustice.
Research Question II

What effect did the intervention have on the participants’ outcomes of advocacy or activism as related to justice in the capital punishment process?

The determination and explanation of the effect of the intervention on the participants’ outcomes of advocacy or activism related to justice in the Capital Punishment process can be seen by sharing the narratives of the subjects’ plans for advocacy following the intervention.

Pre-Interview and Post-Interview overview summaries are examined, analyzed and compared to answer Research Question II. Pre-Interview Questions 4, 8, 9, 10 and Post Interview Questions 4, 5a, 6-6a, and 10 are considered for analysis to provide resolution and resolve for responding to this research question.

Pre-Interview Question 4: Share any activities that you have participated in to advocate for justice or fairness with regard to capital punishment.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 4: The subjects share patterns of scarce and scattered participation in advocacy such as: signing petitions, attending rallies (in the distant past), praying at a prayer vigil, serving as a panelist, and sharing their positions in conversations. Although the advocacy is far from being extensive in the area of justice related to capital punishment, there are additional activities of advocacy within the area of criminal justice and social issues.

Post Interview Question 4: Contrast your tendency to voice your view on justice as it relates to capital punishment now as compared to before this intervention. 4a. What is your perspectives on justice as it relates to capital punishment?

Post Interview Response of 4:

Subject R – Since this intervention, I've talked about capital punishment in my Sunday school class with young people, trying to get them to better understand it. They took a biblical approach going directly to the Ten Commandments and saying, what about "Thou shall not kill?" I was satisfied with that. 4a. The same as before. This reinforces an anti-death penalty belief that there are too many injustices within the capital system.

Subject S - I think the awareness that I'm getting will make me speak more about it, but I find that most people don't seem to have any interest in it. Possibly because it doesn’t affect them. 4a. I don't think its justice when the rich are exceptions to the rule. Justice is for sale if you can buy your way out of a death penalty.

Subject T – It’s about the same, yet now I have had more opportunity to gain knowledge, understanding and a wider perspective. It has enhanced by thirst for more information on this topic. 4a. The same as before.
**Subject U** – Since I am a very direct person and firm in my view, I believe the contrast since the intervention is that I am more approachable and softer in my directness concerning the opposing position on capital punishment (not that my view has changed but my openness to hear the other side and to engage the options). 4a. I see the system as a platform with justice built in the process, and with capital punishment as one of the tenants in the justice system, because you have all kind of levels of justice.

**Subject W** – Prior to the intervention, the subject voiced a belief that these issues on the administration of justice should not be discussed publically. This had much to do with the environment that he had worked in previously. In contrast subject w now has had somewhat of an epiphany asking the question stating that bad justice (injustice) is “just us” making bad decisions. In the beginning interview, I stressed that the justice system is just a system that is sometimes unjust. Do we say "Justice is bad," or do we credit the people,” just us,” making poor and bad decisions? We make bad decisions. Is it justice, or is it just us? 4a. It heightens my awareness every time I see on the news that someone is about to be executed or that it's their last day. Just the other day I paused to hear an inmate about to be executed. Normally I wouldn't even have any interest in seeing that or I would turn away, but now it heightens my awareness to see what that person has to say on the eve of his execution. I take notice of his statement on this his last day on earth after spending years in the system. They've spent a lot of years, and now I want to see what they say.

**Subject X** - Before, I felt that if you did something wrong, then you're supposed to have whatever the punishment is that you're given. But, thinking about it has led me to ask, even if the years of waiting were not a consideration, “Is executing them within 2 months or 3 months of the sentence, would that do anything to people versus just keeping them in prison for 30, 40 years or more? The time could give them more time to really sit in it. 4a. I feel that there could be so much more required as far as making sure the evidence proves that this person without a doubt is the person that committed the crime. Reform needs to be publicized. Execution or the death penalty should not be the first option because it is definitely more on the extreme side.

**Subject Y** – 4. I have become more vocal, as I feel more relaxed about talking about capital punishment. In the past it was something you really didn't want to talk about or even think about or discuss. Now I see the relevance to real life issues at hand and I pay more attention to it now. 4a. Possibly because I have not been affected personally, I have this perspective but I believe that the power to invoke capital punishment shouldn't lie in any one man's hands or any system's hand. I think only God gives a life, so I think it's his to take and I don't think any man should take any life. I know a lot of times when things happen to you, it causes you to react differently. I'm praying and hoping that I'll continue to be consistent with this perspective and in expressing my opinion.

**Post Overview Response of 4:** 4. Across the board, the subjects reflected that they communicated more on this topic and were more vocal rather than guarded as they were prior to the intervention. Subject R identified a youth Sunday school class as a
targeted audience for sharing some of the newly acquired information in an effort to offer awareness and be preventive. Although the subjects did not discuss a change in position, most did indicate that they are more open and willing to engage and to reflect upon the opposing side of view. Subject W, having previously worked within the system, expressed an epiphany in being liberated to more freely speak about capital punishment and even listen to the stories of those on Death Row. 4a. Most of the subjects expressed their support of the need for justice to be a present and a major component of the process, as compared to injustices due to economic or racial status. Subject S pointed out the weakness in the system that accommodates the rich and shields them from capital punishment. The subjects seemed to be in agreement that the notion of justice existing in this process was a diminishing one.

Post Interview Question 5 – 5a: What was your most valued lesson as an outcome of the intervention that is related to justly applying capital punishment or the death penalty? 5a. How has it moved you to action?

Post Interview Response of 5:

Subject R - The intervention elevated my interest in speaking out more about capital punishment. I am more informed on the injustices for blacks in prison. I've been speaking out on social media, and in private conversations. The intervention has helped me to be able to speak out more about the death penalty. 5a. That I am vocal about not being in support of the death penalty.

Subject S – The realization of how easy it is for an attorney to be incompetent and as a result do harm to a client. A contributor to the incompetence might be as simple as an attorney who gets a law degree in one state and then comes to another state and passes the bar, and begins practicing Law in that new state. This could mean the Attorney who may be good in Louisiana would be incompetent in Texas to practice there. It's a question of being equipped to do the job, due to the difference of the laws in the new state. This could make all the difference in a capital case. 5a. Not applicable.

Subject T – 5-5a. Since the intervention I would be more likely to speak up on the topic of justice and capital punishment, to initiate or respond with confidence, when the opportunity arises.

Subject U - It caused me to be more aware of what I am hearing, to be more inquisitive about what has happened, and more vigilant. 5a. It causes me to inquire more and to be more sensitive.

Subject W – It was a combination of all the information that heightened my awareness to listen a little bit more now to people that are on death ... It strikes my interest a little bit more where I previously had no interest. Before I wouldn't even listen, and I didn't want to look. Now I have more of an ear, to listen to what is said by those that are on death sentence. I would now be more prone to stop and listen, versus just going on like I am nonchalant and insensitive, and don’t want to hear their stories. Now I do listen a little bit
more. My having worked on the inside is most likely the reason for the block, my past connection keeps me from wanting to listen to any of those stories. Although I am aware of what goes on in the inside, I wouldn't have wanted to hear any of the stories of any of the guys that's about to take their last breath.

Subject X – I think it was learning just how much Texas plays a part in the volume of executions and injustices. I was amazed to learn that all new death sentences in Harris County since December 2004 until January 2015 have been handed down against men of color. The picture that we saw (see L.13), showed that they were so young. I can attest that it could start as early as high school or middle school, so maybe touching their lives early on could serve as a preventive measure or provide them a different outlook for their lives revealing that they need not pursue that path. I think that connected with me because I know a lot of the guys I went to high school with, that were not bad in class, but they hung around with the wrong people and due to peer pressure, they were affected by what they did outside of class.

5a. As I think about their backgrounds and what might have provoked them, I am concerned about preventive actions. It makes me want to know the source of the problem. What got them into that situation in the first place? Where did it start?

Subject Y - I guess my most valued lesson was absorbing death penalty related statistics across the U.S. and in other nations, and looking at the various cultures and nationalities involved. Learning the nations with the highest and lowest numbers, and discovering which nations conceal it and which ones were open about their numbers

Post Overview Response of 5-5a: The most valued lessons from the intervention included: 1) Elevated interest and heightened awareness appears to be at the top. To be more informed on the injustices, to seek out information, to be inquisitive by seeking the true answers. (Shared by four (over 57%) subjects R, U, W, & X); 2) Learning to speak up and share information with others at opportune times about information on capital punishment and statistical data; (Shared by two (over 28%) subjects T & Y); 3) The significance of the competence of the attorney in a capital case (Shared by one (14%) subject S); 5a. Ways that subjects have been moved to action: Being vocal about their stance; to speak up and speak out for justice;

Post Interview Question 6: Is there a difference in the consistency of your advocacy since the intervention? 6a. Share if and how your planned activities for advocacy have expanded.

Post Interview Response of 6:

Subject R – The intervention focused me to really think about the issue of administering capital punishment with justice. I've never really supported capital punishment but I've never actually taken a position either. So the intervention helped me to pull together my thoughts on this issue and to clarify and articulate my stance, which is my opposition. 6a. I've talked about capital punishment in my Sunday school class, with young people, trying to get them to understand the entire process. The kids were just ... They took a very
biblical approach. They said, "Well doc, what about Thou shall not kill?" I was satisfied with that. I didn't see any need to explain any more. That's your basic idea and it cuts both ways.

Subject S – I would say yes. 6a. The expansion of my advocacy would most likely be based on the inequities that compel me to want to make a difference. I still think of the Duane Buck, who winded up in prison because his Attorney didn't speak up when the expert said he was a danger because he is “Black.”

Subject T – It's about the same. The added dimension is that if provided a doorway for moving or entering areas for advocacy with more ease. 6a. NA

Subject U – I am more aware of the need to bend my knees and pray in order to pursue God about how He wants me to engage in endeavors and to action by doing something. Also to be quicker to respond. 6a. My plans for advocacy were expanded through this intervention, as my antennae became more sensitive. The information about justice and the death penalty begin to pop up everywhere I go. It was as if I was being cued in, as I became aware and more attentive to what I was hearing. I was no longer dull of hearing about capital punishment. Now I search for an answer asking, how do I engage myself? I ask God, “What is it that you are calling me to participate in?” The first response I hear is education. When I hear about a case or I see something, I get that little tug leading me to do something more. Now I will be more inclined to respond to that tug faster. I may have responded in the past but not fast enough.

Subject W - I think it aroused my interest a little more because it got me to open up, and to talk about something that I've never wanted to talk about. It led me to get into discussions with others, which I'd never done before. My awareness was heightened a little more because I had been employed by a Federal Prison. I’d been on the inside, and because of that I’d just always taken the stance of just doing my job and living to see another day.

Subject X – Yes, I definitely feel there is a difference now after the intervention. It stems from seeing the people that were innocent who were on death row, and knowing they were to be put to death, yet when discovered to be innocent, you definitely start thinking about some of the other options. It leads me to exploring possibilities to ensure that no innocent person is executed and that the justice system is better able to make sure that they're punishing the right person for the right crime.

Subject Y – My interest level increased (moving from a 4 to an 8, on a scale of 1 to 10). This was the case because, whether capital punishment was just, was something I'd never really thought about.

Post Overview Response of 6: Only one subject (T) conveyed the idea that the intervention did not have an effect upon the consistency of Subject T’s advocacy. The remaining six participants expressed various reasons that have contributed to expanded advocacy activities. One subject (R) was moved from having no position
to actually articulating a stance on capital punishment and it’s just administration. In a similar way Subject W was motivated to open up, gain awareness, and modify some behaviors that working within the prison system had produced. Subjects S, X and Y shared increased interest levels due to greater awareness of injustices and systemic ills.

**Pre-Interview Question 8:** Share how the Bible has influenced you to advocate for justice within the capital punishment process?

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 8:** The Bible is the standard for Christians so the Subjects admitted that there were biblical mandates that they adhere to in general, yet they had not particularly been influenced to advocate for justice as related to Capital Punishment. Since those on Death Row could be considered the least of these, they were not opposed to believing that such an outreach is equivalent to doing it for God.

**Pre-Interview Question 9:** Do you see a need for Christians at Brentwood to be more involved in advocacy regarding the just administration of capital punishment?

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 9:** The overwhelming response is in favor of the Church to be more involved in advocating for justice in the administration of capital punishment. The publication of a quarterly newsletter was suggested by Subject Y.

**Pre-Interview Question 10:** In what way are you involved in advocacy (pro or con) related to justice in administering the death penalty?

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 10:** Two subjects (S and T) have clearly been involved in advocacy and seem quite open to continue some form of advocacy regarding justice and capital punishment. Two subjects (T and X) suggested that their advocacy could evolve through conversing with associates and sharing on social media. The remaining four admitted to no previous involvement in advocacy in this area.

**Post Interview Question 10:** Do you see a need for Christians at Brentwood to be more involved in advocacy regarding the just administration of capital punishment? **10a.** In what way will you remain involved in advocating for justice in the capital punishment process? **10b.** What part of the Intervention had the most effect on your being moved to act as an advocate?

