

May 4, 2007

Dear [New Jersey legislator]:

On behalf of Friends in New Jersey, the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) urge you to **support the pending legislation, S171/A795, to abolish the death penalty** in New Jersey. New York Yearly Meeting is composed of meetings (churches) and worship groups (including 9 prison worship groups) throughout northern and central New Jersey, as well as New York State and eastern Connecticut. In New Jersey, these meetings are Dover-Randolph Monthly Meeting, Montclair Monthly Meeting, Ridgewood Monthly Meeting, Chatham-Summit Monthly Meeting, Manasquan Monthly Meeting, New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, Rahway & Plainfield Monthly Meeting, Shrewsbury Monthly Meeting, and Somerset Hills Monthly Meeting.

Friends have advocated humane treatment of those held in prison for over three hundred and fifty years. Our Book of Discipline (called *Faith and Practice*) notes that "We have consistently opposed capital punishment. Each person is uniquely valuable and divine, and no one is totally beyond redemption. Capital punishment rejects the message of forgiveness. In some cases, it legally destroys innocent persons, and in all cases it degrades the humanity of the executioners and of the society that endorses the act."

We recognize that it may be necessary to restrain those whose dangerous behavior poses a threat to the security of others (and themselves). We also believe that such restraint must be effectuated, in ways that reflect the presence of God in everyone. Racism and prejudice frequently lead to unfair and unjust sentences and to brutality in the handling of prisoners. No sentence can be more dismissive of God's presence, nor more unfair, unjust, and brutal, than the execution of a human being.

Friends Meetings in New Jersey have approved a minute, which was endorsed by New York Yearly Meeting on April 14. The minute is enclosed.

New York Yearly Meeting asks and prays that New Jersey enacts legislation ending the death penalty permanently.

In Faith,

Ernestine Buscemi
Clerk, New York Yearly Meeting