



# Peace Offerings

## Rep. Tucker to Speak on Civil Discourse

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**Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.**

State Representative Clarke Tucker is scheduled to speak on Thursday, June 8 at the Pax Christi Little Rock meeting. He will be standing in for Dr. Jay Barth and will provide information on civil discourse and the need for it in our world today.

Mr. Tucker is a Democrat who has represented the 35th district since he was elected in November of 2014. He is a native of Arkansas and a graduate of Central High. Mr. Tucker graduated from Harvard University in 2003, where he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Government. He then attended the University of Arkansas and graduated magna cum laude with a law degree in 2006. He

also served as Editor-in Chief of the *Arkansas Law Review*. Mr. Tucker received his law license in 2006 and served as a law clerk for the Honorable J. Leon Holmes of the US District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas from 2006-2008. Mr. Tucker has been in private practice since 2008, currently working with the law firm of Quattlebaum, Grooms and Tull. His primary area of practice is litigation.

As a state representative in the 91st General Assembly, Mr. Tucker serves on the committees for Judiciary, Aging, Children and Youth, Legisla-



**Rep. Clarke Tucker**

tive and Military Affairs, and Joint Performance Review. He serves as founding Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tiger Foundation and is a member of the board of Just Communities of AR. He is also the founder of the Pulaski County Imagination Library, a non-profit that delivers age appropriate books to all children in the county between birth and age 5.



## SAVE THE DATE

**Lieutenant Steven McClanahan, a 22 year veteran of the LR Police Dept. and commander of the Public Affairs section, will speak at the July Pax Christi meeting on the topic of crime and violence on Little Rock streets.**

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## Msgr. Harris Shares Stark Reality of Life on Death Row

Father Jack Harris spoke to a full house on Thursday, May 11 at the PCLR monthly meeting regarding his experiences as chaplain for several of the death row inmates in the Varner Supermax Unit of the Arkansas Department of Corrections. He has served these inmates in this capacity since 2003. Father Harris is a Crisis Intervention Specialist and shared that he has always had a vocation to work in the prison setting. In addition to his duties as chaplain on death row, he also serves as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Morrilton, AR.

During his presentation, Father Harris described Arkansas as being both a death penalty state and a "supermax" state. He said that, "supermax means you're locked down 23 hours a day in a one-man cell. It's a little concrete box, a lighted concrete box is what it is. You don't control when the lights go on and off. Some men spend literally years locked up in there. You think just a minute what that does to a person mentally." Because of the significantly stressful experience of simply living on death row, Fr. Harris said that "you never execute the same man you convict." He went into some detail regarding how the experiences of these men changed them in different ways as many of them lived over 20 years on death row. He said, "If you leave a man in prison for twenty years and he is no longer the same man who committed the crime, do you really have a right to kill him?"

Father Harris discussed three reasons

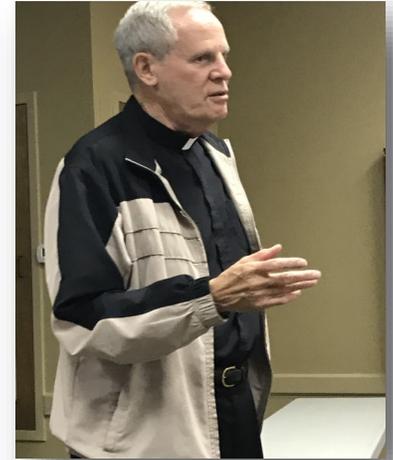
that many people use to support the death penalty: **deterrence to further crime, protecting society, and vengeance.** He indicated that he had known the 34 men who were on death row prior to the four recent executions. He said "These 34 men were not deterred by the death penalty. Those 34 were men who acted in the moment. They didn't think about 'what is going to happen to me if I do this.'"