**Post Interview Response of 10:**

**Subject R – 10.** Yes. I’m an advocate for Brentwood Church to have a policy statement, something for the congregation, containing “we believe” statements. This provides an opportunity for members of the ministry or ministries to be involved in that process. **10a.** I don't know exactly how I will remain involved, but I'm open to participating in the church’s initiatives. Very open to that. **10b.** The pictures (L.13) of the black Death Row inmates who are the only persons from Harris County sentenced to death since 2004.
Subject S – 10. Yes, their involvement in advocacy is needed. 10a. I would be involved as I'm praying about what the Lord wants me to do and what he's opening my eyes to. 10b. During the intervention, my curiosity of how the Brentwood Congregation stood on the matter of capital punishment was peaked as to what the result of polling the members would reveal? I would be willing to help with the ballots.

Subject T – 10. Yes our Brentwood Christians should advocate for justice in the capital punishment process. 10a. I do want to remain involved. Just being there, showing your face. It's like wearing a badge, or bearing your cross, saying that I am in support of change. 10b. Discussions and dialogue that brought to mind the use of social media. This is the way the world is now. People sell on Facebook ... If you want to get yourself out there, and you want to have yourself heard, somebody's reading it.

Subject U – 10. Oh, most definitely I feel that Brentwood Christians should be more involved in advocacy. 10a. – 10b. One of the things that you'll probably see in my journaling is that due to this intervention, I think that we should design a survey that I propose could be optional for our membership to complete. It could inform us of how some of our members may have directly or indirectly experienced various levels of incarceration. Maybe it didn't go as far as capital punishment but their experiences could offer information that provides a better panoramic view.

Subject W – 10. Yes, I think that congregation would be more educated by advocating. 10a. I would get involved slowly by listening and learning. My first inclination was to listen and learn, followed by a perceived need for prayer and education. Knowledge is power. Education can also address anger issues, whether directed at the death sentence or at workers in the prison system. 10b. I think just my presence being here. Just my presence being a part of the intervention. I think that was it. Just by me taking that step to show up here and listening. Because had I not showed up, like I said, I wouldn't even have any interest at all in it. My willingness to show up and listen and to realize that someone prayed for me to help me through some of my rough parts of my life, and I really, really believe and know without a shadow of a doubt that prayer does work. I'm not just saying it, but I've witnessed it even if not in a death sentence. I can advocate by sharing prayers and information.

Subject X – 10. Yes, I think they must be involved in advocacy. I think that it is a must, especially because of the Texas image related to executions, and sentencing practices. Then there are those who have been wrongly convicted and you have a lot of people that are fighting for the ones that are innocent (such as Project Innocence). Additional advocates are needed to assist so that these numbers are reduced. We need Churches to partner with these organizations to keep innocent people from being wrongly convicted. 10a. Yes, I would get more involved. By definitely doing more extensive research, I can speak out with expert facts. 10b. The part of the intervention that had the greatest effect was the story of the Anthony Graves and discovering how he was affected by simply showing up and being seen by someone who later wrongly accused him. I am open to help with polling our Congregation with ballots sometime in the future.
Subject Y – 10. I say yes the congregation should be involved in advocacy because our membership is changing. It used to be that we didn't have anyone that was incarcerated (or maybe just not aware). It seems to me that our community has changed and our membership has changed, so with grandparents raising grandchildren, we need to be aware of what's going on and the systems that should be in place. The more informed we are the better we can help our youth by being proactive and preventive in our advocacy to these families in an effort to keep these youth from becoming a part of the system. 10a. I will advocate for justice by involving myself with the children of the persons that are incarcerated charged with capital punishment. I want to help them, to contribute to them, or to provide counseling to the children or youth. 10b. The part of the intervention that had the greatest effect was to view the videos. Watching the videos was like peering into their lives. Some of the incidents and things they talked about were real life activities and incidents that happens and that quicken us to the real world around us.

Post Overview Response of 10: 10. All seven subjects agreed that there is a need for Christians from the Church to be involved in advocating for the just administration of capital punishment. Subjects had varied ideas for their own advocacy: not certain of actual plan yet open to involvement in Church’s initiatives (R); praying for God to reveal direction (S); being present and supporting change (T); design of survey to get stance of membership on capital punishment (U); listening, learning and praying (W); involvement in extensive research to uncover facts (X); and outreach to the children of those on Death Row (Y). Finally the subjects had distinctive parts of the intervention that spoke to them. These were inclusive of: the videos and stories of the wrongly convicted, pictures of the young black faces from Harris County sentenced to Death Row since 2004 (R, X and Y); the question on the Brentwood position which peaked curiosity (S); and the discussions and dialogue were instrumental in inspiring subjects to think outside the box concerning use of social media, designing surveys, polling the church members, and being open to listen and possibly be influenced by the perspectives of other participants (T, U and W).

Reflection on Research Questions

Research Question I: What effect did the intervention have on the development of the participants’ beliefs on justice as it relates to capital punishment (CP)?

Pre and Post Interview Question 1

1) Overall, the intervention served to reinforce the already formed beliefs of the subjects that there is an imbalance of justice that exists in the capital punishment process.

2) The intervention revealed: Two out of seven subjects (28%) strongly affirm life without parole (over the death penalty) even for those who commit heinous crimes.
3) The intervention raised a major concern over the growing number of wrongly convicted persons released from Death Row nationwide, due to the fact that there is no correction for an error once the death penalty is implemented (one is too many).

Pre and Post Interview Question 2

1) The intervention revealed that the participants consistently did not have a firm grasp as a whole, nor had received focused information from their local Church on justice in the administration of capital punishment.

2) A majority of the subjects were unable to articulate the capital punishment stance of the Texas Baptists and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Pre and Post Interview Question 3

1) The intervention was responsible for an increased and stirred interest for five of the seven subjects (71%) who indicated that the intervention increased their desire to gain more detailed knowledge of the injustices present in the administration of capital punishment.

2) The intervention did not cause a decrease in the interest level, yet two of the seven subjects remained at the same level after the intervention as before it.

Post Interview Question 4

1) The participants expressed that since the intervention, they have communicated more on the topic of capital punishment and justice, and have been more vocal rather than guarded on this topic than they had been prior to the intervention.

2) Although the subjects did not discuss a change in position, most did indicate that they are more open and willing to engage and to reflect upon the opposing side of view.

3) The subjects expressed their support of the need for justice to be a present and a major component of the process, as compared to injustices or inequity.

4) One Subject pointed out the weakness in the system that accommodates the rich and shields them from capital punishment. The subjects were in agreement that justice existing in this process was a diminishing element.

Pre and Post Interview Question 5

1) The participants consistently agreed that the intervention provided them with a heightened awareness, exposure to execution information, along with facts and figures of inequities and inconsistencies within the capital system.
2) Two of the subjects (28%) were dismayed by all of the men (L.13) from Harris County that were sentenced to Death Row since 2004, as they were exclusively young men of color.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 6

1) None of the subjects expressed affirmatively that they had shared in discussion(s) at their Church regarding justice in the application of capital punishment, and most subjects had very little or no discussion(s) in other settings prior to the intervention.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 7

1) Three subjects (43%) did not support capital punishment. One subject (14%) believed “life without parole” was sufficient. One other subject (14%) did not support capital punishment overall. Two subjects (28%) did not voice a position on capital punishment. And only one subject (14%) supported capital punishment fully. Overall the group was more against than for the death penalty.

Post Overview Response of 7

1) Most of the subjects admitted that conversations prior to the intervention on justice in the administration of capital punishment was almost non-existent and very shallow compared to the extensive depth of information exchanged during the intervention.

2) The discussions and dialogues within the environment of the intervention in comparison with those before the intervention were described as being much freer and more focused.

3) Each of the participants were emphatic about highly and absolutely recommending that others should experience the intervention. The following descriptions highlighted the recommendation: exposed eye opening facts, brought awareness of biblical scripture to the discussion, served as an eye opening experience like removing blinders, revealed views from both sides, and included especially informative and interesting reality based videos.

4) The subjects affirmed a need for people of different backgrounds that are different ages to join the discussion within the Church. One subject insisted that the experience was positive and necessary because the more that is known, the more those involved might be willing to move in a direction to do something, such as advocate.

Post Overview Response of 8

1) Six of the seven participants (86%) revealed during the Post Interview that they felt more informed since the interview.
Post Overview Response of 9

1) Each subject when asked about how the Holy Spirit is guiding them in this area spoke from a deep and genuine desire to please God. Each seemed to have a strong affinity to a certain distinctive area of ministry or personal purpose uniquely theirs, such as:

a. life in prison rather than the death penalty,

b. being adamant about the presence of injustice and in disagreement with Texas governors who have proclaimed that no “Innocents” have been executed in Texas,

c. being led to address capital punishment’s place in biblical history,

d. seeking change for the benefit of generations to come,

e. offering more orientation and training components that help to process the acquired information on capital punishment,

f. pursuing the goal of being effective and living a balanced life

g. seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit to pray and to offer forgiveness to those on Death Row (in Texas, nationwide and worldwide),

h. sharing Jesus Christ and the liberty He offers as being key,

i. going from an attitude of they get what they deserve to one of seeking to be compassionate and offering that compassion and extending forgiveness,

j. seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit in recognizing that only God has the authority to take a life,

k. coming to terms with whether the death penalty is able to remedy an injustice.

Research Question II: What effect did the intervention have on the participants’ outcome of advocacy or activism as related to justice in the administration of capital punishment?

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 4

1) Prior to this intervention, the subjects shared patterns of scarce and scattered participation in advocacy such as: signing petitions, attending rallies (in the distant past), praying at a prayer vigil, serving as a panelist, and sharing their positions in brief conversations. Although the advocacy was far from being extensively in the area of justly administering capital punishment, there were advocacy activities from a wider range of criminal and social justice issues.
Post Overview Response of 4

1) The participants expressed that since the intervention, they have communicated more on the topic of capital punishment and justice, and have been more vocal rather than guarded on this topic than they had been prior to the intervention.

2) Although the subjects did not discuss a change in position, most did indicate that they are more open and willing to engage and to reflect upon the opposing side of view.

3) The subjects expressed their support of the need for justice to be a present and a major component of the process, as compared to injustice or inequity. The subjects were in agreement that justice existing in this process was a diminishing element.

4) The intervention led to advocacy through communicating on the topic of justice in the administration of capital punishment:
   a. with youth in the Sunday School class as a targeted audience for sharing some of the newly acquired information in an effort to provide awareness and be preventive;
   b. as a former Federal Prison agent, this subject has liberated the subject to speak more freely about capital punishment and even to be more open to listen and hear the stories of those incarcerated or on Death Row.
   c. to openly reveal the flaws and injustices that exist in the system, which include a system that accommodates the rich by shielding them from capital punishment.

Post Overview Response of 5

1) The lessons most valued by the subjects of the intervention that moved them to action or advocacy included:
   a. elevated interest and heightened awareness that motivated action,
   b. being stimulated to act due to new information on systemic injustices,
   c. desiring to research for facts, being inquisitive and seeking the truth.
   d. absorbing and sharing death penalty related statistical data and information with others at opportune times (beginning with Texas);
   e. considering the significance of the attorney’s competence in a capital case,
f. being moved to preventive action or advocacy,
g. avoiding insensitivity and having an ear and heart to hear,
h. being vocal about stance on capital punishment;
i. speaking up and speaking out for justice.

Post Overview Response of 6

1) The intervention was instrumental in focusing Subject R to clarify a position and stance on justly administering capital punishment. The subject then initiated an open dialogue about capital punishment in the Sunday school class, with young people, helping them to understand and enter a dialogue on the death penalty.

2) Subject S was compelled to make a difference by advocating based on learning of the inequities facing Duane Buck (by signing a petition and sharing with a weekly Class).

3) Subject T defined the intervention as being an added dimension that provided a doorway for moving or entering areas for advocacy with more ease.

4) Subject U identified prayer as an intermediate advocacy effort that uncovers the will of God for upcoming advocacy actions. The intervention also increased sensitivity, and caused Subject U to be more responsive to the direction by the Holy Spirit.

5) Subject W’s aroused interest from the information and dialogues initiated an openness that had not previously existed. This changed behavior led the subject to actually interview former co-workers and for the first time felt free to reframe some ideas. Due to the subject having worked on the inside, this in itself was a new freedom and added perspective.

6) Subject X was certain that the difference after the intervention stemmed from seeing the people that were innocent who were on Death Row, and knowing they were to be put to death, it becomes quite clear that “there is no room for error” as “death is final.” This is a definite area that calls for advocacy.

7) Following the intervention, Subject Y’s level of interest doubled (from a 4 to an 8). The idea of justice within this process took on a more real persona.

Pre-Interview Overview Response of 8

1) The subjects admitted prior to the intervention that there were biblical mandates that they adhere to in general, yet they had not particularly been influenced to advocate for justice as related to Capital Punishment.

