**Capital Punishment – PCUSA statement**

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Presbyterian General Assemblies have been concerned not only for the issue of capital punishment, but also for those imprisoned. The major policy statements of the past 40 years have come in 1959, 1977 and 1978.

In 1959 the 171st General Assembly, “believing that capital punishment cannot be condoned by an interpretation of the Bible based upon the revelation of God’s love in Jesus Christ,” called on Christians to “seek the redemption of evil doers and not their death” and noted that “the use of the death penalty tends to brutalize the society that condones it.”[(1)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#1)

In 1977 the 189th General Assembly called upon its members to:

* a. Work to prevent the execution of persons now under sentence of death and further use of the death penalty;
* b. Work against attempts to reinstate the death penalty in state and federal law, and where such laws exist, to work for their repeal;
* c. Work for the improvement of the justice system to make less radical means available for dealing with persons who are a serious threat to themselves and to the safety and welfare of society.[(2)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#2)

The next year, 1978, the General Assembly went on record as saying, “Capital punishment is an expression of vengeance which contradicts the justice of God on the cross.”[(3)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#3)

In 1985, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), reaffirmed these positions and declared “its continuing opposition to capital punishment.”[(4)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#4)

In 2000, and a decade later in 2010, the General Assembly reaffirmed its stance against capital punishment, and called for “an immediate moratorium on all executions in all jurisdictions that impose capital punishment,” authorizing direct advocacy by the Stated Clerk with the President of the United States, Congressional representatives, and governors and state legislators in states where persons are incarcerated while awaiting execution. [(5)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#5)

In 2008, the General Assembly approved “A Social Creed for the 21st Century” which includes the call for Christians to work for: “A system of criminal rehabilitation, based on restorative justice and an end to the death penalty.”[(6)](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/capital-punishment/#6)

(1) Minutes of the 171st General Assembly (1959), United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., p. 384
(2) Minutes of the 189th General Assembly (1977), United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., p. 485
(3) Minutes of the 190th General Assembly (1978), Presbyterian Church in the United States, pp. 200-202
(4) Minutes of the 197th General Assembly (1985), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), p. 84
(5) Minutes of the 212th General Assembly (2000), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), p. 476; and Minutes of the 219th General Assembly (2010), Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), action 11-08.
(6) Minutes of the 218th General Assembly (2008) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  pp. 54-57

— Adapted from the Compilation of PC(USA) Social Witness Policies.