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MULTIPLYING HEALTHY CHURCHES  
AMONG ALL PEOPLE

# CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

## SECTION A

### THE CHURCH, FAMILY LIFE AND SEXUALITY

The following resolutions represent the core conviction that the family as a biblically defined foundational unit in any society must be nurtured and protected. While our society brings great stress upon the family and the relationships which preserve its integrity, the biblical imperatives remain intact nevertheless. By seeking to respect the biblical ordering of human sexual relations, by protecting the family unit and manifesting regard for the human person from birth through old age, these resolutions call the Church to faithfulness in its own relationships and in its witness to the larger society.

#### **Resolutions:**

Singleness, Marriage and the Family (1977)  
America's Aging and the Church (1978)  
Homosexuality (1980)  
The Church's Concern for the Divorced (1985)  
Pornography (1985)  
Teenage Suicide (1987)  
Television Programming (1988)  
Family Violence and Abuse (1988)  
Foster Care (1991)

## **SINGLENESS, MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY**

Resolutions adopted at General Conference, 1977  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In light of the millions of single adults in our society, we affirm singleness as a valid biblical lifestyle (1 Cor. 7:8). Therefore, we encourage our churches to develop meaningful ministries to single persons and to seek their essential role in the fellowship and ministry of the Body.

In light of the fact that one and one half million unmarried couples live together in America, we affirm marriage as consistent with the biblical norm.

In light of the million divorces occurring in the United States each year, we affirm the biblical ideal of marriage as being an indissoluble relationship and we regret the rising trend of divorce; and where it affects people within or without our churches we urge that our churches extend compassion and ministry to the affected.

In light of the widespread breakdown of the family in our society, we likewise affirm the importance of the family unit and its importance to the nurture and development of human life and the health of society.

Recognizing the pressures in our society that have contributed to the breakdown of marriage and the family, such as, changing value systems, the high mobility of society and the impact of television; we urge the following:

1. The complexities of our modern industrial society have reduced the amount of time a family spends together. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important that the family compensate by carving out time to be together.
2. That the local church structure its program so as to allow sufficient time for family units to have time together.
3. That the local church helps its families to develop meaningful family activities.
4. That parents take the initiative in relating more effectively to their children and to each other.
5. That parents use discretionary judgment not only in the selection of television programs, but also in the amount of time that television is in use in the home.
6. That parents give serious consideration to the implications of uprooting the family for the sake of personal advancement.
7. That parents use biblical family patterns and principles in the development of their family.

## **AMERICA'S AGING AND THE CHURCH**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1980  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, an ever increasing proportion of our society is over 65, bringing the total to well over 20 million Americans, and

WHEREAS, medical advances are lengthening the life expectancy of all of us, promising an ever increasing number of elderly, and

WHEREAS, this period of life brings physical deterioration and many kinds of emotional stress producing a higher rate of suicides among the elderly, and

WHEREAS, our children are seeing an increasing attendance by the elderly at services and an increase of elderly in the community about us.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we make every effort possible to reach the unchurched elderly with the gospel of Jesus Christ, seeking them out in love through home visitation programs, nursing home services, activities in the church or community, and through ministry to their physical needs, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we make every effort to make these years enjoyable for the elderly, especially those in our churches, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we provide opportunities of service in the church for those capable of serving, making use of their years of experience and wisdom. This may include service on boards or committees, use of their talents and gifts in creative ways, or, beyond the local church, in short-term missionary projects or denominational ministries, and

BE IT RESOLVED that we provide special ministries to the elderly including good books and tapes in the church library for their enjoyment and enrichment; transportation to church services, activities and other needs; visitation and ministry to them when shut in, along with the provision of tapes of church services; providing social activities of interest to them, encouraging interaction with other age groups; making sure that every effort is made to meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

## HOMOSEXUALITY

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1978  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS God in His Holy Word plainly condemns the practice of homosexuality as an abomination in His sight (Lev. 18:22), a degrading and unnatural passion (Rom. 1:26-27), one that brings grave consequences in this life, and a sin that, if persisted in, will exclude one from the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10), and

WHEREAS God desires that all repent and come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4), and

WHEREAS through the Apostle Paul, he testifies that those once involved in homosexual practices were among those who were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11);

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT neither individual Christians, nor ministers of the Word of God, nor congregations of the Lord Jesus Christ, may take away from or lessen God's prohibition of and warnings against the practice of homosexuality. Neither may they individually or collectively as responsible citizens in a free society, urge or concede that the state should give special protection or approval to this practice or promote it as a matter of personal taste, free choice, or "sexual orientation,"

THAT individual Christians, ministers and congregations, understanding that all human beings are sinners and that as Christians we have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly and hostile to God (Rom. 3:23, 5:6; 10) must warn against homosexual practices as from the mouth of the Lord (Ezek. 3:17) and, at the same time proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restitution and power for godly living for all who will repent and believe the gospel (John 1:12, 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Phil. 2:13),

THAT individual Christians, ministers and congregations, compassionately and in love, should proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and the admonition to sin no more (John 8:11) to those once involved in homosexual practices, admitting them into fellowship after confession of faith and evidence of repentance, as with those who have sinned grievously in other ways (1 Cor. 6:11).

## **THE CHURCH'S CONCERN FOR THE DIVORCED**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1985  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

INASMUCH as The Evangelical Free Church of America must never compromise its biblically mandated position to uphold the sanctity of marriage by precept and example, declaring the clear fact that divorce is contrary to God's loving plan for the life and well-being of man and woman, and that we will always be committed to affirming the Gospel message of forgiveness and hope from our pulpits, our programs and our policies; and

INASMUCH as rampant divorce rates are a tragic fact of modern life reaching even into the life of the church itself, deceiving and victimizing many within families of God's people, as well as in the world at large;

### **BE IT RESOLVED:**

1. That our churches teach the whole council of God on family life and marriage, balancing concerns of equality and submission, freedom and obedience, responsibility and independence.
2. That our churches recognize that the mandate of the Great Commission to disciple all people, includes all parties involved in the divorce since Christian service is a necessity to all who claim to be Christian.
3. That our churches evaluate, clarify and teach their biblical position on the role of the divorced.
4. That our churches develop ministry to the divorced.
5. That our churches recognize the gifts of ministry and provide for those who have been divorced opportunities to serve the Lord.
6. That our churches radically deal with non-biblical prejudice surrounding divorce and seek the healing and full restoration of the divorced to the life and fellowship of the body.

