

July 22, 2013

LETTER FROM JAMES WEAVER  
REGARDING REQUEST FOR CLEMENCY

The Honorable Mike Beebe,

A POWERFUL MESSAGE —

Sir, my name is James Ross Weaver Jr.. I am an inmate at the ADC Tucker Maximum Security Unit and currently in my 23rd year of incarceration for the conviction of capital murder for the death of John Rodgers in 1989. I am applying for clemency and hope that upon reading this letter and testimonies of others concerning me and my personal accomplishments, you will have some idea of the man that I am and the person I have become over these many years.

It is often said that a life should be lived free of regrets, that we make mistakes and should forget them and move beyond them. That's a fairly noble statement and I'm sure many strive to that standard. But I would like to think that there is truer courage in admitting that the very disappointments that might sabotage a person's sense of worth and purpose create the best potential for greatness. That is my personal experience. At the moment when my life seemed to be over, everything forfeited, a future abandoned... somehow hope was not lost for me. I was only 19 years old and there was a lot that I did not understand and certainly struggled to accept. That I would spend the rest of my life in prison or that I would even have anything to do with such a cruel tragedy. My childhood was far from perfect and I'm sure I could point a finger at a myriad of negative experiences that one might blame for some of my ridiculous decisions growing up, yet nothing that could excuse my involvement with the death of another person. It was a severely crushing dilemma. How did I get where I was? Who was I? And, how do I even begin to make amends? It took me a long time to understand those questions before I could answer them. But over time with a measure of emotional maturity, a measure of education and life experience combined with the dedicated loving support from family and friends and a deep relationship with God, I began to gain the perspective needed to make sense of my past and my future.

None of what I share in this letter is an excuse for my guilt. Nothing could excuse my absence of action or compassion as John was killed by Alan Hubbard so brutally. That I would sacrifice the life of another for fear of my own... is a hard truth not so easily reconciled. Even after 23 plus years, the stain of that shame lingers. Alan is since deceased. Another tragedy for another family. The loss that fateful night has imputed to the families involved is immeasurable. Words truly fail.

My story really isn't so much different than a million other stories about kids growing up surrounded by addiction, abuse, apathy, and poverty. Fortunately I did not find solace in gangs or look to express myself through malicious criminality. I wasn't brave enough for that. If truth be told I was really just such a coward. Not just for fear of physical confrontation, but emotional confrontation as well. I always felt developmentally behind everyone else and was always catching up. I struggled with feelings of powerlessness and weakness that created this terrible internal torment for me. Because I often chided myself for it, I began to loath myself. When I found success in something I would always end up sabotaging it somehow because my low sense of self-worth did not leave much room for achievement. A debilitating cycle and a truly sad story because the truth was, that I was worth more than I could have imagined. As I grew up I became involved in things and attached myself to people that only validated my growing sense of apathy. I used drugs to insulate myself against the responsibilities and uncertainties I faced everyday. I wanted happiness in a world of my own making where I was free from the terrible relationship with my dad, free from judgments and bullying, and free from the social pressures of being poor. I wanted deliverance, but I was just a hostage trading one dark place for another. Running away - there was something I was good at.

My turning point came a short time after my conviction. A kind person saw fit to help me realize that I *was* worth something and that my life still held value. When I opened my life to the One Who made it, everything truly changed for me. But as much as I reveled in a new found joy, I also realized just how lost I had been my whole life. I embarked on a journey that has been painfully difficult, yet so richly rewarding. I have endeavored to take every moment, every opportunity available to me to reconcile, to grow, to excel and attain something much better for myself and those I care for. I practically threw away my senior year in high school, so I immediately began to further my education gaining GED and Vo-Tech certificates. My love of God and music introduced me to an incredible praise and worship ministry that is a constant source of strength and direction in my life. I became involved in addiction recovery through faith and clinical initiatives. My confirmation to the Episcopal church was a true validation of the man I had become, a result of the generous love so many had labored to invest in me. My life truly became a catalyst for change both inwardly and outwardly. It really is hard to express how being awakened to the empowerment of love and servant-hood is so absolutely transforming. Having stood on the precipice of hopelessness, feeling marginalized and alone... it was love, faithfully tangible, completely realized and full of possibility that healed me, restored me, commissioned me.