2) Initially some of the subjects highlighted valid scriptures to support a view on capital punishment. Among them were reminders of the necessity for forgiveness, the need
for the punishment to fit the crime (*eye for eye*), the law against killing, and the reminder by Christ that when we are kind to those in prison, the least of these, we are responding to Jesus Himself.

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 9**

1) The overwhelming response by the subjects was that Christians in the Church should be more involved in advocating for justice in the administration of capital punishment. Subject Y suggested that a quarterly newsletter might raise interest and awareness.

**Pre-Interview Overview Response of 10**

1) Only two subjects (S and T) had clearly been involved in advocacy prior to the intervention and responded that they were open to continue some form of advocacy in the area of justly administering capital punishment.

2) Two other subjects (T and X) suggested that their advocacy could evolve through conversing with associates and sharing on social media. The remaining four admitted to no previous involvement in advocacy in this area.

**Post Overview Response of 10**

1) All seven subjects agreed that there is a need for Christians from the Church to be involved in advocating for the just administration of capital punishment.

2) Subjects had varied ideas for their own advocacy:

   a. Subject R - Not certain of actual plan yet open to involvement in Church’s initiatives/Task Force;

   b. Subject S - Praying for God to reveal direction; This subject journaled extensively and was passionate and intentional about searching for God’s guidance; Subject S leads a weekly Bible Study of approximately 75 – 125 people, and dedicated a week’s study to Capital Punishment;

   c. Subject T - Being present and supporting change;

   d. Subject U – Interested in designing survey to get stance of Brentwood membership related to justice and capital punishment;

   e. Subject W – Open to being more sensitive, listening, learning and praying;

   f. Subject X - Involvement in extensive research to uncover facts;
g. Subject Y - Outreach to the children of those housed on Death Row. Subject Y asked the following in a journal entry: *We know our system is influenced by politics and racism, so how can we change it?*

3) Finally the subjects had distinctive parts of the intervention that spoke to them. These were inclusive of:

   a. the videos and stories of the wrongly convicted,

   b. pictures of the young black faces from Harris County as the only persons sentenced to Death Row since 2004 (R, X and Y);

   c. the question on the Brentwood stance which peaked curiosity (S);

   d. the discussions and dialogue were instrumental in inspiring subjects to think outside the box concerning use of social media, designing surveys, polling the church members, and being open to listen and possibly be influenced by the perspectives of other participants (T, U and W).

   e. For a future project, the Researcher is planning to use any subjects that are willing and those who wish to volunteer on a Task Force to assist in 1) *administering a survey* and 2) *polling the membership by ballot* to determine the stance of the Brentwood Congregation on this issue.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty

Presented During the 84th Texas Legislature;
Endorsed by 551 Texas Faith Leaders

March 2015

Dear Governor Abbott, Members of the 84th Texas Legislature, and other elected officials,

We, the undersigned 551 faith leaders, reflecting the rich diversity of faith traditions observed in this great state, stand together in expressing our deep concern about the death penalty in Texas. Our concerns are both moral and practical and are rooted in our religious traditions. We write to you today to call for the end of the death penalty in Texas in the belief that this practice is not in the best interest of our State, our justice system, or the safety of our people.

We join with many Texans in questioning our state’s death penalty system, which has consistently been shown to be unfair and inaccurate. Texas leads the nation in the number of executions carried out each year. In fact, our state is a significant outlier in this regard, accounting for more than one third of all executions nationwide since 1976. Well documented evidence suggests that often it has not been the crime itself but rather such factors as race, socioeconomics, geography, or politics that have determined the application of the death penalty. Another grave concern is the number of individuals who have been wrongfully convicted and spent years on death row for crimes they did not commit.

As faith leaders, we are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. We believe that instead of allocating scarce resources to fund an irrevocably flawed capital punishment system, the State of Texas should invest in victim support services, effective law enforcement, drug treatment programs, child and family services, and mental healthcare – all measures that hold potential for preventing future acts of violence. We should do all we can to make sure our state’s resources are directed towards the improvement of life, not its destruction.

We firmly believe that those who commit terrible crimes should be held accountable for their actions and we advocate for a justice system that is both humane and restorative. It is particularly important to us to support the victims of violent crimes and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing. In responding to one of our greatest societal problems, we believe the state must consider solutions to violent crime that address our communities’ need for safety and healing, not retribution.

As people of faith, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our opposition to the death penalty and to express our belief in the sacredness of human life and in the human
capacity for redemption. It is this respect for all life that prompts us to join the diversity of voices across the state calling for repeal. We urge you, our elected officials, to take a closer look at the reality of capital punishment in Texas and ask that you seek alternative ways to achieve healing and justice for all those who suffer in the wake of violent crimes. We thank you for your leadership and we pray for the time when our state is led away from this unnecessary, arbitrary, and outmoded form of punishment.

Sincerely,

Bishop Michael McKee, Bishop of the North Texas Conference, The United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas
Bishop J. Michael Lowry, The Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Bishop Earl Bledsoe, New Mexico/Northwest Texas Annual Conferences, The United Methodist Church, Lubbock, Texas
Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, United Methodist Bishop, Houston Episcopal Area, Houston, Texas
Bishop James E. Dorff, Rio Texas Conference, San Antonio, Texas
Bishop Michael Rinehart, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Houston, Texas
Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Houston, Texas
Bishop Ray Tiemann, Southwestern Texas Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Mike Cole, New Covenant Presbytery, Houston, Texas
Bishop Joel Martinez, Retired, The United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Texas
Bishop Joe Wilson, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Galveston, Texas
Ann Sherer-Simpson, Retired Bishop, United Methodist Church, Trinity, Texas
Bishop John Russell, Retired, The United Methodist Church Fort Worth, Texas
Bishop Ben Chamness, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Huntsville, Texas
Bishop Dan Solomon, Retired, The United Methodist, Church Abilene, Texas
Bishop Robert Hibbs, Retired, West Texas Episcopal Diocese, San Antonio, Texas
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Father Eugene Okoli, St. Jude Catholic Church, Allen, Texas
Rev. James Guest Retired, The United Methodist Church, Carrollton, Texas
Rev. Jonathan Grace, City Square, Carrollton, Texas
Rev. Jason Redick, Holy Covenant United Methodist Church, Carrollton, Texas
Rev. Carol Sparks, Holy Covenant United Methodist Church, Carrollton, Texas
Rev. J.D. Allen, First United Methodist - Carrollton Carrollton, Texas
Rev. Alice Coder, First United Methodist – Plano Plano, Texas
Rabbi Benjamin Sternman, Adat Chaverim, Plano, Texas
Rev. Debbie Chapman, Holy Covenant United Methodist Church of Carrollton, Plano, Texas
Rev. Frank Denner III, Custer Road United Methodist, Plano, Texas
Rev. Wally Butts, Cornerstone United Methodist Plano, Texas
Deacon Art Tiongson, St. Gabriel Catholic Church, Frisco, Texas
Pastor Charles Harrison Kessler Park United Methodist Church, Garland, Texas
Rev. James Minor Axe Memorial United Methodist Church, Garland, Texas
Pastor John Schelter, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Garland, Texas
Rev. Brian Dierolf, First United Methodist - Grand Prairie, Grand Prairie, Texas
Pastor Sarah Roberts Schreiber, United Methodist Church, The Colony, Texas
Pastor Preston Weaver, Kirkwood United Methodist Church, Irving, Texas
Lama Duojom Dorjee, Karma Thegsum Choling Dallas, Irving, Texas
Rev. Gregory Neal, Northgate United Methodist Church, Irving, Texas
Pastor Mary Beth Hardesty-Crouch, Vista Ridge United Methodist Church, Lewisville, Texas
Rev. Andy Lewis, First United Methodist Lewisville, Lewisville, Texas
Co-Pastor Isabel Marquez, Cathedral of Hope, Lewisville, Texas
Pastor Nancy DeStefano, St. Stephen United Methodist Little Elm, Texas
Dr. Thomas Brunett, First United Methodist McKinney, McKinney, Texas
Rev. Clay Horton, Christ United Methodist Church, McKinney, Texas
Deacon Victor Machiano, St Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church, McKinney, Texas
Rev. Woodrow Weilage, Retired, The United Methodist Church, McKinney, Texas
Rev. Don Zeiler, St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church, McKinney, Texas
Rev. Terry Heislen, First United Methodist – Sachse, Plano, Texas
Pastor Thomas Downing, First United Methodist Dallas, Richardson, Texas
Rev. Alan Clark, First United Methodist Church – Rockwall, Rockwall, Texas
Rev. Chris Dowd, First United Methodist Church Sherman, Sherman, Texas
Pastor Chuck Hubbard, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church – Garland, Wylie, Texas
Rev. Donald Brown II, First United Methodist Church, Grand Saline, Texas
Rev. Charles Kimble, First United Methodist Church Malakoff, Malakoff, Texas
Rev. Charles Aaron, First United Methodist - Terrell Terrell, Texas
Rev. Dana Russell, Mesquite, Texas Rev. David Weber First United Methodist – Mesquite, Mesquite, Texas
Pastor Michael Baughman, Union, Sunnyvale, Texas
Rev. Larry James, City Square, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Terry P. Jones, Highland Park United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dr. Timothy McLemore, Perkins School of Theology, SMU Dallas, Texas
Rev. Kerry Smith, Greenland Hills United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Connie Millsap, Kessler Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dr. R. Ben Marshall, Northhaven United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. John Hardt, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Connie Nelson, The United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Clerk Elizabeth Wolff, Dallas Friends Meeting, Dallas, Texas
Sister Patricia Ridgley, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Dawn Anderson, Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Mitchell Boone, White Rock United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Gary Kindley, D. Min. Cathedral of Hope, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Kay DeBlance, Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. S. Dianna Masters, St. Luke Community United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Wes Magruder, Kessler Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Adam M. Allenberg, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Asher Knight, Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas
Deacon Tim Muldoon, Christ the King Catholic Church, Dallas, Texas
Fr. Tim Gollob, Pastor, Holy Cross Catholic Church, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Les Chandler, Grace United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Venerable Tashi Nyima, New Jonang Buddhist Community, Dallas, Texas
Bodhisattva Monk Rinchen Tslultrim, New Jonang Buddhist Community, Dallas, Texas
Licensed Practitioner Veronica Valles, RSCP Centers for Spiritual Living, Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Nancy Ann Kasten, Reform Judaism, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Arthur Stewart, Midway Hills Christian Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Eric Folkerth, Northaven United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Brian Zimmerman, Union for Reform Judaism, Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Steve Fisch, Congregation Beth El Binah Dallas, Texas
Rev. Peter H. McNabb, Wheatland United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Alejandro De La Torre, Cathedral of Hope, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Shelley A. Hamilton, Cathedral of Hope, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dr. Jo Hudson, Extravagance United Church of Christ (UCC) Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dawson B. Taylor, Cathedral of Hope Dallas, Texas
Rev. Robert Cooper Retired, The United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas
Rev. Bruce Theunissen, Retired, Presbyterian Church, USA Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Andrew Paley, Temple Shalom, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Russell Floyd, First United Methodist – Irving, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Ryan Koch, Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Joaquim Nascimento, Spring Valley United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. George Battle, Oaklawn United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Rachel Baughman, University Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rabbi Ana Bonnheim, Reform Judaism, Dallas, Texas
Sean Briscoe, Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. W.J. Bryan III, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Matthew Gaston, University Park United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Minister Larry George Theh, United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Jeff Hall, Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Justin Hancock, Missional Wisdom Foundation, Dallas, Texas

**Dr. Frederick D Haynes, III Friendship-West Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas**

Michael House Retired, The United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Jacob Keeya, The United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dr. Gayle Landis, Lakewood United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. William B. Lawrence, Dean of Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Stanley Meyer, North Texas/ North La. Mission Area of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Mary Miriti, Oasis Global Mission Church - Grace United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Paul Nesenne, Oasis Global Mission Church - Grace United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Freddie B. Orr, Jr. Camp Wisdom / Glen Oaks United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Gary Stephens, The United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. L. Charles Stovall, Light of Love Covenant Community Church, Dallas, Texas
Rev. John Thomburg, Greenland Hills United Methodist, Dallas, Texas
Rev. Becky Walker, First United Methodist Church – Dallas, Dallas, Texas
Rev Carolyn Allbritton, Westview United Methodist, Greenville, Texas
Rev. Steven Martinez, First United Methodist – Bells, Bells, Texas
Pastor Dyan Dietz, First United Methodist – Bonham, Bonham, Texas
Rev. Stacey Piyakhun, Melissa United Methodist, Melissa, Texas
Pastor Rob Spencer, First United Methodist Church in Paris, Paris, Texas
Rev. Frank Rahm, Marvin/Whitewright United Methodist, Whitewright, Texas
Rev. Steven Bradley Morgan, Williams Memorial United Methodist, Texarkana, Texas