## PORNOGRAPHY

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1985  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

INASMUCH as the Evangelical Free Church bases its standard of morality upon the authority of the Word of God; and

WHEREAS the Bible condemns fornication (Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5), adultery (Lev. 20:13, Rom. 1:24), incest (Lev. 18:6, I Cor. 5:1), homosexuality (Lev. 20:13, Rom. 1:24), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), and prostitution (Lev. 19:29, Eph. 5:5) as immoral; and since pornography is known to condone and promote all these forms of immorality; and

WHEREAS though God created both men and women in His own image, pornography is essentially a degradation of women since most pornography involves the use of women in subordinate, degrading poses for sexual exploitation, and even the sadistic and violent pleasures of men and fosters the mentality which considers the human being, not as a person, but as an object which exists to gratify the selfish interest of others and reflects hostility toward women; and

WHEREAS pornography is known to be both seductive, and addictive, desensitizing its victims, leading them to greater consumption of pornographic material; and

WHEREAS research shows that pornography incites violence, contributes to many violent crimes such as rape and child abuse, and encourages illicit and abusive sexual activity; and

WHEREAS this seriously undermines family structure as well as church and community values; and

WHEREAS the Supreme Court has established that obscene material is not protected by the First Amendment (Roth vs. United States, 1957); and that material can be judged as a whole to determine whether it lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific values (Miller vs. California, 1973); and that juries can judge obscenity by local community standards rather than by a National Standard (Hamling vs. United States, 1974); that indecent language in broadcasting can be prohibited (FCC vs. Pacifica, 1978); and affirms the protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse (New York vs. Ferber, 1982); and

WHEREAS pornography has increased in the past several years to where it is now a multi-billion dollar business often linked to organized crime; and

WHEREAS modern technology is rapidly expanding access to pornography in our homes through cable TV, video cassette recorders, the telephone and even personal computers; and

WHEREAS this expanded access means increased consumption of pornography not only by adults but by unsupervised children in our homes; and

WHEREAS the use of children in pornographic material is growing at an alarming rate;

BE IT AFFIRMED that we as members of the Evangelical Free Church do hereby condemn pornography as evil, exploitative, offensive and totally unacceptable in any form.

THAT we insist that the President of the United States, the Postal Services, and the Department of Justice and all proper authorities enforce all obscenity, pornography, and indecency laws; and

THAT we encourage continuing legislative efforts to eliminate the destructive influence of pornography, obscenity and indecency; and

FINALLY, we urge our congregations to patronize and publicly support those businesses which refuse to benefit financially or in any other way from the sale, production, or distribution of pornography, and conversely—in accord with our first amendment rights to freedom of speech—we urge our congregations to enter the public debate in opposition to the growing evil of pornography, to oppose its growing intrusive presence in our public life, to insist on the enforcement of the laws which regulate it, and to protest against those who profit by it.



## TEENAGE SUICIDE

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1987  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Teenage suicide has reached epidemic proportions in American society, affecting even the Christian community. Sixty-five hundred teenagers commit suicide each year and 400,000 young people coming from every segment of society attempt it.

Drug and alcohol abuse has been found to be one of the primary causes of teenage suicide.

Separation and divorce cause great trauma among the children who are its innocent victims and have been shown to be a factor in the rise of teenage suicide.

Young people daily enter a world of secularism where the unique value of human life is undermined.

The American society has developed an ambivalent attitude toward the value of human life which with increasing frequency manifests itself in an approval of the act of suicide.

Since it is the mandate of the Christian church to proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will give teens purpose in life and enable them to cope with the pressures of our society, we urge the church:

1. To become sensitive to some of the conditions which encourage suicide among teenagers: high rates of alcohol and chemical abuse, marital breakdowns, high mobility communities, and the epidemic effort of other teenage suicides.
2. To develop ministries that respond to individuals caught up in these conditions: counseling ministries, hotline ministries, warm and caring youth groups, and church activities which appeal to the unchurched young person.
3. To teach in fresh ways the value of human life in an effort to counter the despair which results from the purely secular view of life pervasive in American society.
4. To mobilize special ministries and counseling in those communities where there is a teenage suicide to help avoid the epidemic effect on other teenagers.
5. To support those inter-denominational groups in the community which work with young people on the school campuses, and to encourage cooperation between these groups and the local church.
6. To encourage the public schools to teach the value of human life and to affirm the intrinsic worth of each individual student.
7. To integrate God's eternal truth with the complex issues facing our young people.

We further urge parents to model lives that are exemplary before their children, providing examples of Christian commitment to the concepts of compassion, honesty, and healthy relationships between both husband and wife and parent and child, living in freedom from bondage to any drugs or alcohol.

## TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1988  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Over the past three decades television has become the most influential medium of communication in our society. This industry is not only a primary source of information, but is also a principal service of entertainment, socialization and value formation.

With this in mind, we urge Christians to carefully consider the role of television within their homes. Excessive hours spent watching TV detract from family communication and interpersonal development. Many TV programs introduce values and lifestyles which are contradictory to biblical development. Role models often mock godly virtues. A pre-occupation with TV viewing has a detrimental effect on academic performance and spiritual, emotional and physical development. In contrast to presenting a “window to the world,” the pervasive themes of sex and violence actually present a distorted view of reality.

We encourage families to take three steps of action. The first is that we discipline the amount of time spent in television viewing and carefully monitor which programs are watched. It is imperative that parents interact with their children regarding the content of programs, assisting them to evaluate and discuss philosophies expressed.

Secondly, we urge Christians to provide feedback to producers and sponsors regarding the content of programs. As a consumer-oriented industry, television and its advertisers are sensitive to public opinion. We challenge the television industry to present people who are models of morality and decency. It is not unreasonable for us to expect accuracy in the portrayal of godly people nor for us to expect restraint in what is currently excessive profanity, sexual expression and violence.

