

Governor Greg Abbott
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711

January 28, 2015

Dear Governor Abbott:

It was a pleasure to see you at the 5:30 p.m. Mass at St. Austin's this past Sunday. I hope you will always feel welcome here.

I am writing to you about a matter of great urgency, namely that you grant clemency to Texas death row prisoner Rodney Reed, who is scheduled to be executed on March 5, 2015.

Rodney Reed was convicted of the 1996 murder of Stacey Stites in Bastrop, Texas. His conviction was based on semen DNA evidence. However, no other physical evidence linked him to the murder. Rodney has maintained that he and Stacey were having an affair, which accounted for the presence of his DNA.

During the trial, important evidence of Rodney's innocence was not presented, through a combination of inadequate representation and prosecutorial misconduct. This included hidden eyewitness testimony, misleading expert witness testimony, and the failure of the defense to call either an alibi witness or the multiple witnesses who could have testified to the affair between Stacey and Rodney.

Over the years, evidence has been uncovered that points to Stacey's then-fiancée and former Giddings police officer Jimmy Fennell, Jr. as the perpetrator of this crime. Fennell failed two polygraph tests on the question of whether he had strangled Stacey. Witness testimony and DNA evidence collected at the site where Stacey was found point to the involvement of Fennell's known associates. Fennell is currently in prison for sexually assaulting a woman in his custody while policing in Georgetown, TX.

Rodney is pursuing new DNA testing on several crucial pieces of evidence – including the belt that Stacey was strangled with – which has never been tested for DNA. These tests could very well prove Rodney's innocence. Rodney is also pursuing a new state appeal based on changed medical testimony about the DNA that convicted him, that could help to prove his innocence.

New laws passed in the last two legislative sessions concerning DNA testing in Texas speak to the importance of both pre- and post-conviction testing. In 2013, you, then-Attorney General and now Governor, you supported a bill for pre-conviction DNA testing, saying, **“Texans may disagree about the death penalty, but one thing all Texans can and should agree upon is that no innocent person should be executed in Texas.”**

I am asking that you stand by those words. Do the right thing and stop the execution of a probably innocent man. I am asking that you ensure that all DNA testing and a thorough examination of all the evidence in Rodney’s case is undertaken by the state. I am asking that you to insure justice for Rodney Reed.

Sincerely,

Rev. Charles Kullmann, CSP
Pastor