J. Marvin Weems, Presbyterian Church USA, Atlanta, Texas
Rev. Sara Curley, St Andrew's United Methodist Church and Murvaul United Methodist Church, Carthage, Texas
Rev. James R. Littleton, Jr., Rehobeth United Methodist Church, Carthage, Texas
Rev. Todd Cooper, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Tyler, Texas
Rabbi Neal Katz, Congregation Beth El, Tyler, Texas
Rev. T. Randall Smith, Marvin United Methodist Church, Tyler, Texas
Rev. Stephanie Hughes, Marvin United Methodist Church, Tyler, Texas
Minister Dan L. Gillian, First United Methodist – Dangerfield, Dangerfield, Texas
Rev. Steven C. Newcomb, Sr. Pastor Carroll Springs United Methodist Church, Carroll Springs, Texas
Rev. Jack Albright, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Jacksonville, Texas
Rev. Tom Stephenson, First United Methodist – Jacksonville, Jacksonville, Texas
Rev. Dr. Michael Deaton, Van United Methodist Church, Van, Texas
Rev. R. Jeremiah Booker, Hamilton Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas
Pastor Lynn L. Willhite, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Palestine, Texas
Rev. Grant Barnes, First United Methodist Church Lufkin, Lufkin, Texas
Pastor Joshua Hale, Perritte Memorial United Methodist Church, Nacogdoches, Texas
Rev. Rick Anderson, First United Methodist Garrison Church, Nacogdoches, Texas
Rev. Gordon Johnson, New World United Methodist Church, Arlington, Texas
Father James Gigliotti, St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church, Arlington, Texas
Father Laurence Uhlman, St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church, Arlington, Texas
Rev. James O’Toole, Diocese of Ft Worth Bedford, Texas
Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, Congregation Beth Israel Colleyville, Texas
Brother Paul McMullen, T.O.R. Good Shepherd Catholic Church Colleyville, Texas
Deacon Lynn Sowers, St. Andrew Catholic Church Cresson, Texas
Friar Thomas Fox, O.F.M. Franciscan Crowley, Texas
Director of Religious Education Julie Lambert, Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church Euless, Texas
Pastor Franz Schemmel, Messiah Lutheran Church Weatherford, Texas
Pastor Christopher Yanker, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Mission Area - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Weatherford, Texas
Rev. Tony Lorenzen, Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church, Southlake, Texas
Sister Ines Diaz Sisters of St Mary of Namur, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Gerald Gordon, Franciscan Friars, Third Order Regular, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Brooks Harrington, First United Methodist - Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Pastor Charles Johnson, Bread Fellowship, Fort Worth, Texas
Sister Anselma Knabe, Sisters of St Mary of Namur, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Father Carmen Mele, Order of Preachers, Diocese of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Pastor Karl Travis, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Andrew Wong, Grace Presbytery, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Lindsay Woods Wong, Gethsemane Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Mart Gayland Pool, Retired, The Episcopal Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Dr. Robert Kenji Flowers, Polytechnic United Methodist Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Judith W. Stempel, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Tim Bruster, First United Methodist - Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Valerie Forstman, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Tom McDermott, First United Methodist - Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Rabbi Jordan Ottenstein, Beth-El Congregation, Fort Worth, Texas
Father John Shanahan, TOR Franciscan Friars, Third Order Regular Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fort Worth, Texas
Fr. Thomas Stabile, T.O.R. Saint Andrew Catholic Parish, Fort Worth, Texas
Sister Roberta Hesse, Sisters of St Mary of Namur, Fort Worth, Texas
Sister Charles Marie Serafino, Sisters of St Mary of Namur, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. J. Michael Holmberg, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Ryan Baer Ridglea, Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Pastor Janet Kraatz, Faith Lutheran Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Kristopher Aaron, Christ United Methodist Church, Benbrook, Texas
Rev. Nathan Russell, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Lawrence "Larry" Grubb, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Page Hines, First United Methodist - Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Phyliss McDougal, First United Methodist - Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Dr. Daniel F. Flores, La Trinidad United Methodist, Fort Worth, Texas
Pastor Mark Moore, Grace Lutheran Church, Fort Worth, Texas
Rev. Bernard Kern, Retired, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Mission Area - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North Richland Hills, Texas
Rev. Dawson and Jean Tunnell, Retired, Presbyterian Church USA, Denton, Texas
Rev. Celene Welch, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Denton, Texas
Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood, Cathedral of Hope UCC, Denton, Texas
Rev. Craig Hunter, Trinity Presbyterian, Denton, Texas
Rev. David Taylor, First United Methodist – Krum, Krum, Texas
Rev. John Burton, First Christian Church, Denton, Texas
Rev. Martha Myre, The United Methodist Church, Providence Village, Texas
Rev Mona Millard, First United Methodist – Bowie, Bowie, Texas
Rev. Scott Melton, First United Methodist – Nocona, Nocona, Texas
Rev. Georgia Harrison, First United Methodist Church Wichita Falls, Wichita Falls, Texas
Rev. Jack McKone, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Wichita Falls, Texas
Pastor Cheryl Murray, Wesley United Methodist, Wichita Falls, Texas
Rev. Charles Luke, Tarrant County Spiritual Care Network, Lipan, Texas
Rev. Drew Weber First United Methodist – Cameron, Cameron, Texas
Rev. Dr. J. Andrew Fowler, First United Methodist Church, Killeen, Texas
Rabbi Laura Schwartz, Harari Temple Rodef Sholom, Waco, Texas
Dr. Roger E. Olson, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University, Waco, Texas
Father Hubert Wade, Jr., St. Mary Catholic Church, Ballinger, Texas
Rev. Tom Gibbons, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Mason, Texas
Rev. John Saint, First United Methodist Church, San Saba, Texas
Rev. Kevin Collins, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Joanna Crawford, First Unitarian – Copperfield, Houston, Texas
Pastor Jennifer Fairbanks, Zeteo Worship Gathering - Disciples of Christ, Houston, Texas
Rev. Martha Frances, Retired, Christ Church Cathedral, Houston, Texas
Rev. Daniel Enrique Melendez, Iglesia Hispana Nueva Vida, Houston, Texas
Rev. Emily L. Chapman, St. Paul’s United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Eleanor Colvin, St. Paul’s United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Thera Freeman, The United Methodist Church Houston, Texas
Pastor Kathy McDougall, Zeteo Worship Gathering, Houston, Texas
Rev. Jasmine C. Quinerly, Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Houston, Texas
Rev. Wilfred Canning, C.S.B Roman Catholic, Houston, Texas
Rev. Lura Groen, Grace Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Richard Wahl, Roman Catholic, Houston, Texas
Rev. Carissa Baldwin-McGinnis, St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. James Grace, St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Marilyn Meeker-Williams, The United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. LyAnna Johnson, Servants of Christ United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Lisa Hunt, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Emily Everett, First United Methodist – Pasadena, Houston, Texas
Rev. Nadine Graham, Unidos en Cristo United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Dr. Will Reed, Servants of Christ United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Frank Richard Coats, St. Matthew's United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Dr. Suzanne Carter, The United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Tammy Heinrich, Terrace United Methodist, Houston, Texas

**Assistant Pastor Lemuel W. Moton, Mt. Horeb Baptist Church, Houston, Texas**
Sr. Cecile Roeger, Dominican Sisters of Houston, Houston, Texas
Sr. Margaret Bulmer, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Houston, Texas
Rev. Ruth Seeliger, Non-Denominational, Houston, Texas
Rev. Taylor Fuerst, Westbury United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. David A. Roschke, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Daniel Childs, The United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Beth Ellen Cooper, Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Dr. Belinda Koenig, Retired, Presbytery of New Covenant, Houston, Texas
Rev. Barbara Robberson, West University United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Brian Turnbow, Houston Graduate School of Theology, Evangelical Covenant Church, Houston, Texas
Pastor Stephen Rhoads, Lakeside United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Mark Edmiston-Lange, Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Dr. Rebecca Edmiston-Lange, Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church, Houston, Texas
Rabbi Steven Gross, Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism, Houston, Texas
Rev. J. Ernest Turney, Bering Memorial United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Helen DeLeon, Webster Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Wencil Pavlovsky, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. W. Stewart MacColl, Northwoods Presbyterian Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Dr. Keith Jenkins, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Susan Buchanan, Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Chaplain Diana Dungy, Good News Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. David M. Pantermuehl, Grace United Church of Christ, Houston, Texas
Rev. Gerald J. DeSobe, Krist Samaritan Center, Houston, Texas
Rev. Mark Downs, Presbyterian Church USA, Houston, Texas
Rev. Martin Troyer, Houston Mennonite Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Christina Hale, Mission Bend United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Pastor David Meeker-Williams, Mission Bend United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Stephanie Wilkins, Blueridge United Methodist, Houston, Texas
Rev. Glynden Bode, Texas Annual Conference United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Harvey Clemons, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. C.E. Hilliard, Addicks United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rabbi David Lyon, Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, Texas
Rev. Terry Thompson, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Houston, Texas
Rev. Johnnie Simpson Jr., Haven Chapel East, Columbia, Texas
Pastor William Llana, First United Methodist – Conroe, Conroe, Texas
Rev. Michael Lindstrom, First United Methodist Church – Conroe, Conroe, Texas
Rev. J. Scott Moore, First United Methodist – Conroe, Conroe, Texas
Rev. Scott Dornbush, First United Methodist – Huntsville, Huntsville, Texas
Rev. Ellen Willett, First United Methodist – Huntsville, Huntsville, Texas
Rev. Shelli Williams, First United Methodist – Cleveland, Cleveland, Texas
Rev. Dr. Donald W. Sinclair, Coldspring United Methodist Church, Coldspring, Texas
Scott Atnip Wesley, Memorial United Methodist Church, Huntsville, Texas
William Kleiber, Executive Director, Restorative Justice Ministries Network, Huntsville, Texas
Rev. Cheryl Smith, Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church Huntsville, Texas
Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick, Magnolia United Methodist, Magnolia, Texas
Rev. Carroll Pickett, Retired, Presbyterian Church USA, Kerrville, Texas
Rev. Lindsay Childers Kirkpatrick, Montgomery United Methodist, Montgomery, Texas
Father Fred Valone, St. Anne Catholic Church, Tomball, Texas
Pastor Robert E. Webb, Rose Hill United Methodist, Tomball, Texas
Rabbi Matthew Berger, Congregation Beth Shalom of The Woodlands, The Woodlands, Texas
Rev. Brian T. Wharton, Faith United Methodist, Spring, Texas
Rev. Lisa Beth White, Faith United Methodist, Spring, Texas
Rev. Carrie Deleon, Klein United Methodist, Spring, Texas
Rev. Don Storey, Sr., The United Methodist Church, Bay City, Texas
Pastors Linda and Setterick Allen, New Life Community Outreach Center, Brookshire, Texas
Rev. Harold Knolls, Cypress United Methodist, Cypress, Texas
Fr. Lawrence Matula, St Robert's Church, El Campo, Texas
Rev. Nathan Bledsoe, St. Peter's United Methodist, Katy, Texas
Rev. John Rooney, St. Angela Merici Catholic Church, Missouri City, Texas
Rev. Catharine Cline, Grace United Church of Christ, Houston, Texas
Rev. Preston Morgan, Christ United Methodist, Sugar Land, Texas