Thirdly, that we support and encourage Christian families choosing to eliminate all TV viewing from their homes.

We applaud efforts the American Family Association (National Federation for Decency), CLEAR-TV, and other organizations which have demanded greater accountability in television programming. We encourage participation in these worthy efforts.

## FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1988  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The family was instituted by God for the good of the entire human race and for the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all its members. In recent years we have become increasingly aware of the prevalence of family violence and sexual abuse among family members, especially of children, in the larger society and also within the evangelical community.

The Bible clearly gives instructions for intra-family relationships such as the husband's responsibility to love, to sacrifice for his family, to exercise godly leadership, and to provide for their needs (Ephesians 5:25 & 5:23, 25; I Timothy 5:8). The wife is to respect, adapt (submit), and to create a godly home environment (Ephesians 5:33 & 5:22; Proverbs 14:1 & 31:20-29). Both husband and wife are to live in an attitude of mutual submission and respect (Ephesians 5:21). Parents are to exercise loving discipline over their children (Ephesians 6:4). Children are to honor their parents and to obey them (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1).

The Bible instructs parents to exercise disciplinary action over their children, administered in a self-controlled and loving manner (Proverbs 13:24). It also cautions against provoking children to resentment or anger, and especially warns against offending them, and thus causing them to stumble (Ephesians 6:4 & Matthew 18:6). Jesus emphasized the value and worth of each child when He took them on His knee, blessed them, and said "...of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:48; Matthew 18:1-5 & Matthew 19:14).

The Scripture upholds the sanctity of sex within the marriage bond, but decries moral perversion, such as incestuous relationships (I Cor. 7:3-6 & 5:1; Lev. 18). We recognize that the following factors are often present in individuals guilty of sexual abuse and family violence: a background of family violence, a low level of tolerance for stress, low self-esteem, alcoholism, a lack of authentic Christian conviction, jealousy, and reading pornographic materials and/or watching pornographic videos.

Since verbal, physical and sexual abuse all leave scars and inflict pain and suffering that can continue for years, and since child molestation and sexual abuse are on the rise, as indicated by some authorities in the field who tell us:

- that one in every four girls will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime
- that 500,000 children disappear yearly, many forced into sex slavery and pornography
- that sexual assaults are now estimated to be around five million annually, and that 80% of these occur within the family or with someone the child loves and cares about

We resolve the following:

That our Evangelical Free Churches stress personal purity and chastity, and that our pastors emphasize personal Scripture holiness in their messages,

That we guard our minds from the sin of sexual and/or violent fantasies, often depicted in soft or hardcore pornographic literature and/or videos (II Corinthians 10:5; Proverbs 4:23), and

That the church should take the initiative to minister by prayer, counsel and support those individuals who themselves have been or are the victims of family violence and/or sexual abuse, in order to lead them to maturity in their own family relationships and in the body of Christ.

For those who are guilty of family violence and/or sexual abuse, the church should call for repentance, exercise godly discipline, and proclaim forgiveness to the repentant and the ability to change by the power of the shed blood of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 6:9-11).

The church should cooperate with the courts and law enforcement and social service agencies to protect and rehabilitate the abused spouse and/or child, and insist on apprehension of and counseling for the abuser.

When the church cooperates with public agencies on behalf of the victims, it must do so with a recognition of both the need for intervention and the risk which that entails for the individuals and the families involved. The church must also be vigilant, therefore, to exercise its public voice on behalf of all those concerned, holding the agencies of the state accountable to be just and sensitive in their procedures and policies.

Parents should assume primary responsibility for their child's welfare and protection, and should be encouraged to instruct their children in methods of self-protection so that they will not fall prey to molesters either inside or outside the home.

## **FOSTER CARE**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1991  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The breakdown of the American nuclear and extended family has resulted in the tragic displacement of thousands of children. Foster care provides an avenue for the nurture of some 250,000 of these children.

It is estimated that the need for foster care providers will increase dramatically in the next few years as new factors result in the additional displacement of up to 100,000 children per year. These factors include children born with the AIDS virus, those born into homes of alcoholic or drug-dependent parents, or those born with physical and mental handicaps—many of whom, with increasing frequency, are being abandoned, neglected, or subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

Consistently we find in Scripture that our heavenly Father shows great compassion for children, especially those in distressed situations who require special care (Genesis 21:8-21; 2 Samuel 9:1-13; Esther 2:5-7). During the ministry of Jesus, the treatment of children was cited as an evidence of our own deepest response to Him (Mark 9: 35-37; 10:13-16). The loving care of distressed and displaced children is a sign of an authentic relationship with God (Deut. 24:17, 19; Proverbs 23:10; James 1:27).

Those who share God's love for children can provide Christian foster care and affirm the value of human life in a broken world. Therefore we urge families to investigate the possibilities of opening their home for either short—or long-term foster care (Isaiah 58:7; 1 Timothy 5:8).

We encourage churches to provide support networks for foster care families. Assistance could be given through special support groups, through occasional baby-sitting, the provision of clothes, assistance to foster families in equipping their homes, or with transportation.

The Evangelical Free Church has clearly stated its commitment to the value of human life. It is important that we demonstrate our commitment to life in all stages of development. Whether through the direct provision of foster care or through the support of foster care families, we urge Evangelical Free Churches to respond with compassion to the foster care crisis.

## SECTION B

### THE CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT

From the beginning of the American experiment the patterns of relationship between church and state have been historically unique. The freedoms we enjoy—to worship and to witness—are a product in no small measure of the separation of church and state as embodied in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution. But the outworking of that separation—in a society which is both increasingly secular and religiously pluralistic—has often led to a divorce between Christian values and the larger society. Without ignoring the complexities which exist in the relationship of church and state, the following resolutions rest on one basic premise: that the voice of the Christian needs to be heard in public places. Believing that there can be no ultimate divorce between values and public policy, and that ours is a government of the people, by the people, and the people, these resolutions call the Christian to exercise the rights and responsibilities of political involvement, and to enter with humble confidence into the public discourse.

