



Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

Joint Media Statement

United in our Demand for Mercy

The leaders of the Uniting Church in Australia have joined in prayer and lament at the imminent execution of nine people including two Australians by the Indonesian Government.

At a meeting in Brisbane, the President of the Uniting Church and the Church's six Moderators have called for an end to the death penalty in Indonesia and wherever else it exists in the world.

"As Christians we simply must stand for mercy," said the President of the Uniting Church Rev. Professor Andrew Dutney.

"Our belief leads us to the inevitable conclusion that it is wrong for any government or institution to arbitrarily cut short a person's life. It is a cruel and inhuman punishment which denies the hope of reform.

"It is wrong in the United States, in China, in Iran, in Indonesia – it is wrong everywhere it is practised. The Uniting Church in Australia opposes capital punishment wherever it exists," said Rev. Prof. Dutney.

The host of the meeting, the Moderator of the Queensland Synod, Rev. David Baker said, "No one is beyond God's love. Our rejection of capital punishment rests on our belief that every person is created in the image of God and can find redemption in Jesus Christ," said Rev. Baker.

Moderator of the Uniting Church in Western Australia, Rev. Steve Francis pointed out that the death penalty left no leeway for the correction of injustice.

"Even in countries with the most robust and transparent legal systems, grave errors can be made and people wrongly convicted. We know that innocent, often disadvantaged people have been wrongly executed."

South Australian Moderator Dr Deidre Palmer said that justice is not served through violence.

"True justice exists where there is peace and reconciliation. The death penalty is a violent act which denies the hope of reconciliation and so denies justice," said Dr Palmer.

The Moderator of the Synod of NSW and the ACT, Rev. Myung Hwa Park has pleaded for compassion.

"The faces of the families of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran as they farewell their loved ones speak to the inhumanity and the tragedy of the death penalty," said Rev. Park.

The Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Dan Wootton, says he's deeply disappointed to learn Indonesian authorities are refusing the two Australians access to their pastors in their final moments.

"These two people have travelled the journey with Andrew and Myuran. They have prayed with them and cried with them. Now in the final moments of their pastoral duty, their care is being denied," said Mr Wootton.

The Moderator of the Northern Synod and President-elect Stuart McMillan has asked UCA members to keep those on death row in Indonesia in their prayers in the days ahead.

"All life is precious in God's eyes. Jesus told his followers to be merciful just as God is merciful. Our duty to show mercy and to encourage others to be merciful becomes clearer to us every day," said Mr McMillan.