

# United Church Opposes Capital Punishment

"Murder is an offence against God", and lending the sanction of the state to it still doesn't make it right.

Working from this fundamental position, the Executive of The United Church of Canada's General Council voted Wednesday to continue its opposition to capital punishment.

Members of the Executive, representing the church's constituency across the nation, also shared in the sense of national anger over the recent rash of killing of police officers. The church resolution expresses sympathy for the deep sense of hurt experienced by the families and colleagues of the victims of such crimes. It goes on to call for measures such as tighter gun control legislation to better protect the lives of police.

The resolution warns,

however, that to give in to "an eye for an eye" mentality will serve simply to further brutalize Canadian society. Such a mentality, says the Church, will escalate, not de-escalate, the level of violence. The church action maintains further that there is no evidence that the death penalty has ever been an effective deterrent to murder.

### Resolution of the Executive of the General Council — The United Church of Canada

Passed unanimously on November 21, 1984.

Criminal violence represents an ugly pollution of the Garden of Creation. Persons of faith are called to care for that Garden, and we condemn murder as fundamentally an offence against God.

Whereas the recent rash of killings of police officers

has resulted in renewed calls for the return of Capital Punishment in Canada.

Whereas we sympathize deeply with the hurt of families and colleagues of the victims of such crime, and

Whereas we believe that such taking of human life by the state as punishment has a brutalizing effect on society, and

Whereas there is no evidence that the threat of Capital Punishment would have prevented these killings or deter murder generally, and

Whereas The United Church of Canada has long opposed the use of Capital Punishment in Canada and supported its abolition because it is "contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ" (General Council Statements in 1956, 1960, 1966 and 1972), and

Whereas we also recognize that our responsibility to preserve and protect the lives of those who work as police officers in the protection of society

Therefore Be It Resolved that this Executive of General Council of The United Church of Canada meeting November 1984, affirms that:

1) We abhor the killing of any human being, and emphatically declare our anger when the victim dies while serving as a protector of society.

2) We reaffirm the position of The United Church of Canada in support of the continued abolition of Capital Punishment.

3) We urge the Conferences, Presbyteries, Congregations and members of The United Church of Canada to stand in opposition to the return of the death penalty, and to

communicate their positions to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Justice, the leaders of the Opposition Parties, and in particular, their local member of Parliament.

4) We call upon our governments, policing authorities and other relevant bodies to take appropriate measures to better protect the lives of police including tighter gun control legislation, use of protective articles such as bullet-proof vests and improved police training.

The church resolution calls on its membership and the nation's leaders to stand in opposition to the current popular ground swell and to remain firmly committed to the abolition of capital punishment in Canada.

# Safe Driving Week

## December 1-7

"One of the major obstacles faced in countering impaired driving is that all too many people, most of them otherwise responsible law-abiding citizens, regard it as perfectly reasonable and acceptable to get behind the wheel of a car after having too much to drink," says Dick Greene of the Canada Safety Council.

For this reason, National Safe Driving Week, December 1-7, is aimed at the drinking driver. This year's theme "Impaired Driving ... The Social Dilemma" is the Canada Safety Council's attempt to educate the public as well as influence the way people perceive the drinking driving problem.

"Far too many people recognize and accept the fact that a significant proportion of the population drive while impaired, and the potential to cause harm is not enough for them to stop others or themselves from driving while impaired," says Mr. Greene. "The problem of impaired driving could be overcome by each member of the public accepting their responsibility towards the safety of others."

The Canada Safety Council believes that all drivers can make a contribution to resolving the dilemma of impaired driving and make Canada's roadways safe for all.

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