#### **Resolutions:**

The Voice of the Christian (1979)  
Charitable Contributions (1979)  
Religious Freedom (1979)  
The Christian and His Government (1980)  
Church and State (1981)  
Nuclear Defense (1983)  
Sentencing Reform (1983)  
Voter Registration (1984)  
Equal Rights Amendment (1984)  
Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution (1987)  
Child Care and the Federal Government (1989)  
Civil Disobedience and the Christian (1993)  
Homosexuals in the U.S. Military (1993)  
Stranger at Our Gates: A Christian Perspective on Immigration  
Statement of Conscience Concerning Worldwide Persecution of Christians

## **THE VOICE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1979  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS a democratic society with a representative form of government presupposes and depends upon the willingness of all its citizens to participate fully in responsible public decision-making through the political process, and

WHEREAS the number of Bible-believing Christians in North American society is so great that their involvement or non-involvement is of great significance for the direction that society as a whole will take, and

WHEREAS no biblical Christian can speak with authenticity and integrity on moral, ethical, and spiritual matters apart from the instruction he receives from God's Word;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that as Christians in a democratic society at whatever level and in whatever calling God has placed them, have both the right and the duty to share frankly and fully with their fellow citizens those values and standards that they have learned from Scripture. In a "pluralistic" society the Christian may not expect to impose biblical principles just because they are biblical, but he should not withhold from society biblical perspectives in the shaping of law and the political process as a whole.

## **CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1979  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

European visitor Alexis de Toqueville noted a unique quality in colonial America. He marvelled that when needs developed in communities, the people voluntarily associated themselves together and organized to meet those needs.

Since our earliest days, voluntary, non-profit agencies have been part of the vital strength of the United States of America. Such agencies, including religious institutions and churches, have performed necessary functions that otherwise would have fallen to government.

Charitable contributions to voluntary agencies have diminished considerably in recent years, with increased use of the standard deduction on the federal income tax. It has reliably been estimated that between 1970, when 50% of Americans used the standard deduction, and 1977, when 75% or more used the standard deduction, philanthropic organizations lost five billion dollars in contributions as the result of the loss of financial incentive to the bulk of middle-class Americans. The price tag in 1977 alone has been placed at 4.1 billion dollars.

Believing that voluntary agencies should be strengthened and that it would be tragic if their services eventually had to be taken over by the government, the National Association of Evangelicals endorses the kind of legislation espoused by Representatives Conable and Fisher. Such legislation would allow all taxpayers to deduct charitable contributions "above the line," i.e., whether or not they itemize their deductions.

Additionally, The Evangelical Free Church of America encourages the Judiciary Committee and the House to amend any lobby disclosure bills to exclude churches and all bona fide religious organizations from the requirements of that bill.



**RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**  
Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1979  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

On May 15, 1974, Mr. Justice Blackman said in his dissent from the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the American's United case: "I am disturbingly aware of the overwhelming power of the Internal Revenue Service." Mr. Blackman then expressed his concern about "the hazards of vesting in the Commissioner virtually plenipotentiary power over philanthropic organizations." He pointed out that the provision in the tax code for 501(c)(3) organizations was "obviously not designed to raise money." He observed that the Commissioner "is properly vested with broad powers to prescribe all needful rules and regulations for the enforcement of tax laws" and lamented the fact that his power is now being used to the detriment of eleemosynary institutions in the enforcement of public policy unrelated to the collecting of taxes.

Notwithstanding this expression of concern and tacit appeal to the commissioner to exercise restraint in the use of his awesome power from a member of the highest court in the land, the IRS continues to propose and adopt one regulation after another that seriously erodes First Amendment rights. Some examples:

- a. In a regulation defining an "integrated auxiliary," the Commissioner assumed the prerogative of determining the mission of the church, which the government has traditionally declined to do under the First Amendment. This action was taken against the protests of representatives from virtually the entire religious community of the United States who argued that such action involves the government in excessive entanglement in church affairs.
- b. Last year the Commissioner adopted a ruling which severely restricts the publication of voting records of political candidates by church groups.
- c. On February 13, 1979, the Commissioner published a revised version of a proposed procedure which will allow the IRS to revoke the tax-exempt status of private church schools for failure to maintain a racial balance which satisfies the ideals of the Commissioner. This notwithstanding the fact that the school may have a publicly announced and advertised non-discriminatory racial policy with minority students enrolled and minorities serving as board and faculty members.

In addition to these disturbing infringements upon the religious freedom of our churches and church-related activities by IRS, the last two Congresses have attempted to enact at least two pieces of legislation that would seriously erode the freedom of religious rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. These are:

- a. The Charitable Contribution Disclosure Act which has already been reintroduced in the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R. 825. This would open church records to government inspection at the whim of those charged with the enforcement of the Act.
- b. The Lobby Disclosure Act which is also pending in the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress as H.R. 81 and H.R. 1979. This would make it virtually impossible for church groups to contact their legislators or influence public policy without assuming an excessive administrative burden and register as a lobbyist.

The National Association of Evangelicals is alarmed by these developments which jeopardize our religious freedom. The power to tax is the power to destroy, and there is usually no practical relief from a bad IRS ruling or regulation. As Justice Blackman has indicated, because of the time-consuming delays and insurmountable costs in any endeavor to effectuate corrective action, the cure in most cases is worse than the disease.

Therefore, the NAE calls upon each member of Congress to carefully consider the adverse impact that the Charitable Contribution Disclosure Act and the Lobby Disclosure Act would have upon all philanthropic

organizations and churches in particular. We also call again upon evangelical organizations to adopt principles and practices of self-regulation as assurance against the abuses which have prompted the Charitable Contribution Disclosure Act and the Lobby Disclosure Act. We further request Congress to enact legislation that will clearly stipulate the limits of power which the Commissioner of IRS may use against tax-exempt groups in the enforcement of social policy as distinct from the collection of taxes.

