



DIOCESE of ATLANTA

The Episcopal Church in Middle and North Georgia

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January 23, 2015

The Hon. Terry E. Barnard, Chair
The State Board of Pardons and Paroles
Floyd Veterans Memorial Building
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S.E.
Atlanta, GA 30334-4909

Dear Chairman Barnard and members of the Board,

I am Robert Wright, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, and I serve 110 worshipping communities in Middle and North Georgia. Above all, I strive to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

I write to urge you to spare the life of death row inmate Warren Lee Hill.

While many people support capital punishment, Holy Scripture clearly shows Jesus never taught that we should murder a human being, no matter how heinous their crime.

Christians who tell you differently have made Jesus in their image and put their own words in His mouth. Maybe, most tragically, they have forgotten that Jesus himself was put to death by the State, in cooperation with fearful, religious people at the hand of indifferent State officials.

The Episcopal Church has been on record as opposing the practice of state-sponsored executions since 1954, and I was greatly encouraged in July 2014 when this board made the decision to commute the death sentence of Tommy Lee Waldrip to life without parole.

Your decision was a victory for morality and human dignity and I praise you for your action. Today I urge you to again take the courageous path and spare the life of Mr. Hill.

Each time a person is put to death by the State of Georgia it requires the strapping of that person to a table, while chemicals are injected into their body until they are poisoned to death.

The truth is that capital punishment is simply state-sanctioned mob violence and naked bloodlust. It is lynching, political expediency and tough-on-crime posturing. Capital punishment does not deter crime. And, does not soothe grief-stricken hearts. Capital punishment does not restore the scales of justice to balance. Vengeance does not bring justice or balance, peace or comfort.

Most importantly, you know it is not the will of God as revealed to us in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

In all humility, I beg you to find the courage to avoid further killing by the State of Georgia.

This I ask in the name of Jesus – who represents the love of God uniquely among us – and I pray that His teaching may guide you as representatives of the State of Georgia.

Respectfully,

The Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright

