

Corpus Christi pastor plans to pray in death chamber

October 3, 2022

The State of Texas is scheduled to execute John Henry Ramirez on Oct. 5, and his pastor plans to be in the death chamber to lay a hand on him and pray for him.

Pastor Dana Moore of Second Baptist Church in Corpus Christi has served as spiritual adviser to Ramirez about five years, ministering to him in prison.

After Ramirez made a profession of faith in Christ and was baptized on Texas Death Row, Second Baptist Church allowed him to join the congregation's membership. Ramirez is among 28 inmates who are part of the first designated [faith-based units on Texas Death Row](#).

Barring a [clemency declaration](#) or last-minute delay, Ramirez will die by lethal injection on Wednesday about the time other members of Second Baptist Church gather for a mid-week Bible study and prayer time.

Ramirez was convicted and sentenced to die for the 2004 murder and robbery of Pablo Castro, a Corpus Christi convenience store clerk.

Supreme Court ruled

In an 8-1 decision in [Ramirez v. Collier](#), the U.S. Supreme Court in March upheld on religious liberty grounds a [request by Ramirez to have his pastor lay hands on him](#) and pray aloud for him at the moment of his execution.

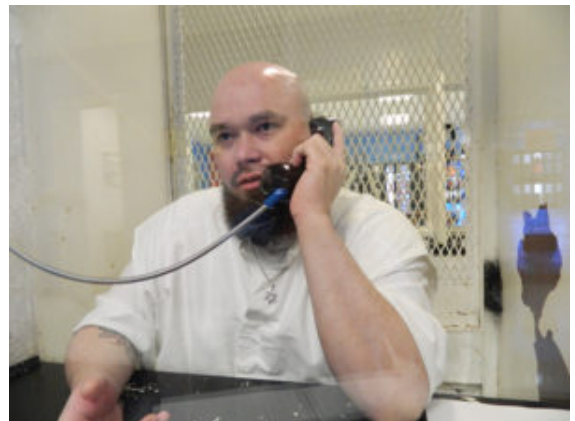
Previously, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice had denied his request, citing security concerns. Lower courts sided with the state agency,

saying the TDCJ has a “compelling interest in maintaining an orderly, safe and effective process” when carrying out executions.

While the Supreme Court agreed the state has a clear interest in carrying out executions in a safe and orderly fashion, security issues do not justify denying an inmate the right to spiritual comfort.

At the time of the ruling, Moore said he was glad the court “upheld John’s religious liberty rights” by allowing his spiritual adviser to offer a “ministry of presence,” praying for him and laying a hand on him in his final moments of consciousness.

“Touch is a very meaningful and supportive way of showing compassion and love,” Moore said. “That’s why Jesus touched.”



John Henry Ramirez is part of one of the first designated faith-based units on Texas Death Row. (Photo / Ken Camp)

In a May 25 interview with the *Baptist Standard* at the Allen B. Polunsky Unit, Ramirez said it will be “spiritually significant” to have Moore physically present in the execution chamber to pray for him and place a hand on him.

“He’s my brother. I’ve grown to love him,” Ramirez said. “I want to have him touch me and pray over me as I transition from life to death.”

When Ramirez is transported 50 miles from the Polunsky Unit to the Huntsville Unit, home of the state’s execution chamber, it won’t be the first time he has made the trek for a scheduled execution. In fact, it marks the fourth execution date he has faced in recent years.

In September 2021, the Supreme Court granted a last-minute [temporary stay of execution](#) to consider his request to have his pastor in the death chamber with him.

In April, Nueces County District Attorney Mark Gonzalez filed a motion to [withdraw the death warrant](#) his office had issued for Ramirez’s execution, saying he “has the firm belief that the death penalty is unethical and should not be imposed on Mr. Ramirez or any other person.”

But in June, state District Judge Bobby Galvan [rejected the prosecutor’s request](#) to withdraw the warrant. Then last month, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals [denied a stay of execution](#), and the appeals court let stand Galvan’s order refusing to vacate the Oct. 5 execution date for Ramirez.