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Death Penalty Commission

Date of Testimony:
September 22, 2008

Person Offering
Testimony:

Rev. Dr. Peter K. Nord
Executive Presbyter

Points of Discussion

- Rev. Dr. Peter Nord has significant experience.
- Opposition includes Maryland Presbyterians Presbyterians nationally Most faith leaders

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Testimony from the Presbytery of Baltimore

Presenter

The Rev. Dr. Peter Nord is the spiritual leader of the Presbytery of Baltimore. There are 18,000 Presbyterians within this judicatory and a total of 30,000 Presbyterians throughout the state. He has been the Executive Presbyter since September of 2003.

The Rev. Dr. Nord throughout his career has had an interest in the criminal justice system. He worked for three years on the streets of Kearny, NJ with drug users and gang members. He created the Harrison County (NJ) Volunteers in Probation Program. He has sponsored a regional meeting (in Minnesota) on community corrections. He served on the Board of Social Concerns for the Minnesota Annual United Methodist Conference. And he has testified before the General Assembly of Maryland regarding legislation on the death penalty.

Position of the Presbytery of Baltimore

On February 19, 1963 the Presbytery joined with the General Assembly of the national Presbyterian Church and declared its “opposition to capital punishment” and call upon “churches to work for the abolition of the death penalty . . . while at the same time working for the improvement of penal practices especially with relation to reform and rehabilitation.”

On September 23, 1999 the Presbytery affirmed “its opposition to all forms of capital punishment, on both humanitarian grounds and in accord with our understandings of the demands of our Christian faith.” [See attached for complete text]

On March 22, 2001 the Presbytery join in a Baltimore *Sun* ad in support of a death penalty moratorium.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) has often spoken out in opposition to the death penalty with statements voted upon by our national body in 1959, 1985, 2001, and 2002. [A statement from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is attached.]

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has joined with most other religious bodies in deploring the use of capital punishment. [A statement by the leaders of more than 28 Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups is attached.]

While the positions taken by the Presbytery and the national church are not held by all Presbyterians, the Presbytery and its governing body supports this with greater unanimity than almost any other position it has taken.