March 28th, 2008

California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice
900 Lafayette Street, Suite 608
Santa Clara, California 95050

Dear Commissioners,

As people of faith, we reject the state sanctioned killing of another human being as a response to murder. Together we are united in our conviction that the death penalty is not serving our communities or the victims of crime.

Some people claim that victim families need the death penalty “to help bring them closure.” As clergy we are often the first responders to personal tragedies. Many community members will come to us for emotional and spiritual support in times of crisis. Many of us walk with grieving mothers who have seen their child’s future stolen from them by murder. We know much about coping with mourners’ grief, and we know that simple formulas for closure are an illusion.

In our pastoral counseling experiences with grieving mothers, vengeance is not the primary concern expressed by them. Victim family members look for consolation, and they do not find comfort in the prospect of eventually bringing grief to one more mother in the San Quentin viewing room. They want to see society’s resources invested in their local communities so other at risk youth can pursue positive paths. Out of their tragedy, these grieving mothers seek meaning and hope. They do not want more violence and despair for another family.

As faith community leaders, we urge you to cease spending precious public safety and community resources on the death penalty. We need to focus our resources and efforts on preventing crimes, serving victims, and solving crimes. In Los Angeles County, fifty percent of our African American and Latino youth will not graduate from high school. We have ninety thousand youth (16-25) who are not in school or gainfully employed. Many other California counties face similar challenges. Instead of diverting precious community resources into cost-prohibitive death penalty litigations, let us invest our resources in our children’s education, recreation and vocational programs.

The undersigned clergy urge that the Commission recommend to the Legislature a focus on realistic justice that will help prevent more mothers from having to bear the tragedy and grief of burying their own children.

―The movement to abolish the death penalty needs the religious community because the heart of religion is about compassion, human rights, and the inherent dignity of each human person made in the image of God.‖
  - Sister Helen Prejean, author, Dead Man Walking
List of Signatures for Statement to California Commission for the Fair Administration of Justice

Rev. Arturo Aguilar SSC
Superior of the Columban Fathers
St. Columbus, NE (National)

Rev. Dr. Frank Alton
Immanuel Presbyterian Church
Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel
Congregation Sha’ar Zahav (Reform Jewish)
San Francisco, CA

Rabbi Melanie Aron
Congregation Shir Hadash
Los Gatos, CA

The Rev. Ed Bacon, Rector
All Saints Church (Christian/Episcopalian)
Pasadena, CA

Most Rev. Gerald R. Barnes
Bishop of San Bernardino
San Bernardino, CA

Rabbi Leonard I. Beerman
Founding Rabbi of Leo Baeck Temple
Los Angeles, CA

Board of Directors
Council of Churches, Santa Clara County

Ven. J.M. Dharmakara Boda
Mahabodhi Maitri Mandala in America
Occidental Regent of the Chan Ssu Lun (Shan-tao Shi-Ixong)
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Gregory R. Bonfiglio, S.J.
President, Jesuit High School
Sacramento, CA

Msgr. Eugene Boyle
Diocese of San Jose

Fr. Gregory J. Boyle, S.J.
Executive Director, Homeboy Industries
Los Angeles, CA
Most Reverend Tod D. Brown
Bishop of the Diocese of Orange (Roman Catholic)
Holy Family Cathedral
Orange, California

Matthew Carnes, S.J.
Jesuit Community, Santa Clara University

Fr. Mike Carson
Pastor, Queen of Apostles Parish
San Jose, CA

Rabbi Kenneth Chasen
Senior Rabbi, Leo Baeck Temple
Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi Hillel Cohn
Rabbi Emeritus, Congregation Emanu El
San Bernardino, CA

Rabbi David J. Cooper
Kehilla Community Synagogue
Piedmont, CA

Most Rev. Salvatore Cordileone
Auxiliary Bishop, Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego
San Diego, CA

Rabbi William Cutter, PhD
Professor of Hebrew Literature and Jewish Education
Director, Kalsman Institute on Judaism and Health
Paul and Trudy Steinberg Professor, Human Relations
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles, CA

Most Rev. Rutilio del Riego
Auxiliary Bishop of San Bernardino
San Bernardino, CA

Ned Dolejsi (non-clergy)
Executive Director, California Catholic Conference
Statewide

Sr. Georganne M. Donovan
Chancellor of the Diocese of San Bernardino
San Bernardino, CA

Rev. Howard Dotson
Minister of the Presbyterian Church USA
Los Angeles, CA
Fr. Jerry Drino
Episcopal Diocese of El Camino
Northern California

Rev. Michael Ellard
Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church
San Jose

The Rev. H. Alix Evans, Esq.
St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Rector
Chair, Task Force Against Capital Punishment, of the Commission on Peace and Justice
The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. David Farley
Echo Park United Methodist Church
Echo Park, CA

Reverend James W. Felt, S.J.
Professor Emeritus, Jesuit Community
Santa Clara University, CA 95053

Very Rev. Msgr. Anthony Ferrero J. C. L.
Canonical Services, Diocese of San Bernardino
San Bernardino, CA

Rabbi Richard A. Flom
Burbank Temple Emanu El
President of the Rabbinical Assembly organization of Conservative Rabbis in the Pacific
Southwest Region
Burbank, CA

Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey (non-clergy)
St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church
Peace and Justice Chair, Vestry
Studio City, CA

Rev. Dr. Marsha Fowler
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rev. Jerry Fox
Pastor, St. Paul's Methodist Church
San Jose

Rev. James Friedrich
Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Saratoga, CA 95070

Rev. Diana Gibson
Co-Executive Director, Council of Churches
Santa Clara County, CA
Rev. Paul J. Goda, S.J.
School of Law
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053-0421

Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein
Associate Director, retired
Union for Reform Judaism, Pacific Southwest Region
Los Angeles, CA

Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia
Bishop of Monterey
Monterey, CA

The Right Reverend Mary Gray-Reeves. Bishop,
Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real.

