

I am Rev. Cheryl Burke, a resident of East Lansing, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and parent of 4 adopted children.

I serve as an Associate Conference Minister for the Michigan Conference United Church of Christ, partnering with 140 churches across the state. At our October 2023 annual meeting of churches and clergy, we adopted a resolution "In Support of Second Look Sentencing Legislation".

I have copies of that resolution available for your information.

As a person of faith, I believe that this legislation is vital for the soul of our state.

People make terrible decisions and irreversible mistakes, AND transformation is always possible. None of us is stuck in time ... we are not the worst that we have ever been.

Our justice system is not infallible, either. It can make mistakes. A second look needs to be built into the system.

Mandatory sentencing laws and other laws may change over time. Judges need an opportunity to take a second look at a sentence to see if it still fits the crime and the person.

Jamie Meade is studying to become a minister in the United Church of Christ. He was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for being present at a crime where someone was murdered. This was a mandatory sentence at the time. The person who committed the murder is no longer in prison.

Jamie has acknowledged the devastation of his decisions and behavior. He has worked for 30 years in prison to change. He has taken classes, earned educational degrees, cared for other inmates, and become a better person.

The Second Look Sentencing bills would give people like Jamie, and hundreds of others who have turned their lives around, a chance to demonstrate their transformations.

God's transforming love can help any of us see where we have fallen short and turn around. Second Look legislation will give hope to the hopeless. It will give an opportunity to correct decisions from another time.

It has the potential to transform the world for good by those who have done previous harm.

I urge adoption of these bills.