

Press Release
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TENNESSEE EXECUTIONS RESUME THIS WEEK

EASTER SUNDAY: MARCH4MERCY from Riverbend Correctional Institution to Legislative Plaza followed by Easter Prayer Service at Legislative Plaza.

NASHVILLE, TN, April 17, 2022 – With the April 21st execution of Oscar Smith set to resume Tennessee executions this week following a Governor-imposed moratorium due to the pandemic, an ad-hoc group of friends of current and former Tennessee death row prisoners and other opponents of the death penalty will March4Mercy from Riverbend Maximum Security Institution to Legislative Plaza starting at 1pm [today](#), Easter [Sunday, April 17, 2022](#).

Marchers will carry images of the Stations of the Cross which were painted by prisoners on Tennessee's death row. There will be brief stops along the route for prayers as part of a Stations of the Cross procession. An Easter prayer service will take place upon arrival at Legislative Plaza at approximately 4pm.

This highly visual and prayerful event is convened under the banner of the Tennessee March4Mercy and is co-sponsored by Franklin Community Church, No Exceptions Prison Collective, Common Hymnal, Red Letter Christians, Death Penalty Action and others.

The March4Mercy has become a regular practice in Nashville on the Sunday prior to scheduled executions in Tennessee. It repeats a march that took place in August, 2019 prior to the state's execution of Stephen West. Marchers carry a poster-size replica of the letter to Governor Bill Lee signed and sent in June, 2019 by 32 condemned prisoners simply inviting Governor Lee to visit the prison to pray with the men who await their execution.

"He [Governor Lee] acknowledged it when Kevin and I hand delivered it just before Nick Sutton's execution," said Dan Mann, a member of the ad-hoc "Friends of Unit 2."

The March4Mercy has taken place prior to each subsequent execution in Tennessee.

Additional information is at [the March4Mercy web page](#).

SCHEDULE - Easter [Sunday, April 17, 2022](#)

1pm - Marchers will gather for an opening briefing and prayers in a private parking lot on the right just before you get to the prison

1:30pm - Marchers will step off

There will be several stops along the route

4pm (approximate) - Rally at Legislative Plaza

The [March4Mercy web page](#) has further details, including a list of endorsing organizations and individuals which includes noted authors Wm Paul Young and Shane Claiborne, and musician Steve Earle.

Additional Background:

On June 6, 2019, shortly after the execution of Don Johnson, thirty-two (32) of the fifty-five (55) remaining male, death row inmates signed a letter to Governor Lee requesting prayer: “We understand you are a man of faith and we would like to ask you to please come pray with us.”

The letter was written and a copy was delivered to the Governor’s office after numerous attempts to contact the Governor’s office for a face-to-face meeting with the inmate’s friends to discuss the inmates request. The Governor has yet to address the request for a meeting or to acknowledge any action or even contemplation of the simple request to pray with the condemned men of Tennessee.

The letter has been replicated on a postcard which has now been mailed to Governor Lee by thousands of individuals from across the United States. Following the execution of Stephen West, 5,000 additional postcards were produced with West's name struck through with a red line.