Dear [name]:

The events of this past week in Tennessee surrounding the attempt of that state to execute Christa Pike bring dramatically and horrifically to our attention everything that is wrong about capital punishment around the world and especially in the United States of America. This cannot be seen as something that is solely a problem for the people of Tennessee. It affects all of us, and we must deal with it on a federal level.

In its statement of Social Principles, The United Methodist Church, of which I am a member, says the following:

> Our commitment to the inherent dignity and worth of every person and our historic stance as United Methodists compels us to oppose capital punishment and the imposition of the death penalty….
>
> We, therefore, call for the abolition of the death penalty and urge individuals and congregations to educate themselves about the historical stance of The United Methodist Church and its predecessors, especially The Evangelical United Brethren Church. Further, we ask pastors and congregations to commit themselves to minister to those who have lost loved ones to violent crimes and to support families without judgment as they navigate the competing demands of justice, compassion, and healing.

The death penalty is always retributive and never rehabilitative by its very nature, and it has repeatedly been shown to be of no effect as a deterrent, beginning with the landmark study done by Arthur Koestler in his monumental work, *Reflections on Hanging*, pp 48-61.

I urge you to initiate or support an effort in the Congress of the United States to bring an end to the use of the death penalty in the United States at both the federal and state levels. Amendment VIII of our Constitution seems to provide an opening for Congress to expand the definition of "cruel and unusual punishments" to include all forms of the application of the death penalty, abolishing it forever in all land under the jurisdiction of the United States Government.

Torture, which is always cruel and unusual, is what was meted out to Christa Pike. And torture is never a path to justice.

Regards,

Lonnie