

Abortion

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is convinced that the Bible strongly affirms the dignity and value of every human life based on what the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139:15 NIV).

“Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name” (Isaiah 49:1 NIV).

“for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born” (Luke 1:15 NIV).

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41 NIV).

To further differentiate mankind from any other living creature, we read: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27 NIV). Unlike any other created being, Scripture also teaches: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7 NIV).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, a confessional statement shared by most Reformed churches, forbids the taking of innocent life while demanding the preservation of life from the moment of conception through to natural death:

“The Sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life,

and the life of others.” (Question 68).¹

“The Sixth Commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly...” (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 Evangelical Presbyterian Church affirms that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. It attributes human personhood to the unborn child. This extends to the unborn child ex utero as no less a human being than the child in the mother’s womb.

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

Christians are called upon 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. However, 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 moral and ethical decisions, including those that relate to the preservation of human life. In addition to prayers and general assistance, the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church urges that the following steps be implemented by the individuals, congregations, and judicatories in a concerted effort to provide substantial support for those impacted by problematic and/or unexpected pregnancies:

1. A woman facing a problematic pregnancy or an unexpected pregnancy should expect to receive support, love, acceptance and wise counsel from her pastor(s), counselor(s), physician(s) and fellow Christians. Regardless of the woman’s decision, the Church should always provide compassionate biblical and spiritual

guidance to that individual.

2. The Church must serve as a loving and supportive community to any man involved to inform and direct him in his personal responsibilities and obligations as the child's father.
3. The Church must be supportive of the woman who chooses life for the child of an unexpected pregnancy and must seek ways to support and care for those children carried to term through unexpected pregnancy.
4. The Church must serve as a loving and supportive community to those who have experienced physical, emotional, or spiritual wounds as a result of undergoing an abortion or placing a child for adoption.
5. Christians should individually and corporately oppose abortion (except under the most extreme of circumstances that endanger the physical life of the mother), and do everything in their power to provide support groups, para-church ministries and sponsoring agencies that offer viable alternatives to abortion.
6. The Church should declare to the world and teach its members that abortion should never be used as a convenience or a means of birth control.
7. The Church should actively oppose the killing of human embryos through the extraction of stem cells for medical research or treatment.
8. The Church should oppose the practice of producing more embryos by *in vitro* fertilization than would be implanted *in utero*, which would either be destroyed immediately or stored frozen with the strong practical likelihood of later destruction.

¹Quotations from the Westminster Confession of Faith are from The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in Modern English, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2009.

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