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Resisting the choice for death

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NCR Today

Grace abounds.

This past week I have been overwhelmed by news accounts, political analysis and personal reflection ? all on tough topics: death penalty, use of guns, efforts to resist nuclear weapons manufacture.

On Sunday the New York Times printed an essay about coming to terms with the fact that a brother?s murderer would live.

Matthew Parker was himself a convicted felon and he recounts his journey from a desire for blood revenge for his brother to the conclusion that he doesn?t want to kill anyone, much less have the state do it for him.

A week ago there were two more very personal essays in the Times about the experiences of a policeman and an Iraq war veteran carrying weapons every waking hour. Neither one of them would wish that burden on us and they puzzle over why we would ever want it.

The fourth reflection on resisting the choice for death is a political action going on in Kansas City, and reported in *Sojourners*.

The city issued bonds to finance a nuclear weapons plant for fear the Department of Energy would build a replacement plant somewhere else. The bonds and contracts cannot be undone. The Kansas City Planned Industrial Expansion Authority now owns the plant that makes 85 percent of the components of nuclear bombs ? all non-radioactive.

But the City Council is committed to planning for civilian conversion of the plant if we ever stop making

nukes, and a city ballot initiative in November will give residents an opportunity to vote, 'never again.'

Most of us don't carry guns or have a brother who was murdered. Most of our cities don't own weapons plants. But our retirement plans own stocks in arms manufacturers. Our taxes pay for war and executions. These readings provide some meditation about ways our society chooses death and they offer some new paths for our thinking.

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