## **THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS GOVERNMENT**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1980  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS social ferment with all of the accompanying moral, economic and spiritual problems is having a revolutionary effect upon our nation, and

WHEREAS government is of God and is one of His providential provisions for fallen humanity (Romans 13:1-7; Proverbs 8:15), and

WHEREAS civil authority is ordained of God (John 19:11), and

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach that Christians are:

1. To be subjected to civil authority that is in keeping with the teaching of the Word of God (Romans 13: 1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13, 14; Acts 5:29)
2. To pray for those in authority (1 Peter 2:13, 14)
3. To support constituted government by payment of taxes (Matthew 22:17-22; Romans 13:6), and

WHEREAS Christians, even though citizens of another world, are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Conference of The Evangelical Free Church of America urge Christians to pray for those in authority; and to remind them that their power is ordained of God and they are responsible to Him, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christians be urged to become involved in the political process, to register and to vote; and in view of the need of legislative awareness and positive action within the framework of our Christian responsibility,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christians be urged to pray for God to guide our nation and especially so as Americans go to the polls to select leaders in this presidential election year.

## CHURCH AND STATE

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1981  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS Scripture teaches the legitimacy of human government (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-17), which in its constituted authority is capable of fulfilling the purposes of God, it also recognizes the possibility that human government can stand in opposition to the will of God, in which case the ultimate duty of the Christian and of the Church is obedience to God and to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ (Acts 5:17-32), and

WHEREAS the Constitution of the United States prohibits the establishment of religion by government, it does not prevent the freedom of religious groups to influence society through public discourse, and

WHEREAS the growing pluralism of American society makes it increasingly difficult to protect the rights of religious exercise while avoiding its establishment by government, leading many to misinterpret the First Amendment as prohibiting churches from addressing issues of civil law, and as prohibiting individual Christians from proposing to society values that originates in biblical teaching;

BE IT RESOLVED that The Evangelical Free Church of America reaffirm the importance of the legal distinction between Church and State, and

BE IT RESOLVED that member churches and individuals be active in seeking to preserve this distinction in public policy as it bears on the free exercise of our belief and practice in the institutions and churches of The Evangelical Free Church of America as well as in the lives of individual members.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED

THAT Christian citizens have both a civil right and a Christian obligation to voice their convictions and to seek to protect their values in public and political discourse, further

THAT Christian citizens should seek to exercise legitimate influence in public education in order to forestall the institutionalization of secular humanist values in public schools, and to preserve the presentation of Christian values and perspectives, and further

THAT Christians should be alerted to, and prepared to resist government attempts at control and harassment of Christian institutions and individuals by discriminatory taxation, regulation, and other administrative means.

## NUCLEAR DEFENSE

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1983  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS God in His wisdom has ordained governments for human society, and

WHEREAS He has entrusted to the magistrate the power of the sword for the punishment of evil (Romans 13:1-4), and

WHEREAS one of the chief duties of government is the defense of its citizenry, and

WHEREAS in the present state of military development, such defense necessarily involves the possession of terrifying weapons of mass destruction, potentially capable of extinguishing all human life, and

WHEREAS despite this potential, God reserves for Himself the appointment of the means and the time for ending the present state of human history with the advent of the Last Day, and

WHEREAS the true hope of men and of nations does not lie in human weapons, either in their possession or in their prohibition, but in the Lord, who calls us to pursue the righteousness that exalts a nation and to shun the sin that is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34):

BE IT RESOLVED that The Evangelical Free Church of America exhort those in authority in our nation to view their authority as a commission from God, to be discharged in accordance with His will and His justice, by providing for the national defense to the best of their wisdom and ability, seeking always to deter aggression and maintain peace, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christian citizens be exhorted not to yield to fear and apprehension concerning the future, which is in the hands of God, nor to allow themselves to be submitted to bondage through fear of death (Hebrews 2:15), nor to weaken the resolve of government to restrain evil and to punish aggression by voluntarily and unilaterally giving up the weapons of defense and deterrence.

WHEREAS the church has been entrusted with the message of reconciliation and seeks to represent to the world, first and foremost, the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ our Lord, and

WHEREAS it is incumbent upon Christian people to draw from the gospel practical and political implications for the real conditions of our world;

BE IT RESOLVED that The Evangelical Free Church of America call upon our nation's leaders to be vigilant in the pursuit of peace by seeking in concert with governments of other nations, mutual and multilateral limitation and reduction of the weapons of mass destruction, subject to adequate mutual verification, and thus reduce the danger and threat that mankind may destroy itself and ruin the Creation that God, in the present age, entrusts to our stewardship.

**SENTENCING REFORM**  
Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1983  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

America's prisons now have far more inmates than they were designed to hold. A recent federal study revealed that this overcrowding results in discipline problems, increased violence, illness and suicides. According to the FBI, three-quarters of those released from prison are re-arrested within four years. It is thus evident that the prison experience is more often than not destructive rather than rehabilitating.

Criminal offenders should be punished as a matter of simple justice. However, the punishment should advance the public interest and, whenever possible, provide restitution to the innocent victim. Dangerous criminals must be imprisoned to protect society. However, half of those in prison have been convicted of non-violent offenses. As an alternative to incarceration, biblically based sanctions such as restitution would benefit the victim of the crime and society in general, as well as help to rehabilitate the offender. Incidentally, the cost of this approach would be only a fraction of incarceration.

The NAE, therefore, urges the enactment of state and federal legislation such as the "Sentencing Improvement Act" to be introduced in the 98<sup>th</sup> Congress by Senators Nunn and Armstrong. Such legislation would insure sufficient prison space for dangerous offenders and the restoration of victims by providing that non-dangerous offenders be punished through strictly enforced orders of restitution to the victims of crimes and through community service.

We also urge pastors to encourage their churches to become actively involved in prison ministries through well-qualified evangelical agencies which specialize in this type of ministry.

Correction officials are urged to provide maximum opportunities for volunteers from such organizations since complete rehabilitation comes as the gospel for Jesus Christ transforms the heart of the individual.

**VOTER REGISTRATION**  
Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1984  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Presidential and Congressional elections this year will determine the political philosophy that will guide the nation for years to come. The character of the federal judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, will likely be shaped by the one occupying the Oval Office in the next four years. Issues of religious liberty and traditional values are at stake in this election.

