

Mr Donald J Trump
President of the United States of America

*cc: The Honourable Robert Wood Johnson
Ambassador of the United States of America to the United Kingdom*

*cc: Ms Ellen Wong
Principal Officer of the US Consulate General in Edinburgh*

Friday 8 January 2021

Dear President Trump

Appeal for Clemency – Lisa Marie Montgomery

Lisa Marie Montgomery is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection on 12 January.

Please use your authority to commute her sentence to life imprisonment.

The Church of Scotland, along with Christians throughout the world, opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. The life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ affirms that capital punishment is always and wholly unacceptable. It can never provide an answer even to the most heinous of crimes. The fundamental purpose of justice has to allow for redemption.

The use of the death penalty on Federal prisoners on death row has appalled and disappointed Christians both in the USA and around the world. Lisa Marie Montgomery would be the first woman executed by the Federal Government since 1953. She has been diagnosed with congenital brain damage, multiple traumatic brain injuries and is herself a victim of incest, child sex trafficking, gang rape, physical abuse and neglect. Her case illustrates the wider deficiencies from a Christian standpoint about the use of capital punishment: its use as a deterrent is ineffective when people committing crimes are unable to comprehend the gravity of what they are doing.

God calls us to be compassionate; our compassion should extend to victims, offenders and society itself. This is, at times, hard to maintain, but compassion to society will entail finding the most appropriate ways of protecting it and healing its wounds. Inflicting more violence cannot be a part of that. Compassion to victims will entail working towards their restoration, providing comfort and support, giving opportunity to ask the searching questions and hear the truth in answer, allowing for the expression of the deepest pain and for the release of anger. Compassion for offenders will entail helping them towards confession and repentance, towards making restitution.

The death penalty brutalises the society which practices it, and alternative sentences for serious crimes exist through which restitution and rehabilitation may be achieved. Inflicting death as a punishment limits the redemptive work of God in this life, work modelled by Jesus in his life of God's compassion and mercy, and in his teaching of non-violence.

I ask you to make a clear statement to your country and to the whole world that the love and forgiveness of God is not beyond the reach of any person and that no human being should have the power of death over another.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Fair

**Rt Revd Dr W Martin Fair
Moderator
General Assembly of the Church of Scotland**