**Pastor Don Waybright, Sugar Creek Baptist Church, Sugar Land, Texas**

Rev. Frank Catania, Brother's Keepers Ministries, Sugar Land, Texas
Rev. Juanita Michelle Mathis, Progressive Open Door Christian Center, Katy, Texas
Deacon Amy Bezecny, Christ United Methodist, Sugar Land, Texas
Rev. Robert J. Duggan, C.S.B. Congregation of St. Basil, Sugar Land, Texas
Rev. Curtis Matthys, First United Methodist – Pasadena, Pasadena, Texas
Rev. Keith Swatzel II, Sunset United Methodist, Pasadena, Texas
Rev. Jack A. Womack, Hope Community United Methodist, Pasadena, Texas
Rev. Thomas W. Daugherty, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Pearland, Texas
Rev. Bonnie Osteen, The United Methodist Church, Pearland, Texas
Rev. Mark Fleming, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Baytown, Texas
Rev. Gregory Smith, Old River Terrace United Methodist, Channelview, Texas
Rev. Brandi Horton, Deer Park United Methodist, Deer Park, Texas
Pastor T. Paul Kethley, Deer Park United Methodist Church, Deer Park, Texas
Pastor Emily Lorraine Brown, Faith United Methodist Church, Dickinson, Texas
Rev. E. Mireya Martinez, Lexington United Methodist Church, Freeport, Texas
Rev. David Bridges, Friendswood Friends Church, Friendswood, Texas
Rev. Melody Kraus, First United Methodist – Pearland, Friendswood, Texas
Rabbi Marshal Klaven, B'nai Israel, Galveston, Texas
Rev. Peter J. Cammarano, Chapelwood, Lake Jackson, Lake Jackson, Texas
The Rev. Wesley Welborn, Chapelwood, Lake Jackson, Lake Jackson, Texas
Rev. Lindsey Smith, First United Methodist Church, Liberty, Texas
Pastor Eulis Hill, Grace United Methodist Church, Manuel, Texas
Dr. Charles R. Millikan, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Pearland, Texas
Rev. Mark Bunch, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Bridge City, Texas
Rev. Betty Edwards, St. John's United Methodist Church, Port Arthur, Texas
Rev. Joel Mora Getsemani, United Methodist Church, Port Arthur, Texas
Minister S. Kevin King, First United Methodist - Winnie Stowell, Winnie, Texas
Rev. Rodney Graves McCabe, Roberts Ave United Methodist Church, Beaumont, Texas
Rabbi Joshua Taub, Temple Emanuel, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Monsignor William Manger, Saint Anne Catholic Church, Beaumont, Texas
Deacon Thomas Ewing, Diocese of Beaumont, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Dr. Connie Alexander, Presbyterian Church USA, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Paul Alexander, Presbyterian Church USA, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. John Alexander, Retired, Presbyterian Church USA, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Donna G. Brown, Retired, The United Methodist Church Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Sharon Gazaway, First Presbyterian Church, Jasper Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Ruby Nelson, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Beaumont, Texas
Rev. Francis Conroy, Roman Catholic, Beaumont, Texas
Pastor Richard Baker, Retired, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Brenham, Texas
Rev. Phillip Fenton, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Brenham, Texas
Rev. Edward Triem, Retired, Presbyterian Church USA, Brenham, Texas
Rev. Richard Nelson, The Episcopal Church, Burton, Texas
Rev. James T. Said, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, College Station, Texas
Rev. Dr. Dan Deleon, Friends Congregational Church, College Station, Texas
Rev. Deacon Mary Lenn Dixon, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, College Station, Texas
Elder Theresa Dougherty, United Christian Church, College Station, Texas
Rev. Sandi Mizirl, Texas A&M Episcopal College Mission, College Station, Texas
The Rev. Dr. Rhoda Montgomery, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, College Station, Texas
Rev. Victoria Simons, First United Methodist Church, Somerville, Texas
Rev. Terrance Hayes, Victoria District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church, Victoria, Texas
Rev. Wanda Ritchea, United Campus Ministry of Victoria, Victoria, Texas
Rev. Charles Stephens, John Wesley United Methodist, Victoria, Texas
Pastor Michael Mumme, First United Methodist Church of Cuero, Cuero, Texas Sr.
Elizabeth Riebschlaeger, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Cuero, Texas
Rev. Carolyn Stapleton, First United Methodist Church – Ganado, Ganado, Texas
Barbara Aziz, Bulverde United Methodist, Bulverde, Texas
Judy Godinez, Comal County Unitarian Universalist Society, New Braunfels, Texas
Deacon Robert Leibrecht, Good Shepherd Catholic Church, New Braunfels, Texas
Rev. Stephen G. Echols, Christ United Methodist Church, Stockdale, Texas
Sr. Teresa Carter, Sisters of St. Brigid, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Thomas Heger, Retired Presbyterian Pastor, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Tiolinda Marotta, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Pat Crehan, Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Miriam Mitchell, Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Sheila O'Sullivan, Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Monte Marshall, Travis Park United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Edward Hauf, O.M.I. St. Mary's Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Anita Brenek, CDP Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Father Martin Elsner, S.J Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Marjorie Filler, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Maria Flores, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Charlotte Kitowski, Congregation of Divine Providence of San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Louise Miksch, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Mary Morkovsky, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Patrice Sullivan, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Oralia Arzola, Cordi-Marian Sisters, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Isabel Ball, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Brenda Baradell, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Dorothy Batto, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Father Larry Christian, St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas
Sr. Germaine Corbin, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Louise Delisi, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Rachel Epp Miller, San Antonio Mennonite Church, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Gloria Ann Fiedler, CDP Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Catalina Fresquez, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Jane Mary Gawlik, CSSF Felician Franciscan, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Sarah Holden, University United Methodist, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Carol Ann Jokerst, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Charlotte Kitowski, CDP Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Lourdes Leal, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Sarah Lennon, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Cathy Parent, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Dinah Shelly, Alamo Heights United Methodist, San Antonio, Texas
Elder Hilary Shuford, Mission Presbytery, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Margaret Snyder, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Shirley Vaughn, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Grace Walle, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Sarah Lennon, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Robert Wright, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Robert L. Clark II, Corredor de Esperanza, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Kelly Allen, University Presbyterian Church, San Antonio, Texas
Rabbi Mara Nathan, Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Gerald Metzger, Bethany Congregational United Church of Christ, San Antonio, Texas
Rabbi David Komoroski, Associate Vice President for Advancement at Hillel, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. David Felps, Coker United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Texas
Fr. Vincent Louwagie B., OMI Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Roberto Pena, OMI Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Charles Fredrickson, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Joseph Stobaugh, Grace Avenue United Methodist Church, Frisco, Texas
Pastor Alicia Campos, Principe De Paz United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Imelda Gonzalez, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Brother Brian Haldermann, S.M. Marianist Province of U.S. San Antonio, Texas
Rev. John Manahan, Society of Mary (Marianists), San Antonio, Texas
Brother Gerard Sullivan, SM Marianist Province of U.S., San Antonio, Texas
Sister Dorothy Jean Young, Congregation of the Sisters of St Felix of Cantalice, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Marian Sturm, IWBS Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, Victoria, Texas
Sister Anna Nguyen Kim Tuyet, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, San Antonio, Texas
Sister Emma Stefanoni, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, San Antonio, Texas

**Rev. Rashad Berry, Canaan Missionary First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas**
Rev. Robert Fiser, Rio Texas Conference, The United Methodist Church, Laredo, Texas
Rev. Paul Harris, Laredo United Methodist, Laredo, Texas
Sister Rose Kruppa, Congregation of Divine Providence, San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Roy C Ricker, Chaplain, Methodist Hospital San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith Westlawn United Methodist San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Aaron Gonzalez El Divino Salvador United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas
Rev. Isidro Pina Kelsey Memorial United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas
Congregational Care Minister Tina Trimble The United Methodist Church San Marcos, Texas
Rev. Beth Tatum First United Methodist Church Mathis Mathis, Texas
Rev. Mother Superior Michelle Marie Kuntscher Sisters of the Incarnate Word Corpus Christi, Texas
Pastor Kristine Bair 1st Presbyterian Church Corpus Christi, Texas
Rev. Eradio Valverde Corpus Christi District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas
Father Armand Mathew, OMI Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Oblate Fathers and Brothers (OMI) Brownsville, Texas
Deaconess Cindy Johnson, El Buen Pastor, Brownsville, Texas
Rev. Laura K. Merrill, McAllen District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church, Harlingen, Texas
Rev. Jerimey Wicke, First United Methodist Church of Weslaco, Weslaco, Texas
Pastor Daniel Cruz Longoria, La Trinidad United Methodist, Pharr, Texas
Pastor Marcy Garza, Bethel United Methodist, Raymondville, Texas
Deacon Dan Wright, St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. Guston Browning, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Cedar Park, Texas
Rev. Norman Roe, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Cedar Park, Texas
Rev. Mary Wilson, Church of the Savior, Cedar Park, Texas
Rev. Anamae Storbeck, Everyone's Call, Del Valle, Texas
Rev. Jason Fry, First United Methodist Church, Fredericksburg, Texas
Rev. Yvonne Coon, First United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Amy Forsythe, First United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Fredda Horton Minick, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Milton S. Jordan, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Steve Langford, First United Methodist Church, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Mark Skrabacz, San Gabriel Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Georgetown, Texas
Rev. Mary Powell, Adjunct Spiritual Director St. Philip's United Methodist Church Round Rock, Texas
Rev. Nancy McDougall, First United Methodist-Burnet, Kingsland, Texas
Terry Cortez-Vega, Dharma Teacher - Plum Blossom, Sangha Manor, Texas
Rev. Jeanette Heart, First United Methodist San Marcos, San Marcos, Texas
Rev. Sandra Londa, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Wimberley, Texas
Brother Richard Daly, CSL Brothers of the Holy Cross, Austin, Texas
Rev. Barbara Ruth, First United Methodist Church – Austin, Austin, Texas
Rev. John Wright, First United Methodist Church – Austin, Austin, Texas
Rev. Helen P. Almanza, Tarrytown United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. Lynn Barton, Westlake United Methodist, Austin, Texas

**Rev. Dr. Larry Bethune, University Baptist Church, Austin, Texas**

Rev. Darlene Boaz, St. Luke United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. John Elford, University United Methodist, Austin, Texas
Rev. Victoria Bailey, Retired, University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. John Reynolds, St Luke United Methodist, Austin, Texas
Rev. George Ricker, University United Methodist, Austin, Texas

**Rev. Stephanie True, University Baptist Church, Austin, Texas**

Rev. Bob Breihan, United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. Katy Fitzhugh, Oak Hill United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. Bobbi Kaye Jones, Tarrytown United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. W.B. Sandberg, Pastor for Senior Ministries & Congregational Care, University United Methodist, Austin, Texas
Rev. Bill Wack, CSC St. Ignatius Martyr Parish and School, Austin, Texas
Rev. Cecile Adam, Congregational Church of Austin, UCC Austin, Texas
Rev. Sarah Bentley, Congregational Church of Austin UCC, Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. Whitney Bodman, Congregational Church of Austin, Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. John Elford, University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Glenn Noblin, The United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. Arun W. Jones, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas
Father Charles Kullmann, St. Austin Catholic Church, Austin, Texas
Rabbi Susan Elizabeth Lippe, Bible-Student, Rabbi-Educator, Austin, Texas
Rev. D. Bruce Nieli, CSP St. Austin Catholic Church, Austin, Texas
Rev. K.C. Putney, Jr., Professor, Austin Presbyterian Seminary, Austin, Texas
Rabbi Samuel Rose, Congregation Beth Israel, Austin, Texas
Rabbi Daniel Septimus, Executive Director, Texas Hillel at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas
Rev. Carol Tate, University Presbyterian, Austin, Texas

Rev. Rusty Teeter, Director, Wesley Foundation of Austin, Austin, Texas

Rev. John Yeaman, University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Ken White, United Christian Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. George Holcombe, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Joel Salas, The United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rabbi Rick Brody, Congregation Kol Halev, Austin, Texas

Rabbi Amy B. Cohen, Temple Beth Shalom, Austin, Texas

Rev. Dr. William M. Harris, St. John’s United Methodist, Austin, Texas

Rev. Rudy England, Unity Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Dr. Kristina Carter, Parker Lane United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Dr. Mike Renquist The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Pastor John Reynolds, Retired The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Rev. Judy Baskin, Retired, The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Rabbi Rebecca Epstein, Congregation Beth Israel, Austin, Texas

Rabbi Kerry Baker, Beth Shalom, Austin, Texas

Rev. Sidney G. Hall, III Trinity United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Rev. David H. Jensen, Presbyterian Church USA, Austin, Texas

Rev. David Gilliam, Tarrytown United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Beverly Lawson, Disciples of Christ, Austin, Texas

Rev. Paul L. Escamilla, St. John's United Methodist, Austin, Texas

Rev. Dr. Orval Strong, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Ralph L. Underwood, The United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Sue Abold, Northwest Hills United Methodist, Austin, Texas

Phillip Baker, Plum Blossom Sangha, Austin, Texas

Rev. Suzanne Field, Rabb University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Matthew Iwuji, JUD St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Austin, Texas

Deacon Jose Mendez, St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Susan Sprague, University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Vincent Thanh Nguyen, CSSR St. Albert the Great Catholic Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Richard Bates, Retired, University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Rev. Cheryl Broome The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Rev. James Carter, Retired, University United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas

Sarah Macias, Sanctuary, Austin, Texas

Rev. Kathryn LeVine, Carrizo Springs United Methodist, Carrizo Springs, Texas
Rev. Kent Kepler, First United Methodist, Uvalde Utopia, Texas
Rev. Michael Peschke Lexington United Methodist Church Lexington, Texas
Pastor Glenn Hohlt St. John Lutheran Church New Ulm/Trinity Lutheran Church Freelsburg New Ulm, Texas
Rev. Karen Boehk First United Methodist Church - Smithville Smithville, Texas
Rev. Murray Travis Retired, Presbyterian Church USA Amarillo, Texas
Rev. Kevin Young, St. John's United Methodist, Lubbock, Texas
Rev. Bobby McMillan, Retired, The United Methodist Church, Lubbock, Texas
Rev. Mary Glover, St Mark's Episcopal Church, Abilene, Texas
Rev. Ross Whitaker, Branch United Methodist Church, Abilene, Texas
Father James Plagens, St. Ann's Catholic Church, Midland, Texas
Monsignor Bernard, Gully Roman Catholic, Big Spring, Texas
Rev. David Mossbarger, St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church, Odessa, Texas
Father Joseph H. Uecker, Retired, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Odessa, Texas
Father Mark Woodruff, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Odessa, Texas
Rev. Tom Ramsay, Desert Lotus Buddhist Community, Terlingua, Texas
Father William Morton, Columbian Mission Center, El Paso, Texas
Rev. Edward Carpenter, Jr., St. Joseph Parish, El Paso, Texas
Monsignor Arturo Jose Bañuelas, St. Mark Catholic Church, El Paso, Texas
Rev. Miguel Brisoño, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, El Paso, Texas
Fr. Robert F. Dueweke, O.S. A Order of St. Augustine, El Paso, Texas
Sr. S. Kathleen Braun, OSF School Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Sr. Nancy Hansen, School Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Sr. Frances Hicks, School Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Pastor Antonio Lasheras, St. Therese of the Little Flower Catholic Church, El Paso, Texas
Father Pablo Matta, St. Jude Catholic Church, El Paso, Texas
Sr. Joan McCoy, School Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Rev. David Fierro, St. Matthew Catholic Church, El Paso, Texas
Sister Mary Kay Mahowald, Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Sister Phyllis Nolan, Daughters of Charity, El Paso, Texas
Sister Priscilla Joy Ritchey, Sisters of St. Francis, El Paso, Texas
Rev. Carlos Clugy-Soto, Desert View UCC, El Paso, Texas
Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto, United Church of Christ, El Paso, Texas
Sister Emile Morgan, Daughters of Charity, El Paso, Texas
APPENDIX B

Black Letter Recommendations

Advocacy Efforts of “The Constitution Project”

Safeguarding Innocence and Preventing Wrongful Execution

Recommendation 1 - Jurisdictions should require post-conviction review of credible claims of innocence.