Christians are called upon by their Lord to be the salt of the earth, to flavor and preserve the society in which they live. It, therefore, becomes imperative that evangelical Christians exercise their responsibility to vote. Yet, 10-15 million Christians are, at this moment, unregistered to vote. NAE strongly urges its member denominations, churches, and organizations to engage in non-partisan voter registration drives across the land. The NAE office of Public Affairs stands ready to help.

## **EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1984  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In a 1979 resolution, the National Association of Evangelicals affirmed: “God created mankind in His image, assuring the sacredness of human life and the equality of persons, male and female.” In recent years the Equal Rights Amendment has been promoted as a way to assure the equal rights of women as persons. Proponents of the ERA are now contending that the amendment presents only an economic issue. But the absolute and far-reaching language of the ERA makes its effects unpredictable, and certainly more diverse than claimed. It could be interpreted by the courts to reach results antithetical to Judeo-Christian values.

Because of this possibility, NAE, cannot endorse the Equal Rights Amendment in its present form. At a minimum, it would have to state that it is not intended to grant or secure the right to abortion or the funding thereof: to require the drafting of women or their assignment to military combat: or to deny tax exemption to any school, seminary, or church which believes that God has ordained different roles for men and women.

NAE has supported and will continue to support legislation specifically designed to remedy economic injustices to women.



## BICENTENNIAL OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1987  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

(from the First Amendment to the Constitution)

It is with a profound sense of gratitude to God that we celebrate the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. For over 200 years America has enjoyed a degree of order, stability and freedom among its citizens which is unique among nations. This is in no small measure attributable to the form of government set forth in the Constitution.

Christian people everywhere continue to marvel at the wisdom of the founders, who, out of many streams of influence, fashioned a set of procedures which provide for free elections, equitable representation, and balance among the powers granted to the three branches of government, all the while assuring the rights and freedoms of its private citizens.

Understood as a set of procedures, the Constitution is devoid of substantive moral content: it espouses no particular values, it promotes no particular vision of the good life and does not even permit the government to establish or directly support religion in any form. It is especially for these reasons that the guarantees contained in the First and the Fourteenth Amendments are so important. These make possible the free exchange of ideas and protect the free expression and propagation of religious faith without which the soul of the nation could not be nourished, and without which the moral sensibilities and moral commitments foundational for the support of law could not be nurtured. The constitutional protection of the freedom of religion is the crowning achievement of a plan of government unrivaled in human history.

We rejoice at the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ and the spread of the good news of salvation—even beyond our own shores—which has resulted from these protected freedoms. We believe that God has used these human means for the growth of His kingdom.

We acknowledge that the guarantees of religious freedom do not benefit orthodox Christianity alone. Indeed, many diverse and often competing religious groups and ideas have flourished in American soil. This was the inevitable result of a form of government which preserved a freedom for religion. But we are confident that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can hold its own in the marketplace of ideas, and that it will bear fruit whenever there is a climate of freedom to worship God and to share one’s beliefs freely.

Therefore, as Christian people we affirm the blessings of our earthly citizenship, and on the occasion of its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, we reaffirm our support for the Constitution of the United States.

## **CHILD CARE AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

“Children are an inheritance from the Lord,” says the Psalmist. They are a precious gift from God. Parents’ concern for children should come ahead of career success, personal satisfaction, or their own personal desires.

Contemporary America unfortunately tends to forget that children are a trust from the Lord. Numerous new problems have emerged, including a new wave of selfish materialism. Child abuse and neglect are increasing. Households headed by single parents are faced with added stress. Children are often used as pawns in custody battles. Social trends and economic needs require millions of mothers to enter the work force resulting in their children being reared by care-providers rather than by loving and responsible parents.

Christians understand that children need a close, loving and sustained relationship with their parents. The best providers of child care are loving parents for whom the care of their children in the home is the most important career. Nonetheless, child care outside the home has become a way of life for many American families. As a result, pressure is growing for the federal government and other governmental agencies to support institutionalized child-care services for working mothers. However, we see a serious problem. Governmental involvement in the field of child care has the potential to undermine the nurturing of children while appearing to solve the child-care problem.

Believing that parents have the prime, God-given responsibility for child care, EFCA calls upon the Christian community to support those governmental measures that embody the following principles:

1. The federal government and other governmental agencies should leave to parents the choice of how to care for their children—to care for them at home, to entrust them to family or friends, or make any other arrangements they believe appropriate. Parents, not government, should decide what is best for their children.
2. The federal government and other governmental agencies should concentrate any child care assistance in the form of tax credits to lower-income families with younger children, not grants to providers of child-care services. Tax credits should not discriminate against women who choose to work in the home.
3. The federal government and other governmental agencies should not establish credentials or guidelines for the provision of child care that would favor secularized child care. Parents who believe in religiously-oriented care for their children should not suffer discrimination.

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND THE CHRISTIAN

Resolution Adopted at the General Conference, 1993  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are commanded to be “salt and light” in a world that has been separated from God because of sin. Our witness as “salt and light” includes a variety of practical strategies (Matthew 5:13-16). The present controversy over abortion and the rise of the “rescue movement” has forced a reconsideration of civil disobedience as one of the appropriate Christian strategies.

In order to avoid division in the Body of Christ and to promote understanding and to give direction to members of the Evangelical Free Church of America specifically, the following general principles regarding civil disobedience are affirmed:

1. That God has ordained civil government, and Christians are admonished to honor and pray for their national leaders as they live peaceably within the parameters of the law. (Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17)
2. That a Christian is called to stand for biblical morality (Exodus 1:15-18, Daniel 1:8, 3:18, I Peter 4:3&4)
3. That a Christian should use all means available within the law to express biblical convictions as they relate to social policy and cultural values (Acts 16:37-40, 22:26-29, 25:8-12)
4. That Christians may disagree on the appropriate behavior needed to express those convictions (I Kings 18:1-15)
5. That a Christian may rightly come from a decision to engage in civil disobedience to express those convictions and that the person be prepared to accept the penalty for such disobedience. (Acts 5:29, Daniel 6:1-28)

We also affirm that one must consider the following questions when making a decision about participating in civil disobedience:

1. Can the action be morally justified?

First, one must consider whether the cause is just. Is the “evil” being addressed morally wrong from a biblical perspective?

