

# Texas inmate sues to allow pastor to lay hands on him during execution

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CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (BP)—A Texas death row inmate is suing state prison officials for the right to have his chaplain—Dana Moore—lay hands on him as he is executed by lethal injection.

Moore is the pastor of Second Baptist Church in Corpus Christi and has been ministering to John Henry Ramirez in prison for several years as a part of Second Baptists' chaplaincy ministry.

"My role is to be a minister to John, and part of my ministry is being able to comfort him, and part of that is to touch him in some way," Moore told Baptist Press.

"John wants me to be able to touch him during the most stressful and difficult time in his life as he is being executed, and that physical touch is what I find in Scripture as very meaningful."



John Henry Ramirez

Ramirez, 37, is scheduled to be put to death Sept. 8, but he and his attorneys filed a federal lawsuit Aug. 10 claiming state prison officials had denied his request to have Moore lay hands on him during his execution, reported.

The lawsuit cites a 2019 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that stayed Texas inmate Patrick Murphy's execution unless his Buddhist spiritual advisor be allowed to accompany him to the execution chamber. Murphy has yet to receive a new execution date.

A spokesperson from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice said officials had no comment on the situation.

Moore explained he would normally only be able to enter the death chamber and stand in a specific spot, without saying or doing anything. The lawsuit filed by Ramirez, which contains an affidavit from Moore, explains the role of touch in ministry and asks that Moore be able to minister to Ramirez through touch as he is put to death.

A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Moore said the ministry of touch during prayer or to offer comfort has been a part of every Southern Baptist church he's been around or been a part of. He said the power of positive touch can model some of the ministry of Jesus.

"Jesus healed with touch," Moore said. "He had the children come to him and he held them close, and we see in James the anointing of others which involves touch. It is a traditional practice for us (as Southern Baptists) if we can and if it's appropriate, to touch. To me it's an encouragement and a blessing."

Ramirez was sentenced to death after the 2004 murder of a Corpus Christi

convenience store worker. Reports say Ramirez stabbed the 45-year-old employee during a robbery amounting to only \$1.25.

Moore has ministered to Ramirez as a chaplain for years and hopes the lawsuit will allow his ministry to continue even until the man's death.

"In Matthew 25 Jesus talks about when I was in prison you visited me, and that's what we do for the least of these," Moore said. "It is commanded in Scripture to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and part of the blessing of touch is that you show the person they're loved, and it tells them, 'No matter what has happened, you're loved.' Because two or more are gathered, we know that God will be with us."