Recommendation 2 - If a prosecutor becomes aware of new, credible, material evidence, that it is reasonably likely that an innocent person has been convicted, the prosecutor should notify the court and disclose the evidence.

Recommendation 3 - The government should be required to disclose to the defense, as soon as practicable, all post-conviction forensic testing results.

Recommendation 4 - Jurisdictions should establish procedures for systemic review of exonerations and for avoiding future errors.

Forensic Evidence and Labs

Recommendation 5 - The government should preserve all evidence for at least 60 days after an execution. Evidence should not be destroyed until effective notice has been provided to defense counsel.

Recommendation 6 – Defendants should be entitled by statute to testing of forensic evidence if the results may be relevant to a claim of innocence or wrongful conviction.

Recommendation 7 - Law enforcement agencies should submit to DNA databanks (a) Unidentified profiles obtained from evidence in a capital case and (b) DNA profiles of all convicted felons. Defendants should have access to databank searches.

Recommendation 8 - Testimony from a forensic examiner offered in capital cases should be excluded from evidence when the examiner is not associated with an accredited forensic laboratory.

Recommendation 9 – Congress should establish federal standards and procedures for accrediting forensic laboratories. States should either apply the federal standards or adopt their own more stringent standards. Accredited laboratories should be required to:

a) Employ certified technicians,

b) Use validated techniques,
c) Articulate and enforce written standard protocols,

d) Require examiner proficiency testing in the particular technique in question, and

e) Have in place a procedure for triggering an audit of all death penalty cases when there is reason to question the validity of the original analysis, including, without limitation, when there is reason to believe that the examiner has engaged in negligence or fraud in any case (whether capital or not).

**Recommendation 10** – Forensic evidence should be tested by accredited laboratories (private or public) that function independently from law enforcement.

**Access to Justice**

**Recommendation 11** – A state or federal court should entertain a post-conviction claim that a petitioner facing execution was wrongfully convicted or sentenced and should examine any evidence offered to support such a claim.

**Custodial Interrogations**

**Recommendation 12** – Custodial interrogations of a suspect in a homicide case should be videotaped or digitally recorded whenever practicable.

a) Recordings should include the entire custodial interrogation process.

b) Where videotaping or digital video recording is impracticable, an alternative uniform method, such as audiotaping, should be established.

c) Video or audio recording of the entire custodial interrogation process should not require the suspect’s permission.

**Recommendation 13** – Whenever there is a failure for any reason to videotape or audiotape any portion of, or all of, the entire custodial interrogation process, and the statement was not otherwise suppressed, a defendant should be entitled, upon request, to a cautionary jury instruction, appropriately tailored to the individual case, that does the following: notes that failure,

a) Permits the jury to give it such weight as the jury feels that it deserves, and

b) Where appropriate, further permits the jury to use it as the basis for finding that the statement either was not made or was made involuntarily.
Ensuring Reliable Eyewitness Testimony

Recommendation 14 – State and federal jurisdictions should adopt legislation to require that eyewitness identifications be conducted in accordance with best practice techniques called for by prevailing scientific research. Further, jurisdictions should support research that will result in the continuing development of best practices in identification techniques.

Recommendation 15 – Courts should suppress unreliable eyewitness identifications. The admissibility determination should be made based on objective criteria, not subjective self-reporting by the witness of his or her likelihood of accuracy at the time of the identification.

Recommendation 16 - When courts admit eyewitness identification testimony, jurors should be given specific instructions that identify the factors that may influence reliability.

Recommendation 17 - To give further context to the jury instructions, courts should admit expert trial testimony explaining prevailing research trends relating to the objective reliability of identification procedures and the factors that affect subjective identification reliability.

Recommendation 18 - Jurisdictions should adopt a standardized protocol or set of best practices to be followed for all forensic interviews of children, which should include the videotaping of all interviews of children.

Recommendation 19 - State and federal courts should admit expert trial testimony to give context to jury instructions and to explain prevailing research trends relating to the suggestibility of children and the factors that affect the reliability of children’s testimony.

Reserving Capital Punishment for the Most Heinous Offenses and Most Culpable Offenders

Recommendation 20 - Implementation of the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against execution of individuals who have intellectual disability should be improved.

a) The defendant should be required to prove intellectual disability by a preponderance of the evidence.

b) There should be a rebuttable presumption that a person with an intelligence quotient (“IQ”) below 75 is intellectually disabled and therefore ineligible for the death penalty. The prosecution should be permitted to rebut the presumption by clear and convincing evidence. An IQ above 70 can be considered in determining whether the defendant has demonstrated intellectual disability by a preponderance of the evidence.
c) Diagnostic tests requiring documentation of lack of adaptive functioning by age 18 should be excused for good cause.

d) If the court makes a pretrial determination that the evidence of intellectual disability is not sufficient to render the defendant ineligible for the death penalty, the defendant should be permitted to raise the issue at trial for de novo determination by the jury. The court’s pretrial determination should not be communicated to the jury.

Recommendation 21 – The death penalty should not be applied to persons who, at the time of the offense, suffered from severe mental disorders that significantly impaired their capacity to appreciate the nature, consequences or wrongfulness of their conduct, to exercise rational judgement in relation to the conduct or to conform their conduct to the requirements of law.

a) A “significant impairment” at the time of the offense should be a threshold at a special hearing during the penalty phase of a trial.

b) A “significant impairment” at the time of the offense should mean any significant impairment, whether or not such impairment was due to voluntary action (such as voluntary intoxication or drug use or an affirmative decision not to self-medicate).

Recommendation 22 - A defendant who shows reckless indifference but does not personally kill, attempt to kill, or intend that a killing take place should not be eligible for capital punishment. States should exclude from death eligibility those who were convicted under a felony murder theory alone.

Ensuring Effective Counsel

Recommendation 23 - Every jurisdiction that imposes capital punishment should create an independent authority to screen, appoint, train and supervise lawyers to represent defendants charged with a capital crime. It should set minimum standards for these lawyers’ performance. An existing public defender system may comply if it implements the proper standards and procedures.

Recommendation 24 - Capital defense lawyers should be adequately and reasonably compensated, with due regard for tax payers, and the defense should be provided with adequate and reasonable funding for experts and investigators at all stages of the proceeding, including post-conviction.

Recommendation 25 – Counsel should be required to perform at the level of an attorney reasonably skilled in the specialized practice of capital representation, be zealously committed to the capital case and possess adequate time and resources to prepare. Once a defendant has demonstrated that his or her counsel fell below the minimum standard of professional competence in death penalty litigation, the burden should shift to the state to
demonstrate that the outcome of the case was not affected by the attorney’s incompetence. There should be a strong presumption in favor of the attorney’s obligation to offer at least some mitigating evidence at the sentencing phase of a capital trial.

**Duty of Judge and Jury**

*Recommendation 26* - Capital punishment should not be imposed in the absence of a unanimous verdict both as to the death penalty sentence or advisory sentence and as to each aggravating circumstance used to support that sentence.

*Recommendation 27* - Judges should be prohibited from overriding a jury’s recommendation of a sentence less than death.

*Recommendation 28* - Jurors should be instructed that residual doubt may be considered as a mitigating circumstance in sentencing.

*Recommendation 29* - Judges should ensure that they have adequately discharged their duty to guide jurors properly in the applicable law.

*Recommendation 30* - The trial court should instruct the jury about all available sentencing options and inform the jury as to the meaning of those sentences, including a life sentence without parole.

**Role of Prosecutors**

*Recommendation 31* - Prosecutors should provide full discovery to the defense in death penalty cases, including all information and evidence relating to the subject matter of the offense charged, defenses or other issues in the case that are not protected by an established governmental or other testimonial privilege. Some jurisdictions refer to this as “open-file discovery.” Prosecutors’ offices in jurisdictions with capital punishment, irrespective of the applicable discovery standard, also must develop effective procedures for requiring law enforcement and investigative agencies to gather, properly document and provide all relevant information and evidence to prosecutors for discovery review.

*Recommendation 32* - All capital jurisdictions should establish a Charging Review Committee to review prosecutorial charging decisions in death-eligible cases. The committee should be comprised of one or more line prosecutors, at least one supervisory official, and the chief or head of the prosecuting office. Prosecutors in death-eligible cases should be required to submit proposed capital and non-capital charges to the committee. The committee would then issue binding approval or disapproval of proposed capital charges, with an accompanying explanation. Each jurisdiction should forbid prosecutors from filing a capital charge without the committee’s approval.

*Recommendation 33* - The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (“VCCR”) should be enforced by law enforcement officers.
a) Each death penalty jurisdiction should impose on its attorney general (or another central law enforcement officer) the duty of ensuring full compliance with the VCCR. This duty should include training law enforcement actors about consular rights and monitoring adherence to those rights. An independent authority, such as an inspector general, should report regularly about compliance to the jurisdiction’s chief executive or legislative body.

b) The U.S. should re-join the Optional Protocol to the VCCR and adopt implementing legislation to give domestic effect to the Optional Protocol.

c) Every death penalty jurisdiction should enact legislation rendering foreign nationals ineligible for the death penalty if they are not provided with their consular rights in a timely fashion under the VCCR.

Safeguarding Racial Fairness and Proportionality

Recommendation 34 - All jurisdictions that impose the death penalty should enact legislation to help ensure that racial discrimination plays no role in the capital punishment system. As a critical component of this program, each jurisdiction should adopt a framework for the rigorous collection of data on the operation of the capital punishment system and the role of race in it. A second component is to ensure racial and ethnic diversity among the decision-makers in death penalty cases, particularly defense lawyers, prosecutors, jurors and judges.

Executive Clemency

Recommendation 35 - The executive branch should:

a) Ensure that the clemency process is accessible to all death-sentenced prisoners for independent review of their claims,

b) Implement open and transparent clemency procedures that include, at a minimum, notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard for the offender and representatives of the state,

c) Adopt substantive standards against which clemency applications will be evaluated, and

d) Provide a written explanation of the clemency decision, including the factors that were considered important and relevant.
Execution Procedures

Recommendation 36 – Jurisdictions should rely on the most current scientific knowledge to develop protocols that minimize the risk of pain or suffering, which currently demands the adoption of a one-drug protocol.

Recommendation 37 - Jurisdictions should act with transparency in the development and administration of lethal injection protocol.

Recommendation 38 - Jurisdictions should use only drugs obtained in compliance with all laws and approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in humans and should take appropriate measures to ensure the quality of the drugs.

Recommendation 39 - Jurisdictions should ensure that qualified medical personnel are present at executions and responsible for all medically related elements of executions.
APPENDIX C

Information/ Demographics Form for Participants

Name ________________________________ Date ____________

Phone ___________________ E-mail Address ____________________________

Faith Affiliation / Denomination ______________________________________

Brentwood Baptist Church Member ( ) Yes ( ) No For how long? ______

Gender - ( ) Male ( ) Female Age - ( ) 18 – 29 ( ) 30 – 49 ( ) 50 - 65 ( ) 66+

Marital Status - ( ) Single ( ) Married ( ) Divorced ( ) Separated ( ) Widowed

Number of Children _____ Ethnicity _________________________________

Highest Educational Level ___________________________________________

Are you connected with a Ministry at Brentwood? ( ) Yes ( ) No

What Ministry are you most passionate about? __________________________

How many Worship Services do you attend per month at Brentwood (including both Sundays and Wednesdays)? ______

How many times per month do you attend Sunday School? ______

Has a family member or friend ever been sentenced to Death Row? ( ) Yes ( ) No
APPENDIX D

Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice

Intervention Overview

The Intervention is composed of two Sessions (I and II), consisting of four 90-minute segments, each Session made up of two 90-minute segments. The breakout follows.

