

Resolution on a Faithful Approach to the Death Penalty in South Carolina

WHEREAS the Bible says, “You shall not murder,” (Exodus 20:13) as the Fifth of the Ten Commandments; and

WHEREAS the *Small Catechism*, written by Martin Luther, answers the question, “What does this commandment mean?” with, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in any way, but help him in all his physical needs,” and

WHEREAS the *Large Catechism*, also written by Martin Luther, says, “The meaning of this commandment is that no one should harm another person for any evil deed, no matter how much that person deserves it.”¹, and

WHEREAS Jesus says, “‘You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgement,’” (Matthew 5:21); and

WHEREAS in 1991, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted “A Social Statement on The Death Penalty,” and

WHEREAS, that Social Statement notes, “capital punishment makes no provable impact on the breeding grounds of violent crime. Executions harm society by mirroring and reinforcing existing injustice. The death penalty distracts us from our work toward a just society. It deforms our response to violence at the individual, familial, institutional, and systemic levels. It perpetuates cycles of violence,” (page 3, paragraph 6) and

WHEREAS, that Social Statement also notes, “It is because of this church’s commitment to justice that we oppose the death penalty,” (page 3, paragraph 7); therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the South Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in Assembly June 12-14, 2022, call upon the Synod Council, the Criminal Justice Task Force and other interested persons, to lead our synod in studying criminal justice in general and the death penalty in particular, thereby equipping and mobilizing our synod congregations to address the issues of criminal justice in reference to the death penalty; and be it finally

RESOLVED that the efforts of this group be reported back to our 2023 Synod Assembly with recommendations for ways our entire South Carolina Synod can faithfully and effectively engage our State Legislators.

¹ Kolb, Robert and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000. LC 186, p. 411.