Rev. Kamal Hassan
Candidate for Ministry
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rabbi Alan Henkin
Regional Director, Union for Reform Judaism
Encino, CA

Rev. Paul Hertig
Presbyterian Minister, Presbyterian Church (USA)
South Pasadena, CA

Fr. George Horan
Co-Director, Office of Restorative Justice
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Human Concerns Commission of the Diocese of San Jose
Rev. Monsignor Eugene Boyle
Rev. Jon Pedigo
Rev. Bill Leininger
Rev. Robert Brocato
Terrie Iacino, Diocese of San Jose (non-clergy)
Linda Batton, Diocese of San Jose (non-clergy)
Elizabeth Lilly, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County (non-clergy)
San Jose, CA

Rev. Travis Hyatt
Emeritus Pastor
Presbyterian Church
San Jose
Rev. J.F. Izzo, S.J., Chaplain
Newman Catholic Community Center
Davis, CA

John Deron Johnson, Pastor
Phillips Temple CME Church
Los Angeles, CA

Gloria Marie Jones, OP for the Dominican Sisters
Congregational Prioress, Catholic Faith Community
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose
Fremont, California

Dean Kertesz, Student Rabbi
Temple Beth Hillel,
Richmond, CA

Rev. Dr. Harold Kidd
Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Inglewood
Inglewood, CA

Rev. Kevin Leidich, S.J.
Superior, Jesuit Community
Jesuit High School
Sacramento, CA

Rabbi Michael J. Lezak
Congregation Rodef Sholom
San Rafael, CA

Rabbi Jane Litman
Rabbi Educator, Temple, Beth El
Berkeley, CA

Rabbi Dana L. Magat,
Reform Synagogue Temple Emanu El
San Jose, CA

Gerdenio Manuel, S.J.
Rector, Jesuit Community
Santa Clara University

Rev. Dr. Charles Markis
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rev. Frank Marshal
Presbyterian Minister, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Redondo Beach, CA
Pastor Anthony McFarland  
Abundant Harvest Ministries  
Pasadena, CA

Rev. Brendan McGuire  
Vicar General Diocese of San Jose  
Pastor Holy Spirit Parish, San Jose

Bishop Patrick McGrath  
Diocese of San Jose

Rev. Donna Lee Merz  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Peter Pabst, SJ President  
Nativity Schools of San Jose:

Rev. Dennis R. Parnell, S.J.  
Treasurer, California Province of the Society of Jesus  
Los Gatos, CA

Rabbi Alexis Pearce Jewish  
Congregation Dor Hadash (Reconstructionist)  
San Diego, CA

Rev. Giovanna Piazza  
Sophia Spirit Ecumenical Catholic Faith Community  
Orange, CA

Fr. Chris Ponnet,  
Pastor, St. Camillus / Coordinartor, Pax Christi Southern California / Death Penalty Focus Board  
Los Angeles, CA

Stephen A. Privett, SJ  
President  
University of San Francisco

Most Rev. John B. Reid, Ph.D.  
Bishop, Orthodox Catholic Diocese of Los Angeles-Orange-San Bernardino  
Western Rite Southern California

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, Ph.D.  
Kehillat Israel Reconstructionist Congregation  
Pacific Palisades, CA

The Very Reverend Scott E. Richardson  
Dean, Saint Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral  
San Diego, CA

Rabbi Ted Riter  
Senior Rabbi, Temple Adat Elohim  
Thousand Oaks, CA
Rev. Lawrence A. Robles,
Executive Director
Santa Maria Urban Ministry of San Jose
Episcopal Church in the Diocese of El Camino Real.
San Jose CA 95110

Rabbi John L. Rosove
Senior Rabbi, Temple Israel of Hollywood
Los Angeles, CA

Fr. Scott Santarosa, S.J.
Pastor, Dolores Mission Church
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Paul Sawyer
Minister Emeritus, Throop Memorial Church
Pasadena, CA

Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director of the California Council of Churches
Statewide

Rabbi Judith Seid
Tri-Valley Cultural Jews
Pleasanton, CA

Rabbi Judy Shanks
Temple Isaiah
Lafayette, CA

Sisters of Mercy
U.S. Province

Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
Orange, CA

Rev. Hozan Alan Senuke
Berkeley Zen Center

Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith
Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Paul A. Soukup, S.J.
Communication Department
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053
The Rt. Rev. Chester L. Talton (Statement presenter)
Bishop Suffragan
The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Margo Tenold
Co-Executive Director
Council of Churches, Santa Clara County

Rev. John R. Treacy SJ
Director of Campus Ministry
Santa Clara University

The Very Rev. Will Wauters
The Church Of the Epiphany
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Kenneth M. Weare, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor of Social Ethics, University of San Francisco
Pastor, St. Rita Catholic Church
San Francisco, CA

Rabbi Martin S. Weiner
Congregation Sherith Israel
San Francisco, CA

George Wesolek (non-clergy)
Director, Office of Public Policy and Social Concerns
Archdiocese of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA

The Rev. Connie White, (Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real)
Director, Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, Monterey County
Salinas, CA 93906

Tennant Wright, S.J.
Religious Studies Department
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, Ca 95053

Rev. Michael A. Zampelli, SJ
Associate Professor of Theatre, Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California 95053

Most Reverend Gabino Zavala, D.D., J.C.L.
Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA