

POSITION PAPER ON ABORTION

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is convinced that the Bible strongly affirms the dignity and value of every human life.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

“My frame was hidden from Thee when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.” (Psalm 139:15)

“Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother He named me.” (Isaiah 49:1)

“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15)

“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 1:41)

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, a confessional statement shared by most Reformed churches, forbids the taking of life while demanding the preservation of life:

“The Sixth Commandment requireth all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.” (Question 68)

“The Sixth Commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.” (Question 69)

Scripture teaches that we are not merely to avoid involvement in injustice. God’s people are called upon to speak for the oppressed and defenseless. The Scripture passages cited above are evidence that God accords human value and dignity to the unborn child.

The 6th General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church affirms that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. It attributes human personhood to the unborn child.

Because we hold these convictions concerning unborn children, we urge the promotion of legislation that brings our judicial and legal systems into line with the scriptural view on protecting the poor and weak.

Christians are called to be good citizens by impacting the state in positive ways. All citizens, Christians and non-Christians alike, must have freedom of conscience on all private moral and ethical issues, since God alone is Lord of the conscience. But the issue of equal protection of life under the laws of the state is not a private but a public matter.

The Bible teaches that all persons and nations are responsible before God for their ethical decisions, including those which relate to the preservation of human life.

In addition to prayers and general assistance, the General Assembly urges that the following steps be implemented by individuals, congregations, and judicatories in an effort to provide substantial support for those impacted by problem pregnancies:

1. Women facing problem or unwanted pregnancies should receive support, love, acceptance and counsel from pastors, counselors, physicians and Christian friends both during and after the decisions they face. The Church must provide compassionate biblical and spiritual guidance to these persons.
2. The men involved who respond with indifference must be confronted with their responsibilities and role in such crises.
3. The Church must support and nurture women who decide to carry an unwanted pregnancy to full term.
4. The Church must seek ways to support and care for all children who result from unwanted pregnancies.
5. The Church must serve as a therapeutic community to those who have experienced physical, emotional, or spiritual wounds from abortion or giving up a child for adoption.
6. Both individual Christians and the Church should oppose abortion and do everything in their power to provide supportive communities and alternatives to abortion.
7. The Church should declare to the world and teach its members that abortion must never be used as a convenience or a means of birth control.

The purpose of this statement is pastoral. It is best proclaimed by those who are profoundly aware of their continuous need for the mercy and forgiveness of God. The Church must always follow the compassionate example of Christ who said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

*Adopted by the 6th General Assembly
June, 1986*