



Free Methodist CHURCH OF SANTA BARBARA

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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
CLERK OF THE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

January 10, 2022

To:
Das Williams, First District
Laura Capps, Second District
Joan Hartmann, Third District
Bob Nelson, Fourth District and Chair
Steve Lavagnino, Fifth District

Re: Petition to Transform Criminal Justice

Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

As Christians we are called to care about prisoners and their well-being because God's love and care extends to all people. We fully endorse the principles set forth in the petition below as these are consistent with our values as committed Christians.

Petition composed by CLUE and League of Women Voters of SB for the consideration of the SBC Board of Supervisors:

We can improve our Criminal Justice system in Santa Barbara County by reducing the number of residents in our two county jails (Santa Maria and Santa Barbara). Why?

Our jails incarcerate people who do not pose a threat to the community and who are simply awaiting trial or disposition of their case. (Roughly 80% of jail residents have not been sentenced.) This does not make us safer. Instead, it traumatizes those unnecessarily left in jail, destabilizes families, causes job losses, and stigmatizes people who by law are presumed innocent.

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Rev. Danielle Garcia • Associate Pastor of Administration • danielle@fmcsb.org
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Jake Elliott • Assistant Pastor of Worship • jake@fmcsb.org
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The county is currently under a Court mandate to eliminate inhumane conditions in the old south county jail. Each jail bed costs \$81,761 per year to operate. Reducing the size of the jail and its population by 200 daily could save \$16 million/year to spend on community-based alternatives and much needed housing.

Over 30% of those in our jails are struggling with mental health challenges. Many can be better served in the community than in our jails. In September, a 35-year-old woman died in the Santa Maria jail after waiting over 6 months for a bed in a State Mental Hospital. Those with addictions are also better off being treated rather than jailed. We call on you to fund each of the following to improve criminal justice:

1. Safely reduce the number of people in jail. Implement the June, 2022, County Jail Population Expert's report. Reduce our total long-term jail population by 200 by removing barriers to electronic monitoring, reducing jail time for warrants, and speeding transfers to state prison.
2. Increase needed community services – Help, not handcuffs. Expand and fund community-based treatment programs and mental health beds. Stop housing people in jail with primary health needs that do not require a jail cell. Repurpose existing facilities as needed.
3. Continue and expand Co-response teams (mental health worker + law officer or firefighter). These teams respond to calls in which mental health crises rather than criminal conduct are likely present. Co response teams have proven to significantly reduce arrests resulting from 911 calls.
4. Provide Fair and Early Representation for all. Fund the Public Defender's request to provide a team (lawyer, social worker; investigator) who can meet with clients days (not minutes) before their first court appearance. This will streamline justice in our Courts. Research shows even a day or two of prep time can substantially reduce incarceration.

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5. Provide equal and fair access to evidence. Make funding decisions that enable the Public Defender to receive all the evidence (discovery) that the Sheriff provides to the District Attorney. Other counties have this policy. Our current policy disadvantages those who are accused but must wait to learn the basis of the charge(s) against them.

Sincerely,

Rev. Colleen Hurley-Bates, Rev. Doug Ranck, Rev. Danielle Garcia, Rev. Nikki Ramage, Pastor Jake Elliott and Sandy Patterson
Free Methodist Church of Santa Barbara

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