Second, one must consider whether the means are appropriate. Is the behavior to be participated in directly related to the cause? The act of civil disobedience can be easily misunderstood and dismissed by the society if it does not directly relate to the cause at hand. For example, one does not rob a bank to “protest” a law relating to child abuse.

2. Is the action strategically appropriate?

First, if there are other actions that could be pursued first then to participate in civil disobedience is not an appropriate choice. Only when all legal options are exhausted should one choose to break the law.

Second, if the action creates unnecessary hardship for people not involved in the “evil” being addressed, the behavior may accomplish the goal but not be appropriate. One of the goals of civil disobedience should be to avoid creating innocent victims. Careful consideration must be given to the people affected by the action taken.

Third, if the action has no possibility of effecting a desired change, then it is not appropriate. Civil disobedience should have a realistic potential to make a moral statement that will influence public sentiment and lead to a change in public policy.

3. Is the action “right” for the individual?

Each Christian is responsible for his or her own actions. What may appear to be a clear path of behavior for one person may not be acceptable to another.

Evil in our world does not mean that every Christian will participate in civil disobedience. Therefore, Christians will differ as they evaluate the questions raised above—God has a plan for each of His children. When a person senses a “call” of God to become civilly disobedient for the purpose of bringing about change or simply to make a moral statement and does so within the framework of the principles above, they deserve the respect of the Christian community. They may even become part of a group of people addressing the same issue. However, it would be incorrect for the person to generalize the “call” and say that all Christians must join in the behavior.

The Christian community must understand that individuals who choose to address “evils” in our day through civil disobedience do so for a variety of reasons. Any participation in civil disobedience must be prayerfully considered with the realization that we are accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ for the way in which we live as His ambassadors.

## HOMOSEXUALS IN THE U.S. MILITARY

Resolution Adopted for the General Conference, 1993  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Over recent months, the question of whether or not homosexuals should be officially allowed in the U.S. Military has been a matter of vigorous public debate. For a variety of reasons, we urge President Clinton, the Congress, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to maintain the historic policy of the military which prohibits homosexuals in the U.S. Military.

It is, first of all, an issue of grave moral consequence. We affirm the Biblical view which regards homosexual activity as a sin. If the ban on homosexuals is lifted, it will not only give official sanction to homosexuality, but will protect such behavior as a perfectly legitimate lifestyle.

Furthermore, it is likely that homosexual behavior would actually increase among those who would otherwise not be drawn into such behavior. Such developments not only threaten to compromise the moral environment of the military, but have serious practical consequences as well.

Perhaps, the most serious practical consequence would be to undermine the morale and combat readiness of American troops. Official approval of homosexuality will complicate command structures and troop morale with the kind of sexual and romantic tensions which the military has historically sought to avoid. While these have no doubt always been present to some extent, official approval of homosexuality will only increase such tensions. Additionally, privacy rights--which are already infringed upon by the close working relationships of military situations—will be further strained if efforts are made to openly integrate heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Indeed, the military may even become a sanctuary for homosexuals with the result that recruitment efforts among heterosexuals will be seriously damaged. Some parents will be reluctant to encourage their children to go into military service or will discourage them from doing so.

In addition, in order to prevent discrimination against homosexuals, the military will be forced to undertake a massive re-education effort, in which it will be necessary to teach heterosexuals that homosexuality is a perfectly normal and acceptable lifestyle. This would not only present a moral dilemma for military personnel in general, but it threatens to compromise the moral teaching of our own EFCA chaplains, who might be prevented from teaching or counseling that homosexual behavior is sinful and unacceptable, in violation of their own consciences. It would likewise be a violation of conscience for others of our fellowship in the military, as they are asked to support policies against their own deeply held views. We would regard this not only as a moral offense, but as a serious violation of religious freedom.

The question overall is not a matter of civil rights, since membership in the military is not a civil right automatically accorded to all citizens. Because of the demands of military life, and combat situations in particular, many special conditions or circumstances can disqualify an individual from military service. Nor is the issue equivalent to the racial integration of the military. For, to quote the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Colin Powell, race is “a benign, non-behavioral characteristic,” while sexual orientation “is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics.” Unlike racial integration, which was won in pursuit of high moral ground, lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military would be a moral peril with serious practical consequences.

We deplore the violence against homosexuals that the debate over these questions appears to have encouraged in our society. Nothing in this resolution should be interpreted as an attack on homosexual persons, to whom we compassionately represent the grace of God. As we do so, we want to emphasize that we do not speak with an attitude of self-righteousness. Rather, we proclaim the good news of God’s mercy to all persons who repent and place their trust in Jesus Christ. And we confess that we too are sinners, and have been guilty of behavior as bad or worse than homosexuality. (I Corinthians 6:9-11). As we declare

God's righteousness to those who have sinned, we stand not in our righteousness, but in God's mercy, and we proclaim His mercy to all who are weary of the guilt and sorrow which sinful behavior produces.

Come, let us return to the Lord.  
For He has torn us, but He will heal us;  
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.  
He will revive us after two days;  
He will raise us up on the third day  
That we may life before Him.

(Hosea 6:1-2)

## STRANGER AT OUR GATES: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON IMMIGRATION

Proposed to the General Conference, 1996  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

During periods of rapid change and economic uncertainty, it is often the vulnerable and marginalized people who are blamed for the misfortune that everyone else experiences or expects to experience. Today a significant amount of attention and blame for a perceived threat to the American way of life is being directed at immigrants. As Christians we must ensure that our response to the issue of immigration is directed by a world view that is shaped by Biblical principles rather than secular rhetoric.

A number of themes relevant to immigration run through the Bible. The first theme is that we ourselves, as Christians, are aliens on this earth. "...And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth." (Hebrews 11:13, NIV) Our status as aliens and strangers forms the basis for our attitudes and responses toward people who live outside our society.

A second theme is that our material possessions do not really belong to us. The promised land belonged to the Israelites only in the sense that as hosts, God allowed the Israelites to dwell in the promised land as his guests (Leviticus 25:23). Similarly, as aliens and strangers in the world, the material resources of the world do not belong to us. We have what we have because God, as host, has distributed material resources to us, his guests. As recipients of God's graciousness and generosity, we need to guard against selfishness and possessiveness which would cloud our attitude toward immigrants.

