MIDLOTHIAN FRIENDS MEETING

CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

As Quakers, we are called to answer "that of God in everyone." We believe an Inner Light abides in each of us; that we are equal and interconnected. The Light lends us dignity and can lead us to grow and change. We rely on Quaker Testimonies to guide us and give public witness to our inner faith.

The Quaker Peace Testimony urges us to oppose violence in all forms. We are called to transform institutions of society into instruments of peace. We seek to reconcile enemies and serve the needs of all sides torn by violence.

The Testimony of Community calls us to recognize and nourish the spiritual worth of all people, particularly those who have been devalued or excluded. Along with Simone de Beauvoir we can say "One's life has value as long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation, and compassion."

Finally, the Testimony of Integrity calls us to authenticity and consistency between our values and actions, to live according to the deepest truth we know.

We call for abolition of the death penalty – by execution or lifetime incarceration without hope for parole – in Virginia and federal courts.

State-sanctioned killing denies the sacredness of human life and the human capacity for change. Executing criminals does not address the roots of violence in our society. It has not been shown to deter crime. It is rife with racial and class discrimination. Since the 1970s, at least 160 persons who were initially sentenced to death were found to be innocent and released. Others have been executed despite compelling evidence that they may have been wrongfully convicted.

Execution cannot restore lives destroyed by violence. We empathize with the agony of victims and their families, but we believe that executing people, even those whose guilt is beyond a shadow of doubt, is wrong. Rather than answering violence with violence, we urge a restorative justice that emphasizes reconciliation and focuses on the victims of violence as they rebuild their lives.