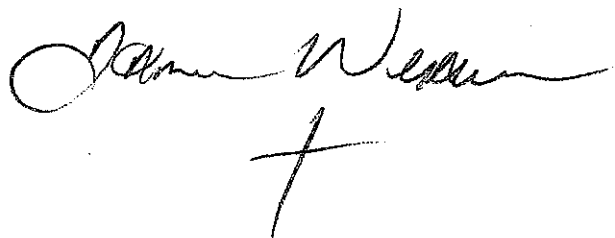
There is a lot I can say about what "I" feel, but it is those who truly know me, who have known me both before and after my incarceration; it is their witness of my life, of me, that I pray declares with sincere clarity the boy that I was and the man I am today. They have been witnesses all these years to both my shining best and my dismal worst. I would never have achieved so much, not even a mustard seed, without them.

I do strive to live my life with the unconditional commitment to reach out to others in order to prevent another John Rodgers, another James Weaver, another Alan Hubbard. My shame and regret, and the loss of John *can* be healed. But never forgotten. That's my testimony. That the memory of John's life would be meaningful and not final. That somehow, my life will reflect that tragedy does not have to be a hollow, vain thing. There can be meaning and purpose if the means to embrace them are cultivated. That's my personal pledge to John, myself and all those who so selflessly invest in me.

Thank you, sir, for reading my letter. I pray to know the day I am free to share the message of my life with others beyond the bonds of prison and to pursue new dreams and aspirations. However you decide the ends of justice are best served, I recognize I must be continually dedicated to reconcile the debt I owe before the eyes of those I so grievously disappointed and hurt.

I ask with the deepest humility I know that you exercise the power of clemency and grant my appeal for relief from my current sentence of Life without the possibility of parole. Thank you and God bless you for your gracious consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James Weaver", with a large, stylized flourish below it.

February 18, 2013

LETTER FROM MOTHER OF JAMES WEAVER

Mr. John Felts, Chairman  
Arkansas Parole board  
105 West Capitol, Suite 500  
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: James R. Weaver Jr. 93762  
2501 State Farm Rd.  
Tucker, AR 72168

Dear Mr. Felts:

My name is Deborah Croxton and I am writing on behalf of my son, James R. Weaver Jr.. He is currently serving a prison sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole, at the Maximum Unit, Tucker, AR. He started serving his sentence in February, 1990, 23 years ago, at the age of 19.

In March of this year, he is going to file for clemency. It has been six years since he last filed and was turned down due to length of time served.

The purpose of my letter is to enlighten you regarding his accomplishments, education and spiritual growth. He completed his GED in the first year he served and has went on to self educate himself in computer systems, which has helped him tremendously in the many job positions he held. He is highly regarded by his superiors in every job capacity held. He has earned the respect of the guards, prison staff and the many volunteers he has come in contact with. He has been confirmed in the Episcopal Church, he participates in the prison chapel band and events put on by volunteers. When he was allowed to go to his father's and grandmother's funerals, the officers who escorted him were very impressed by his attitude and politeness.

When released, James will have a home to go to, a job and many friends and family for support. He also has an Episcopal Church and minister to help him in re-enter the world outside of the prison walls. He would like to go to college to further his education.

James has been held accountable and has proven that he has matured beyond measure that he is ready to enter the free society and be a productive citizen of that society.

A folder full of papers and letters can only tell so much about a person, but a one-on-one hearing will allow you to see James as he really is, intelligent, respectful, regretful for happened 23 years ago and willing to do what it takes to be free.

So as a mother who loves her son very much and wants to see him have a chance at a full and normal life, I respectfully urge you to take a good look at James Weaver Jr., a man that has paid his debt to society and deserves to be free.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Croxton".

