



## Chaplains banned from Death Chamber— for “Christ’s” sake, NO!

by Rev. Dr. Michael G. Maness  
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**Weep for Jerusalem**—TDCJ recently fought all the way to the Supreme Court to deny a condemned man the presence of a Buddhist chaplain ... *while he is killed!*

For shame!

As Texas planned to execute Patrick Murphy, only employees were allowed in the Death Chamber. The Supreme Court ruled on Mar. 28, and Justice Brett Kavanaugh said TDCJ had two remedies “going forward”—all or zero chaplains in the Death Chamber.

TDCJ chose to ban all chaplains!

TDCJ blew up like a balloon the security issues. Yet, 20,000-plus volunteers and 30,000-plus employees know that volunteers log over a million visits a year to unshackled prisoners.

How under heaven can a man strapped to a gurney be a greater security risk than those millions of unshackled visits? Oh, “things can do wrong,” TDCJ said, appealing to that catch-all ghost, again, to avoid the harder work of thinking through.

TDCJ opted not to speculate upon how a vetted member of the clergy would be any different from a state employee. Most prison clergy are seniors, some retired military with more security experience than the TDCJ officers. If the officers properly “strapped” the man down, just how many other things can go wrong? Security was only a paper tiger.

As a 20-year chaplain, I am a witness to thousands of good employees, yet there is a long-held deep state animus against the value

of religion. That culminated in January 2011 with the zero-budgeting and the killing of chaplaincy in the budget. We chaplains and our volunteers had to fight in Austin, and we saved the chaplaincy.

Shortly after the 2011 legislative session, all chaplains were “ordered” to increase Protestant programming almost two-fold by creating Faith-Based Housing without any additional resources or consideration to unit staffing. Just as with the killing, there was not single study of anything. Just do it, and quickly. Yes, after failing to kill chaplaincy, the chaplains were ordered to make *more* bricks with no more straw.

Read the SC’s Mar. 28 *short* two-page decision. If TDCJ followed all, it would have to rescind several “orders” of favoritism to Protestantism with a Baptist hegemony. I wrote a 50-page exposure of that in Dec. of 2011, and have since documented much more abuse.

The ban on chaplains is another abuse hitting all Texans of faith.

A man is rightly condemned to die. For Protestant/Catholic Christians, death begins an eternal one-way journey. For the Buddhist, Muslim, and other faiths, death is a doorway to another place, state, or reincarnation, with beliefs hard to summarize.

We all will take that journey at a time known only God. Mr. Murphy has a date with the state, for a heinous crime, and we—the state of Texas—all of us together will demand his ticket and pull the lever that starts the lethal injection.

We all are party to ... killing a man.

For Christians, Mr. Murphy will go to heaven or hell. You and I are the ticket takers.

We believe in religious freedom, so Mr. Murphy has “rights” to his Buddhist faith representative. A Christian cannot sincerely guide in Buddhism, not in spirit and truth. We Christians—currently the administrative majority—must allow Murphy his representative because we value religious freedom.

Given the above and many more abuses since January 2011, I would rather see the resignation of Ex. Dir. Bryan Collier before the banning of chaplains from the Death Chamber.

As a Christian, death is holy ground, and we are a party to it in execution. Let Murphy have his representative. Why?—for “Christ’s” sake! For the next condemned man may be a Christian, I definitely want him to have his pastor or his priest right there when we pull the lever.

*Please contact your Texas Rep. and Senator pronto, especially Rep. James White who chairs the influential House Corrections Committee.*

*Please, before it's too late.*

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