To the second point, he said that these men, because they are imprisoned, have not been a threat to society. Father Harris indicated that there are 2100 people in prison now in Arkansas for murder, and currently only 30 of them reside on death row. Fr. Harris made the point that "I know that we do not have the most vicious murderers in that unit on death row. But they had something they could bargain with and got a reduced sentence."

In conclusion, he noted that the only reason why the death penalty remains an option is vengeance.

"I will never denigrate or minimize the pain that victims feel. The victim's family. I don't ever want to pretend like that's not important." However, he stated that "I'm not quite sure the vengeance that comes from that should be what guides our policy as a state."

Regarding the oft shared idea that the families of these victims will benefit from the "closure" provided by the execution of these men, Father Harris stated, "There is no closure with this thing. . . It's a little unfair to use that



Msgr. Jack Harris

language. Justice was served the day they were caught, convicted and sent to prison. What you do to them after they're in prison, that's vengeance."

Father Harris shared that much of his ministry on death row consists of simply talking to the men about mundane aspects of their daily life. However, he said the difference for them is the fact that their execution is always pending and that their future is uncertain. Father Harris said that "a very privileged conversation I get to have with these guys is when they try to figure out how to say 'I'm sorry.' And they will talk about that. They will get frustrated about it because how do you go to someone whose loved one you murdered, very likely raped and kidnapped, and say you're sorry? What they know is the words 'I'm sorry' mean nothing." Fr. Harris also talked about how important it was to the inmates to carry themselves with dignity when they walked into the execution chamber. He said that they would become very focused on that final act, desiring to leave this

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### Msgr. Harris (cont)

world in a way that provided them with some sense of value as a human being.

Finally, Fr. Harris made the point that it is unlawful to execute someone who has become mentally ill. But, he said that it is sometimes the case for a man on death row that the opposite is true. That a man may become "stronger and more spiritual" over his years in prison. Then, he asked, because of the many changes that can take place in a person over the years, is it possible to determine at that point if there is reason to execute them?

## MONTHLY DONATION FOR JUNE MEETING ST. JOSEPH CENTER OF ARKANSAS, INC.

At each of our monthly meetings, we choose a cause to ask people who come to the meeting to donate their time, talent, or treasure towards so that we might be the source of some change in the world. Sandy Decoursey, chairperson of SJCA board, indicated that their biggest need currently is money to make the many renovations required at St. Joseph's. With that in mind, we will pass a basket during our meeting on June 8 and send the proceeds to SJCA.

## PCLR BEGINS ONGOING STUDY ON NON-VIOLENCE

During our May PCLR board meeting, it was determined that one of our most foundational concerns should be to educate ourselves in the ways of nonviolence and the different methods for promoting this both personally and in the world. With that in mind, Cackie Upchurch provided the board with several readings to choose from in this area. We will read a new article each month and discuss the topic following the formal meeting. **The following article will be discussed during our next meeting on June 8:**

<http://www.marquette.edu/peacemaking/nonviolence.php> (Nonviolence 101)

**We will choose readings for future meetings from the following list:**

<http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201702/gospel-nonviolence-30938> (article US Catholic, Feb. 2017)

[http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Nonviolence-Third-Way-Facets/dp/0800636090/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1494604508&sr=8-3&keywords=Walter+wink](http://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Nonviolence-Third-Way-Facets/dp/0800636090/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1494604508&sr=8-3&keywords=Walter+wink) (classic book on nonviolence by Walter Wink)

<http://www.iustitiaetpax.va/content/giustiziaepace/en/social-magisterium/wdp/nonviolence--a-style-for-politics-for-peace---message-for-the-50.html> (2017 World Day of Prayer for Peace message from Pope Francis)

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/reflection-questions-for-groups-and-individuals/> (Questions for reflection)

<https://nonviolencejustpeacedotnet.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/wdp-2-pager.pdf> (2 pg summary of WDOPP)

<http://www.marquette.edu/peacemaking/nonviolence.php> (Lengthy book-consider reading a chapter each month)