Deborah Croxton

5600 Echols Rd.

Cabot, AR 72023

501-286-9617

- CHILDHOOD FRIEND & FORMER ROOMMATE
- HAS OFFERED TO GIVE JAMES A JOB AT HIS BUSINESS IN ALABAMA AS WELL AS A PLACE TO STAY IN HIS HOME

Dear Sir or Madam,

I'm not really sure where to start on something like this. I've been putting it off for as long as possible simply due to the emotions that this causes within me.

James Ross Weaver is and always has been my closest friend. It tears me up on the inside every time I think about where he is and how he came to be there.

While I admire the fact that he accepts full responsibility for his actions (or, more appropriately, lack thereof); I cannot absolve myself from the fact that I introduced him into the environment that led him to this end.

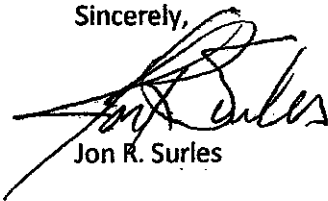
Alan Hubbard was my roommate and James met him through me. I was fortunate to have moved out when I did; but I still feel the guilt from having encouraged James to be there. It could just have easily been me that was lying on that couch or exposed to Alan's madness during the aftermath. I've asked myself numerous times what I would have done if I had been in James' shoes. None of the answers take me to a happy place.

After the trial I moved in with James' family. Many years later I realized that I was there to offer them a surrogate son in place of the one I felt like I had played a part in taking away from them. Please don't misunderstand that statement; I did and still do, love all of them as if they were my own family. I regret not keeping in touch after hearing that James' father passed away and I was not there for him.

Now I'm all grown up and have a family of my own. My family keeps in contact with Uncle James through letters and phone calls; but I really wish we had him around for them to actually meet and get to know.

I'm not certain, now that all of that is out, what the true content of this type of letter is supposed to be. I will say that if you want someone to vouch for James; I will gladly do so. If you want to know that he has a place to stay upon his release; I will assure it. If there is anything that I can do to assist in effecting his release; you need only tell me what needs to be done.

Sincerely,



Jon R. Surles

FROM WIFE OF JOHN SURLLES

To Whom it may Concern:

My name is Melissa Surlles and I am writing this on behalf of James Weaver Jr, one of my husband's dearest friends. I have never had the pleasure of meeting James in person, but I hope to one day. He and I have spoken at length many times and written many letters to one another.

It is my understanding that James is coming up on a chance to be granted clemency. I sincerely hope that his request for clemency is given true consideration as I believe in my heart that he has so much to give to the world outside prison walls.

James has become a man inside a dark and dreary place, a place where there is more bad than good and where people often succumb to their more base instincts. In spite of this, he has chosen a path for himself that many people in society would be

proud to have chosen for themselves.  
The world needs more people in it  
who are like the man he has  
grown into. Because of this, I  
write this letter.

If, for some reason, the state of  
Arkansas would rather he not be  
there upon his release, we would be  
proud to have him here in Alabama.  
He will always be welcome with us.  
I do a lot of things in the community  
here, from working with the homeless  
to volunteering with animals and I  
am certain I can help him find  
a place within a ~~community~~  
ministry where he can make a  
difference.

Thank you,  
Melissa Sures



## FIRST LOVE OF JAMES WEAVER

March 6, 2013

Kelly C. Jones  
5643 Moro Bay Highway  
El Dorado, AR 71730  
870-875-2645  
870-866-7853

TO ALL THOSE CONCERNED IN THE CONSIDERATION OF RELEASE OF JAMES WEAVER JR.

Dear Sir or Madame,

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Wherein he hath abounded to the riches of his grace. Ephesians 1: 2, 3, 4, 7, & 8 KJV.

My name is Kelly Jones; I am 39 year old female, I am a mother, a Sunday school and Awana teacher, a notary, a volunteer for Make a Wish Foundation, a volunteer for several civic venues within my community, and a friend of Mr. James Weaver JR. I have lived in El Dorado for approximately eleven years. I have been a resident of Arkansas most of my life, and I have known Mr. Weaver since I was fourteen. We were friends, and later, when I was fifteen we started dating. We dated until James went to college in Arizona, and then we broke-up, but our friendship endured the hormonal teenage years.