Session I

Segment 1 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

- The viewing of an Amnesty International (AI) Video, Death Penalty Facts & Figures 2014, followed by discussion (Along with the presentation of other statistics related to the death penalty depicting current reality with considerations of pre-interview);

- Review of the outlined Laws in America (abolishing and reinstating the death penalty); Texas and US statistics on capital punishment after reinstatement;

- A brief overview from selected scenarios of death penalty cases.

- Perspectives on Capital Punishment from other institutions
  - Southern Baptist Convention 2000 Resolutions;
  - BGCT’s call for a moratorium and issues addressing this stance;

Segment 2 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

- Centering Moment; The Holy Spirit & Spiritual Guidance; Journaling;

- An overview and discussion of the biblical Old Testament implications of capital punishment.

- An Exercise and Theological Reflection; Discussion of “retribution,” “mercy and forgiveness”;
Session II

Segment 3 (90 minutes) – This part will consist of:

- Introduction of information regarding Exonerations of The Wrongly Convicted (even Posthumously) from Death Row;
- An overview of the biblical context of the New Testament application of the death penalty.
- Discussion of Advocacy Opportunities among Subjects

Segment 4 (90 minutes) Highlights on Studies addressing:

- Constitution Project findings and recommendations;
- Presentation of LDF video, *A Broken Promise in Texas: Race, the Death Penalty and the Duane Buck Case. (Discussion)*
- Presentations of effective ideas for Advocating for Justice in the CP Process; *Rethinking the Death Penalty in Texas* (Appendix L) included;

Advocacy Activities

Each participant will engage or strategize 1-2 advocacy opportunities by the post interview Session. The Participants may schedule one or two of the following activities (or an equivalent) that may include:

1) Standing in recognition of the sacredness of life (with a candle) during an execution in Huntsville (optional);

2) Preparing and sending of a letter to the Texas House of Representatives expressing support from the subject’s viewpoint concerning the administration of capital punishment;

3) Collecting signatures to be sent to the Governor of Texas in expression of the subject’s support, and/or to be appended to the Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty presented during the 84th Texas Legislature endorsed by more than 550 Texas Faith leaders;
4) Applying to serve on the local Grand Jury by completing, notarizing, and mailing a grand jury application to the Administrative Office of the District Courts;

5) Applying to Bridges of Life in-Prison Program founded by John Sage following the murder of his sister. The Program’s objective is to help offenders to seek God’s forgiveness and to forgive themselves. James Dickerson and Erica Sheppard, both 19 at the time, were convicted of capital murder for the death of Sage’s sister. Dickerson died in prison in the late 1990s. Sheppard is on death row in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Mountain View Unit in Gatesville, Texas. (See Appendix G for Houston Chronicle article by Flori Meeks.)

6) Communicating with the Christian Life Commission of Texas Baptists or the Ethics Religious Liberty Commission of SBC to obtain suggested ideas for acts of advocacy that might agree with the subject’s view or perspective.

Guided Journaling

Instructions for use during the Guided Journaling

Reflect and respond by journaling based on your strongest views:

**Entry 1** – Where do you see the greatest need for justice in the application of capital punishment?

**Entry 2** – Share scriptures (no more than 2) which have spoken to you this week and confirmed or provided resolve in some way with regard to justly applying capital punishment. Express how this may support or alter your view. (Note: Simply state your experience, even if no scriptures are involved.)

**Entry 3** – As you pray for resolution and seek God’s guidance, describe how the Holy Spirit is leading you to an action of advocacy that offers resolution or support for a capital punishment process reflecting justice.

Over the next week, begin to plan and identify detailed actions that will aid you in the exercise of your civic duty or in advocating for the just administration of capital punishment.
APPENDIX E

Facts about the Death Penalty

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976: 1,408

Race of Defendants Executed
- Hispanic: 8.1%
- Black: 34.7%
- White: 55.5%
- Other: 1.7%

Race of Victims in Death Penalty Cases
- Hispanic: 7%
- Black: 15%
- White: 76%
- Other: 2%

Over 75% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims generally are white.

DEATH PENALTY STATES (31)
- Alabama
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Florida
- Georgia
- Idaho
- Indiana
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- New Hampshire
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Virginia
- Washington
- Wyoming
- U.S. Gov't
- U.S. Military

NOMINAL PENALTY STATES (19)
- Alaska
- Connecticut
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Nebraska
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Dakota
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

District of Columbia
*Nationwide remains on death row.
RECENT STUDIES ON RACE

- Jurors in Washington state are three times more likely to recommend a death sentence for a black defendant than for a white defendant in a similar case. (Prof. K. Becket, Univ. of Washington, 2014).
- In Louisiana, the odds of a death sentence were 97% higher for those whose victim was white than for those whose victim was black. (Pierce & Radelet, Louisiana Law Review, 2011).
- A study in California found that those who killed whites where over 3 times more likely to be sentenced to death than those who killed blacks and over 4 times more likely than those who killed Latinos. (Pierce & Radelet, Santa Clara Law Review, 2005).
- 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 where white. (Prof. Jack Boger and Dr. Isaac Unah, University of North Carolina, 2001).
- In 96% of states where there have been reviews of race and the death penalty, there was a pattern of either race-of-victim or race-of-defendant discrimination, or both. (Prof. Baldus report to the ABA, 1998).

INNOCENCE

In 1973, over 140 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. (Staff Report, House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil & Constitutional Rights, 1993, with updates from DPIC).

DEATH ROW INMATES BY RACE

Race of Death Row Inmates and Death Row Inmates by State: January 1, 2015

- California: 743
- Florida: 403
- Texas: 276
- Alabama: 198
- Pennsylvania: 188
- N. Carolina: 158
- Ohio: 145
- Arizona: 124
- Georgia: 87
- Louisiana: 85
- Nevada: 77
- Tennessee: 73
- U.S. Gov’t: 62

TOTAL: 3,019
### Executions by State Since 1976

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<td>KY</td>
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<td>MT</td>
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<tr>
<td>US GOVT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Executions by Region

- **South**
  - 1145
- **Midwest**
  - 174
- **West**
  - 85
- **Northeast**
  - 637
- **TX & OK**
  - 637

*Federal executions are listed in the region in which the crime was committed.*

### Death Sentencing

The number of death sentences per year has dropped dramatically since 1999.

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<thead>
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<td>Sentences</td>
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<td>295</td>
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<td>118</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
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</table>


### Mental Disabilities

- **Intellectual Disabilities:** In 2002, the Supreme Court held in Atkins v. Virginia that it is unconstitutional to execute defendants with 'mental retardation.'
- **Mental Illness:** The American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the American Bar Association have endorsed resolutions calling for an exemption of the severely mentally ill.

### Deterrence

A report by the National Research Council, titled Deterrence and the Death Penalty, stated that studies claiming that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on murder rates are "fundamentally flawed" and should not be used when making policy decisions (2012).

- Consistent with previous years, the 2013 FBI Uniform Crime Report showed that the South had the highest murder rate. The South accounts for over 80% of executions. The Northeast, which has less than 1% of all executions, had lowest murder rate.
- According to a survey of the former and present presidents of the country's top academic criminological societies, 88% of these experts rejected the notion that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder. (Radelet & Lacocke, 2009)

### Executions since 1976 by Method Used

| Method          | States using lethal injection | States using other methods
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lethal Injection</td>
<td>34 states plus the US government use lethal injection as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states' death rows and their lethal injection protocols intact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrocution</td>
<td>158 states use electrocution as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states' death rows and their lethal injection protocols intact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Chamber</td>
<td>11 states use the gas chamber as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states' death rows and their lethal injection protocols intact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging</td>
<td>3 states use hanging as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states' death rows and their lethal injection protocols intact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firing Squad</td>
<td>3 states use firing squad as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states' death rows and their lethal injection protocols intact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Juveniles

- In 2005, the Supreme Court in Roper v. Simmons struck down the death penalty for juveniles. 22 defendants had been executed for crimes committed as juveniles since 1976.

### Women

- There were 57 women on death row as of Oct. 1, 2014. This constitutes less than 2% of the total death row population. (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Oct. 1, 2014). 15 women have been executed since 1976.
FINANCIAL FACTS ABOUT THE DEATH PENALTY

- Defense costs for death penalty trials in Kansas averaged about $400,000 per case, compared to $100,000 per case when the death penalty was not sought. (Kansas Judicial Council, 2014)
- A new study in California revealed that the cost of the death penalty in the state has been over $4 billion since 1978. Study considered pre-trial and trial costs, costs of automatic appeals and state habeas corpus petitions, costs of federal habeas corpus appeals, and costs of incarceration on death row. (Alarcon & Mitchell, 2011)
- In Maryland, an average death penalty case resulting in a death sentence costs approximately $3 million. The eventual costs to Maryland taxpayers for cases pursued 1978-1999 will be $186 million. Five executions have resulted. (Urban Institute, 2008)
- Enforcing the death penalty costs Florida $51 million a year above what it would cost to punish all first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole. Based on the 44 executions Florida had carried out since 1976, that amounts to a cost of $24 million for each execution. (Palm Beach Post, January 4, 2000)
- The most comprehensive study in the country found that the death penalty costs North Carolina $2.16 million per execution over the costs of sentencing murderers to life imprisonment. The majority of those costs occur at the trial level. (Duke University, May 1993)
- In Texas, a death penalty case costs an average of $2.3 million, about three times the cost of imprisoning someone in a single cell at the highest security level for 40 years. (Dallas Morning News, March 8, 1992)

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE DEATH PENALTY

Support for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

- A 2010 poll by Lake Research Partners found that a clear majority of voters (61%) would choose a punishment other than the death penalty for murder.

What Interferes with Effective Law Enforcement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Ranking Item as One of Top Two or Three</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of law enforcement resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/Alcohol abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems/child abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of programs for mentally ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective prosecution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient use of the death penalty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A 2009 poll commissioned by DPIC found police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among ways to reduce violent crime. The police chiefs also considered the death penalty the least efficient use of taxpayers’ money.

The Death Penalty Information Center has available more extensive reports on a variety of issues, including:

- "The Death Penalty in 2014: Year-End Report" (December 2014)
- "The 2% Death Penalty: How a Minority of Counties Produce Most Death Cases at Enormous Costs to All" (October 2013)
- "The Death Penalty in 2013: Year-End Report" (December 2013)
- "Struck By Lightning: The Continuing Arbitrariness of the Death Penalty 35 Years After Its Reinstatement in 1976" (June 2011)
- "Smart on Crime: Reconsidering the Death Penalty in a Time of Economic Crisis" (October 2009)
- "A Crisis of Confidence: Americans’ Doubts About the Death Penalty" (2007)
- "Blind Justice: Juries Deciding Life and Death with Only Half the Truth" (2005)
- "Innocence and the Crisis in the American Death Penalty" (2004)
- "Innocence and the Death Penalty: The Increasing Danger of Executing the Innocent" (1997)
APPENDIX F

Brentwood Baptist Church Profile

Brentwood Baptist Church is an African American congregation, founded as a predominantly Anglo Southern Baptist Church in 1965. Brentwood began as a Mission Church of Westbury Baptist Church, a predominantly Anglo Southern Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. As the Brentwood congregation grew, the Brentwood Church felt the pressure and presence of integration its community. By the mid 70’s, the congregation was almost entirely African American, due largely to Blacks moving into the neighborhood and Whites retreating at a rapid pace. The founding Pastor, Dr. Don Carroll remained at Brentwood as its hue changed, welcoming all who joined the Church. He eventually passed the leadership to an Interim Pastor of color. Although the membership was by that time almost completely African American, the Brentwood congregation continued to operate as a Southern Baptist Church, and to be aligned with the Union Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas. At the time this was a deviation from the norm.

There is however a subject where the voice of the Brentwood Baptist Church has been mute. Although since its inception in 1986, the Brentwood Criminal Justice Ministry has made great strides in jail and prison ministry, and in being agents of change. The Ministry’s passion has, however, not intentionally identified capital punishment as a problem to be addressed. The lives of inmates have been touched and even transformed through worship services and living skill classes that have been brought into prisons, jails, juvenile detention centers, and rehabilitation units. It has also sought to impact the re-entry process by providing mentors, resources, referrals for jobs and housing and counseling to
those coming back into the community. It has worked to place mentors with the children of the incarcerated (assisting the guardians of the children), and to send mentors into Elementary schools to interact with at risk students. The ministry has been instrumental in increasing awareness and education among the congregation. And yet education on capital punishment is lacking.

