



July 28, 2006

Dear Friend,

On the road again! Yes – we are right in the middle of planning another wonderful Journey of Hope and this time we're taking our stories to the Commonwealth of Virginia. We are very excited that you have shown an interest in participating. We hope this letter provides you with a bit more information on the actual Virginia Journey as well as what you can expect between now and when the Journey begins.

Why Virginia? Jack Payden-Travers, Executive Director of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty asked the Journey to come to his state this year because they are launching a critical moratorium effort. Jack joined us on the Texas Journey with an eye as to what could be done in Virginia. The truth is a lot can be done in Virginia and those working on longer-term plans to end the death penalty in Virginia very much want the Journey to come help reinvigorate and expand support throughout the state. In fact, we will be helping to launch the beginning of a very specific moratorium effort – a first major step in the right direction.

What will happen in Virginia? The Journey of Hope will start on October 13th and go through October 29th. We will start in Northern Virginia – just across the river from Washington, DC. After several days there we will begin our Journey to some key places throughout Virginia eventually circling back and returning to Northern Virginia for our final events. We are honored to once again have Sister Helen Prejean joining us in Richmond on the 21st and traveling with us to Norfolk for events on the 22nd. In addition, our Virginia Journey ends by blending into the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's annual conference starting the evening of October 26th. The NCADP conference will go through Sunday, October 29th. We may have a few speaking events the morning of the 29th.

The plan for our Journey in Virginia has been carefully designed. For the most part we will be working in teams of three and each team will try to speak at two events per day. In addition there are many opportunities for press coverage of our visibility events.

Who may participate? Anyone who believes in reconciliation, healing, and working to stop the cycle of violence - which includes the death penalty. Everyone has a unique and important contribution to make to the Journey. Family members of murder victims, death row family members, families of the executed, and former death row prisoners all have stories to share which will touch the hearts of Journey audiences. Those who have not been directly affected by violence or the death penalty are also needed to serve as resource persons who can talk about the death penalty in Virginia and help recruit new activists. There is a lot of work to be done – so we need everyone we can to “get on board” with the Journey.

A number of Journey participants will be coming to Virginia from other states. In addition, we want Virginians to participate in the Journey as speakers and volunteers. We strongly encourage Virginians to live and travel with the Journey for as many days as is possible. Much of the work – not to mention the bonding – that happens on the Journey takes place in the early morning hours over breakfast, or later in the evening as we wind down from the events of the day.

How can you sign up? Easy enough – fill out the attached registration form and get it back to us ASAP. It is absolutely essential that we have confirmed registration forms filled out so we can most accurately plan for the best Journey ever.

Getting to Virginia: For those of you coming to Virginia from another state, please make your travel plans early. If you are coming by plane, you should get your tickets at least 21 days in advance in order to get the cheapest rates. Following this advice, everyone should aim to have confirmed travel arrangements by September 23rd.

Flying into Virginia is nice because there are a lot of options. You can fly into Washington, DC (Ronald Reagan National Airport), Northern Virginia (Dulles), or even Baltimore (BWI). BWI is really only 45 minutes away from Northern Virginia and there are many transportation connectors including trains and buses. All the major airlines fly into all three airports. In addition, Jet Blue flies into Dulles and Southwest Air flies into BWI. Both Jet Blue and Southwest tend to have cheap rates.

Itinerary Overview: Included with this letter is a more detailed itinerary. The best “entry points” for the Journey are as follows:

October 13th - October 17th: We will be in the Northern Virginia area staying at the same place. We are hoping that most people will try and arrive on the 13th but if you come in anytime during that four-day period you can join us – just specify on the registration form so we can plan the events accurately.

October 19th - October 21st: We will be in Richmond. As mentioned previously, Sister Helen Prejean will be joining us in Richmond on the 21st. Richmond has a major airport so it is a possibility. Between Northern Virginia and Richmond we will be in some more rural areas that are harder to reach.

October 22nd - October 24th: We will be in the Tidewater area of Virginia. This area includes Norfolk and the popular Virginia Beach. Norfolk also has a major airport making this an option for both early departures from the Journey or late joiners. As with BWI, Southwest Air also flies into Norfolk.

October 25th - October 26th: We are back in Northern Virginia. Bringing us back to our starting point makes the most sense for many of us who will simply return on our roundtrip tickets.

October 26th - October 29th: The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty conference. Journey participants are welcome to join the conference. There is a possibility that we will add a

few more speaking events to the schedule for Sunday, October 29th in the morning for participants who are still in Virginia.

Registration and Fees: As with every Journey of Hope we need all participants to register (the form is included with this letter). PLEASE REGISTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! Just as in years past we are keeping the registration fee at \$300 per person for the full 17-day Journey. Less than 17 days is \$20 a day per person. Registration fees cover the costs of lodging, transportation once you are in Virginia, and two meals per day. If anyone can afford to contribute more we will put it towards our scholarship fund.

Scholarships: Scholarships are also available! Don't let money be a barrier to participating. To apply for a scholarship, please contact Bill Pelke at bpelke@gci.net or toll-free at 877-924-4483 and he'll provide you with additional information on how to apply. Scholarships must be need-based and are on a first-come-first served basis.

Coming to Virginia by Air: If possible, please make your own travel arrangements. If you need assistance making your travel arrangements or the Journey to cover your travel costs, please contact Bill Pelke at bpelke@gci.net or toll-free at (877) 924-4483 before you make your reservations. We do have a scholarship fund (see above) – so please do not let money stand in your way. Of course, if you can pay your own travel expense or have support from another source, we are very grateful because it will help us fund others. If you are not in one of the above categories, you are expected to cover your own travel costs.

Coming to Virginia By Car: If you are joining the Journey by car, welcome! We would love to know if you are coming by car and if you plan to use your car throughout the Journey. In fact, if it is possible for others to travel with you in your vehicle once you arrive on the Journey – even better. Please let us know these details by filling out the registration form. Our Transportation Coordinator will be back in touch with you. If you are willing to drive your vehicle and assist others, the Journey can reimburse you for the cost of gas.

Lodging: As we did with the Texas Journey, we will be staying in hotels throughout the Journey. Our wonderful Hospitality Coordinators have worked hard to secure a very good rate through Choice Hotels. Please indicate on the registration form if you are planning to share and with whom or if you'd like to be paired up with a roommate. Of course if you prefer a room to yourself – just indicate on the registration form.

What to Bring: Fall in Virginia can be cold or warm. Generally speaking it tends to stay warm all the way through mid-November. Southern Virginia – the Tidewater area – is almost always 10 degrees warmer than Northern Virginia. It would be best to plan for warm to even hot days and possibly chilly nights. Layers are a good idea. We will be providing Virginia-specific Journey of Hope tee-shirts. Please limit the number of bags you bring – so pack only what you really need. We have limited transportation and need to make room for a lot of people and their bags. We will include visits to Laundromats along the way. You should also bring enough money to pay for a meal per day. As is the case with many Journeys, we know that we will be treated to many generous dinners with some of our church friends throughout the state of Virginia. In addition, we are in the process of securing gift certificates and other coupons for a variety of restaurants throughout the state. We promise to help keep the options low-cost and still provide good food.

Contacts: There are many, many people involved in the planning and implementation of the Virginia Journey of Hope. We are excited because this year we have a special Journey Participants Team of coordinators. Their role is to work directly with all of you – to ensure you've got what you need, you understand the goals, that your needs are met. The Journey Participants Team:

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Please contact any of us with additional questions or concerns. We all appreciate your interest and hope to see you on the Journey!

Sincerely,

Bill Pelke

George White

Beth Wood

Aba Gayle

Jack Payden-Travers