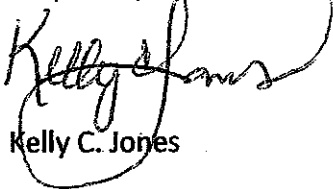
Mr. Weaver had a difficult home life as a youngster. His father was a verbally abusive alcoholic, and it influenced James and his wanting a new better life away from his home environment. He moved in with friends, and other acquaintances and I believe that is what led him down the path of becoming involved with Alan, and John his roommates. The lifestyle they exhibited consisted of drugs and bad decision making. Ultimately those drugs and bad decisions led Alan to murder John, and James to make some wrong choices in not reporting or trying to physically stop Alan from committing the murder of John. He was nineteen years old. He was virtually a child himself. He has most certainly matured in the 24 years since that fateful day. There is a passage in the bible that reads; A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished, Proverbs 22:1-4. I think this is what occurred when Mr. Weaver was sentenced with a life without parole sentence, he was punished because he didn't have the knowledge to remove himself from the evil around him. I know now that he is wise, because he has received salvation and redemption through Christ Jesus. He knows he is forgiven, and I beg of you to forgive him as well.

I understand that the death of John will never be undone. I understand there were crimes committed, what I fail to understand is how keeping James in jail any longer could be justified. He has more than served enough time to acknowledge his wrong doing, and since he has been in jail he has become more than an ambassador for Christ. He has led countless men to the Lord, by explaining the good news of salvation to them. It is time for him to be released, so he can spread the good word to his community, and get a chance to live the life he has been denied since birth.

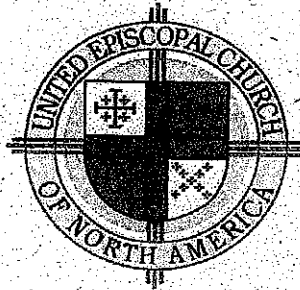
He knows he did wrong, he knows what happened in the past. He also knows what he does right, and how far he has come. He has a plan and a hope for the future. He is a wonderful, thoughtful, loving man, and he can only enhance any community he is part of. Arkansans' could only benefit by his presence as a civilian and I implore you to release him. I know with confidence that he would do what is required by law and morally to co-exist with others. He could only be an asset to any organization he is affiliated with. He is a strong, intelligent, wise, and above all else Christian man. He has served more than enough time of his life in bondage; he deserves an opportunity to experience life as a free man. He has earned it.

If I can be of further assistance to anyone in your organization in anyway please contact me at the numbers listed above. I am anxious to hear of Mr. Weavers expected release date. Please consider forgiving what has already been repaid tenfold.

Prayerfully,



Kelly C. Jones



## St. Barnabas Anglican Church

May 20, 2013

James Weaver - 093762  
Maximum Security Unit  
2501 State Farm Road  
Tucker, AR 72168

Dear James,

Thank you for inviting me to provide a letter of recommendation for you—I am honored to do so. James, I have known you since we worked together in the Kairos Prison Ministry at the Tucker Unit, beginning in 2003. In my capacity as a ministry volunteer, I had the opportunity to get to know you in a casual albeit spiritual environment. I was always impressed by your intelligence and quick learning skills as well as your sincere commitment to your spiritual condition.

As a pastor, I have had the opportunity to counsel with you on several occasions and found you to be sincere to your faith and eager to pursue the right pathways in both your physical and spiritual life. I believe you have the skills and motivation to reach out to others and help them find that same path, and based on my observations, you have been most willing to do so.

If recommendations are useful in your current situation and status, I would not hesitate to recommend you for consideration for return to the community where I believe you can and are anxious to exercise the intellectual and spiritual skills you have demonstrated while incarcerated.