Amid all of this outreach and passion to effect change in the restorative justice arena, our church like so many other Christian congregations (Baptist in particular), have been silent on the issue of capital punishment. Brentwood as an African American Southern Baptist Church is available to embrace the opportunity to probe the congregation’s minds and hearts with regard to their position and perception of capital punishment, and to raise the level of awareness and understanding of the capital process in order to promote a civic responsiveness that might affect a behavioral action that will truly effect a change in the system.
APPENDIX G

Brentwood Demographics

Membership by Age & Gender

April 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<td>106</td>
<td>210</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>814</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>969</td>
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<td>36-45</td>
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<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>3,444</td>
<td>5,676</td>
</tr>
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</table>
John Sage understands the importance of forgiveness. After his younger sister, Marilyn Sage Meagher, was slain in 1993, Sage spent years in a very dark place. "I was a prisoner of my own rage and grief," said Sage, 64, who grew up in the River Oaks area and attended St. Thomas High School. It was only after he was ready to forgive his sister's attackers that he was able to heal.

Now the Uptown-area resident's focus is on helping others with that journey, both the victims of violent crimes and criminal offenders who are in prison. His nonprofit ministry, Bridges to Life, brings crime victims into prisons to work with offenders in a class setting. The goal is to reduce prison recidivism rates, reduce the number of crime victims and enhance public safety. And throughout the program's lessons, assignments and discussions is a message of love and forgiveness found through God.

Sage, who was born in Houston, grew up in the River Oaks area and attended St. Thomas High School. He earned his bachelor's degree and master's degree in business administration from Louisiana State University, where he was an all-American tackle,
and then returned to Houston to launch a real estate business with his father. Living near family was a priority. "We have a very close family, very big and very close," said Sage, the fourth of eight siblings. It was Meagher, 19 months younger, with whom he spent most of his years as a boy and young man. They went to the same elementary school and college, and she attended St. Agnes High School, St. Thomas' sister school. They shared common friends and interests, and were there for each other, Sage said. He remembers when his sister encouraged him to date two gorgeous girls she knew, a blonde and a brunette. He dated the blonde about six times, he recalls, and he's still with the brunette - his wife Frances Sage - more than 40 years later. "So, she even picked out my wife for me," John Sage said. The siblings remained close during their adult years. The last time Sage saw Meagher, he was feeling a bit down. She, as usual, reached out to him with love. "The last thing she said to me was, 'Johnny, you're the greatest.' Looking back, that was a gift."

**The unthinkable**

Marilyn was 43 when she was stabbed and clubbed to death in her apartment on June 30, 1993. James Dickerson and Erica Sheppard, both 19 at the time, were convicted of capital murder for the crime. They admitted they killed her for her car. Dickerson died in prison in the late 1990s. Sheppard is on death row in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Mountain View Unit in Gatesville, Texas. For Sage, coming to grips with his sister's violent death was a struggle. "I couldn't sleep. I lost 25 pounds in 60 days. It hit me real hard. It took me several years to get back to 100 percent functioning," he said. "Looking back, it was a spiritual journey for me that was good, but I didn't want to get there that way." After extensive soul searching, reading, writing and prayer, Sage knew he was ready for a change. He decided his choices were to forgive or to exist in a state of bitterness. He chose to forgive.

**Seeds of hope**

In January 1998 Sage heard about the Sycamore Tree Project, an evangelistic ministry that brings together victims of violence and imprisoned offenders. Sage got involved as a volunteer supporting a 12-week course in Texas. "I watched men change," he recalled. "I
saw it in the way they talked, their body language, their eyes." Not only was he impressed with the impact on offenders, Sage saw the program's potential to heal victims and their loved ones. The more they got to know offenders, the easier it became for them to forgive. "They started to see them as people, not animals." When Sage experienced Sycamore Tree, it was limited to one prison. He started to envision his own program that could be brought to four or five prisons, then more. After a summer of thought and prayer, he launched *Bridges to Life*.

*A new journey*

Sage wrote a curriculum for his new ministry and set it on its path. "In ministry, some people till, some plant seeds, some harvest them. I think we're rock-breakers before the soil is ever tilled." *Bridges to Life* asks participating offenders to address personal responsibility, he said. It encourages them to accept God's forgiveness and to forgive themselves for their crimes. Then, Sage said, they're ready for life-changing spiritual decisions.

In addition to helping offenders and victims experience healing, the program can improve the atmosphere within prisons as offenders change their outlook and behavior, Sage said. And the program makes communities safer, he said, because offenders are less likely to commit crimes when they are released. The program Sage launched in 1998 now operates in prisons throughout Texas, in 10 other states and in Australia, South Africa and Mexico. The ministry has more than 900 volunteers. More than 20,000 prisoners have participated in the *Bridges to Life* course, and about 15,000 have graduated. Sage plans to serve 2,700 to 2,800 prisoners this year. He also has released the program's current book and curriculum in Spanish.

From the beginning, Sage has shown tremendous devotion to this ministry, longtime friend and program volunteer Bob Christy said. "It's his life. He does have a personal life, a family, but he's 110 percent devoted to Bridges to Life," Christy said. "It was a calling I suppose. "He would tell you, he didn't do it all by himself. It required volunteers, financial supporters. But he clearly was the driving and motivating force." Sage's passion
for the ministry is extremely evident, said Mike Lojo, a friend of Sage's since 1961. "He's relentless, but also with a steady keel," the Sugar Land resident said. "John's just as he was when I met him as a freshman in high school, steady as he could be."

Seeing *Bridges to Life's* growth, and its impact on lives, has been a moving experience, Sage said. "It's gratifying and humbling to know you started on a wing and a prayer," he said. "That kind of growth, no one can do that without God's grace and help." *Bridges to Life* always needs additional volunteer support.

For more information, visit http://www.bridgestolife.org/; Flori Meeks is a freelance writer and may be reached at flori@swbell.net.
WHEREAS, The Bible teaches that every human life has sacred value (Genesis 1:27) and forbids the taking of innocent human life (Exodus 20:13); and

WHEREAS, God has vested in the civil magistrate the responsibility of protecting the innocent and punishing the guilty (Romans 13:1–3); and

WHEREAS, We recognize that fallen human nature has made impossible a perfect judicial system; and

WHEREAS, God authorized capital punishment for murder after the Noahic Flood, validating its legitimacy in human society (Genesis 9:6); and

WHEREAS, God forbids personal revenge (Romans 12:19) and has established capital punishment as a just and appropriate means by which the civil magistrate may punish those guilty of capital crimes (Romans 13:4); and

WHEREAS, God requires proof of guilt before any punishment is administered (Deuteronomy 19:15–19); and

WHEREAS, God's instructions require a civil magistrate to judge all people equally under the law, regardless of class or status (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17); and

WHEREAS, All people, including those guilty of capital crimes, are created in the image of God and should be treated with dignity (Genesis 1:27).

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 13–14, 2000, support the fair and equitable use of capital punishment by civil magistrates as a legitimate form of punishment for those guilty of murder or treasonous acts that result in death; and
Be it further RESOLVED, That we urge that capital punishment be administered only when the pursuit of truth and justice result in clear and overwhelming evidence of guilt; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That because of our deep reverence for human life, our profound respect for the rights of individuals, and our respect for the law, we call for vigilance, justice, and equity in the criminal justice system; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we urge that capital punishment be applied as justly and as fairly as possible without undue delay, without reference to the race, class, or status of the guilty; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we call on civil magistrates to use humane means in administering capital punishment; and

Be it finally RESOLVED, That we commit ourselves to love, to pray for, and to minister the gospel to victims and perpetrators of crimes, realizing that only in Christ is there forgiveness of sin, reconciliation, emotional and spiritual healing, and the gift of eternal life.

Orlando, Florida
APPENDIX J

Consent Form

Capital Punishment and Justice: Christians and Advocacy

You are invited to be a participant in a research study on Capital Punishment and Justice that will provide insight into outcomes of advocacy.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report the researcher might publish, she will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records, along with video and voice recordings, will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Contact and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is: Reverend Carolyn Clay Pickens. If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact her at cpickens@brentwoodbaptist.org.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:____________________________________ Date: __________________

Printed Name: ______________________________________
January 25, 2016

Institution Review Board
David W. Schlueter, Ph.D.

Attention: Dr. Schlueter,

This letter of support is being sent to confirm that the Joe Samuel Ratliff Lifelong Learning Center, on the Brentwood Baptist Church campus will be used as a site for the Research Project of Carolyn Clay Pickens, a Truett Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry candidate during the month of February 2016. If you should need further assistance, please contact Pastor’s executive assistant, LaPorsche Morrison at 713-852-1412, or her email: lmorrison@brentwoodbaptist.org.

As Pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church, I provide this signed consent form to the Institution Review Board.

Signature of Person giving Consent  

Date

Sincerely,

Dr. Joe Samuel Ratliff, Pastor
Brentwood Baptist Church
jratliff@brentwoodbaptist.org
APPENDIX L
Texas Baptists on Capital Punishment

Figure L.01

Rethinking the Death Penalty in Texas: Finding Solutions
KATHRYN M. KASE • TEXAS DEFENDER SERVICE

Figure L.02

Texas Executions
1995 to date

Source: Texas Defender Service
New Death Sentences in Texas
1999 to date

Death-Sentencing Rate in Texas Courts
2006 to date

Figure L.03

Figure L.04

Source: Texas Defender Service Capital Trial Project
The Death Penalty Causes the Innocent to be Convicted

The prosecutor coerced witnesses to say Anthony Graves had committed the arson-related murders and overlooked the burns on the informant who first accused Graves. Jurors did not credit his alibi.

After his white coworkers voiced suspicion of him, Clarence Brandley was accused of capital murder – even though he passed several polygraphs and his blood type didn’t match the blood found on the victim’s blouse. An all-white jury convicted him and he spent 9 years on death row.

The Death Penalty Causes the Innocent to be Convicted

- 13 men released from Texas death row determined to be innocent

- Innocent but executed?
  - Cameron Todd Willingham
  - Johnny Garrett
  - Carlos DeLuna
  - David Spence
  - Claude Jones
  - Ruben Cantu
Jurors and Experts are Lousy at Predicting Future Dangerousness

- Juror predictions of future violence are “no better than random guesses.”
  (Cunningham, et al., Capital jury decision-making: The limitations of predictions of future violence, 15 PSYCH, PUB POL, & LAW 223 (Nov 2009))

- The experts are wrong 95 percent of the time.
  (DEADLY SPECULATION (Texas Defender Service 2004))

The Death Penalty is Disproportionate on a Case-by-Case Basis

Multiple Murder: Sentenced to Life Without Parole

Murdered One Person: Sentenced to Death
The Death Penalty does not protect the Mentally Ill from Themselves

Despite a history of paranoid schizophrenia and multiple hospitalizations, Scott Panetti was allowed to represent himself at his death penalty trial while wearing a cowboy outfit and after subpoenaing Jesus Christ and John F. Kennedy as witnesses.

After years of hallucinations and hearing voices and five days after his arrest for Capital Murder, Andre Thomas read Matthew 5:29 and removed his right eye. While on death row and in a psychotic state, he removed his left eye.

Representation Varies by County

• None of the top 4 counties are staffed by the Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases

• “Outcomes are notably better for capital defendants represented by RPDO attorneys than for those with private assigned counsel by at least three metrics.”
  
  — RPDO clients get a fully staffed core defense team sooner
  — RPDO cases more likely to end in plea
  — RPDO gets better deals for their clients than private counsel
**Prosecutorial Misconduct Infects the Death Penalty System**

- The prosecutor coerced witnesses to say **Anthony Graves** had committed the arson-related murders and overlooked the burns on the informant who first accused Graves.

- The trial judge and the DA prosecuting **Charles Dean Hood** had a secret sexual affair. They hid news of the affair for 18 years, admitting to it only days before Hood’s second execution date.

---

**The Death Penalty is Disproportionate Racially**

**Texas Death Row Inmates by Race and Ethnicity (percentage)**

- Hispanic: 27.8%
- Black: 42.9%
- White: 27.8%
- Other: 1.6%

**Texas Population by Race and Ethnicity (percentage)**

- Hispanic: 37.6%
- Black: 11.5%
- Asian: 3.8%
- Mix: 1.8%
- White: 45.3%

*Source: TDCJ*

*Source: 2010 U.S. Census*
Since December 2004, all new death sentences in Harris County have been handed down against men of color.

Figure L.13

Whether a Defendant is sentenced to Texas Death Row depends on Race... of the Victim

Figure L.14

Source: NAACP LDF (Jan 1, 2015)
Kathryn M. Kase serves as the Executive Director of Public Policy for the Christian Life Commission of Texas Baptists. Ms. Kase shared this power point that has been used in a previous presentation with the Subjects of this Intervention, Capital Punishment: Christians Advocating for Justice.


National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons Legal Defense Fund. *Death Row USA* (Fall 2012).


**Electronic Sources**