History tells us that penitentiaries were established to help miscreants realize the necessity for penitence, which is in seeking God's forgiveness, and repentance, which is turning our lives in the opposite direction. From my observations, your experience in the corrections system has had that effect and enabled you to see both the error of your ways and a right pathway to lead you back into the community where, by your example, you can demonstrate the saving nature of God in your life.

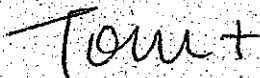
James Weaver

May 20, 2013

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James, please accept my very best wishes in your efforts to regain your status as a full-fledged citizen, not only in the secular community, but also in the spiritual community to which you have demonstrated such dedication and commitment.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom +".

The Reverend Canon Tom Bradshaw  
Rector, St. Barnabas Anglican Church

January 18, 2013

Mr. John Felts, Chairman Parole Board  
105 West Capitol, Suite 500  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72168

Re: Parole Hearing for James Weaver 93762  
2501 State Farm Road  
Tucker, AR 72168

Dear Mr. Felts:

I am writing in behalf of James Weaver's request for parole from the Department of Arkansas Corrections. I became acquainted with James while visiting with my son, Stephen Graves, who was incarcerated August, 2000 at Cummins, later transferred. James was respectful and courteous when we would visit at concession stand, prison ministries, and speak with him during these times. He always displayed integrity and sincerity in his demeanor. (My wife worked with his mother at Farmers Insurance Company in Little Rock). I believe James has accepted responsibility for his role in this crime and is remorseful for his actions.

Being informed of his case, I respectfully ask that the Parole Board give favorable consideration to his request for parole. By his serving these many years; - and being charged as an accomplice to the crime, - we sincerely ask that consideration be given to time served as ample. I please ask that James be given a second chance whereby he can make a favorable contribution to society in his particular community and to our country.

Your favorable consideration for his parole will be sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

  
Reverend Paul Graves, Sr.

261 Scroggins Terrace  
Hot Springs, AR 71901  
501-912-6503

January 18, 2013

Mr. John Felts, Chairman Parole Board

105 West Capitol, Suite 500

Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: James Weaver 93762  
2501 State Farm Road  
Tucker, AR 72168

Dear Mr. Felts:

I am Darlene Graves, a former coworker of Deborah Croxton, James Weaver's mother. I worked with Deborah at Farmers Insurance, Little Rock, for 19 years, been retired the last 5 years, but have kept in contact during that time.

In August, 2000, my 25-year-old son, Stephen Don Graves was incarcerated, I believe Cummins. I hadn't met James at that time. When Deborah told me about James, I spoke to him briefly on my next visit with Stephen as James worked in the concession stand. I was very impressed with his personality, politeness, demeanor and wondered why a young man like him was incarcerated.

As time progressed, both he and Stephen were moved to a different facility where I would see James occasionally and keep up with him through his mom and Stephen. Deborah and I both shared our burdens, hurts, concerns, in ways to help our sons. My husband and I were able to attend some of the prison ministry services. We were allowed to play both our accordions, and Stephen would play his drums that he was allowed to bring to the prison. He played with the band.

I felt bad telling Deborah that Stephen had been paroled and her son was still incarcerated. None-the-less, I still prayed for her and James. I feel now is way past time he should have been released.

I am coming before this parole board, as a concerned parent, friend, retired minister's wife, asking that James be granted parole:

1. He has been incarcerated approximately 24 years.
2. He has been productive being incarcerated in office positions.
3. He has been able to prove that he can be a productive, accountable citizen. He has personality, characteristics, knowledge to pursue an adequate career on the outside.
4. Time is getting short for all concerned to spend time together.

Now, I am coming before the parole board begging and pleading for James' parole. He has already put in 24 years – a whole lot more time than some people who have committed worse crimes. I feel like you will not see him enter your doors again. He will be an asset to our society – which we can use a lot of now.... He needs to be with his mother, sisters, nieces, nephews, as age is not on our side now...

SO TRUE

Thanks for your positive decision. God Bless!

*Darlene Graves*

Darlene Graves

261 Scroggins Terrace

Hot Springs, AR 71901

501-912-6502