A third theme is protection for the alien. As non-citizens, working in their country of residence, aliens exist outside the social and political network of the society they are residing in; thus they are rendered powerless. Aliens are very vulnerable to exploitation. As Christians, we should recall our roots as aliens and thus identify with their plight (Exodus 23:9).

A fourth theme is that for Christians, no one is ever to really be considered an outsider. "...The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself..." (Leviticus 19:33-34, NIV) The Great Commandment is to apply to the alien because he or she is our neighbor.

A fifth theme is that in serving the outsiders of society, we encounter Jesus. Because Christ identified with the stranger, we are to extend the same treatment to the alien and stranger that we would extend toward Jesus (Matthew 25:35).

Historically, immigration policies of the United States appear to be directed more by racism and economic self-interest than compassion. Immigration quotas favored people groups already established in the United States (western and northern Europeans) while limiting immigrants from Asia and Africa. Sometimes certain people were allowed to emigrate only when they were needed as menial labor for a specific task, e.g., Chinese railroad builders. Today immigration policy favors those who bring technical expertise or financial resources with them.

The present debate over immigration policy and immigrants is often based on stereotypical falsehoods. Immigrants do not displace American workers. They usually fill a shortage of skilled labor, or do the menial task that citizens refuse to do. Immigrants' rate of employment is higher than the general population and they work longer hours. They receive less general assistance than the general population. Immigrants pay more in taxes than the social services they receive. The reason state governments are financially burdened by immigrants is because only one-third of the federal income tax paid by immigrants is returned to the state government who provide public services such as education and emergency medical care.

As we engage in our society's debate on immigration through forums such as the voting booth, community discussion groups, political parties, and church, in light of the preceding discussion, we need to raise the following issues:

- A. To what extent are our attitudes toward immigration shaped by racism? To what extent do we assume that American culture is identified with northern and western European culture; and are we attempting to protect those cultural roots of America from corruption by “foreign” cultures? Are we afraid that this existing cultural dominance will be overcome by the “strangeness” of strangers? Are we denying that other cultures bring gifts that add to, rather than detract from our society’s culture? Does our cultural identity take precedence over our Christian identity so that we fail to recognize that we are fellow aliens with these immigrants?
- B. To what extent are our attitudes toward immigration shaped by materialism? As aliens and strangers in this world, what is the theological basis for acting as though America was our property and we can hence deny access to it? Are we being overly possessive of our lifestyle or standard of living?
- C. Is the fear of running out of limited resources justifiable? How can we say that there is not enough to go around in America? Are we more concerned with the pursuit of affluence than meeting the basic human needs of all human beings?
- D. What are the Implications of Proposition 187 Type Legislation (as in the state of California)? Does denying or reducing “safety net” and other public benefits to illegal immigrants and their American born children imply that in our society, some groups of people are not regarded as being equally human as others, even though they participate in the economic functioning of our society? Are some groups of people not deemed worthy to receive the minimal goods and services we consider essential for a very basic level of human existence?
- E. What about immigration policy? To what extent are we responsible for the living conditions in other countries that motivate people to emigrate? Do the policies of the U.S. government and U.S. trans-national companies contribute to pressures on people to emigrate to the U.S.? Does an immigration policy that favors the immigration of highly skilled people drain other countries of the skills necessary to improve their standard of living and hence reduce the pressure to emigrate to America?

As evangelicals we are called by God to aid the vulnerable. Therefore, we must see the alien and the stranger as individuals made in the image of God, the object of Christ’s love, and as people of intrinsic worth who are in need of our affirmation and support.



**STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE  
CONCERNING WORLDWIDE RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION**  
Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1997  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

FORWARD

This Statement of Conscience of the Evangelical Free Church of America reflects our deep concern for the religious freedom of fellow believers, as well as people of every faith. We invite others to join us to work tirelessly to bring about action by our government to curb worldwide religious persecution.

FACTS

The persecution of religious believers has become an increasingly tragic fact in today's world. In many countries, moreover, Evangelical Protestants and Catholics have become special targets of reigns of terror initiated by authorities who feel threatened by Christian faith and worship. Such authorities, often motivated by anti-Western, anti-democratic ideologies, also persecute Christians as a means of threatening the freedom of all persons subject to their authority.

Incidents of religious persecution are legion:

- In many Islamic countries, where militant and xenophobic Islamist movements seek to capture the soul of a historically tolerant Islamic faith, and where the demonization of Christians also serves to intimidate Muslims seeking freedom from repressive regimes.
- In China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam, where remnant Communist regimes feel threatened by persons whose Christian faith places them under an authority transcending governments, and where the persecution of Christians also serves to intimidate non-Christian dissenters.
- In other parts of the world, where persons of evil intent rightly understand that the survival of churches undermines their aims, because these churches affirm the human dignity of all persons created in God's image and acknowledge their ultimate accountability to a transcendent God.
- In countries and regions where the demonization of powerless Christian scapegoats often serves to vent, foment, and popularize hatred of the West and the United States.
- Imprisonment and torture of persons for simply attending Christian worship services or Bible studies.
- Establishment of government-controlled "religious associations" and criminal prosecution and torture of members of "unlicensed" Christian churches.
- Refusal to permit Vatican appointments of Catholic bishops and refusal to allow nonapproved bishops to appoint local priests.
- Encouragement and appeasement of unpunished mob violence against Christians conducting burial and other religious services.
- Church burnings and systematic official refusals to allow the building of new churches or church repairs.
- Encouragement and appeasement of systematic beatings of children who attend Christian schools.

- Literal sale into slavery of Christian churches abducted by government forces.
- Refusal to distribute food to Christians in famine-stricken areas unless they agree to renounce their faith.
- Wide dissemination, often with government support, of scurrilously hateful, deliberately provocative, anti-Christian tapes, books and tracts.
- Imprisonment of Christians for the mere possession of Bibles.
- Prosecution, torture and even murder of practicing Christians under infamous and broadly construed “blasphemy” laws.
- Prosecution, torture and even murder of Christian converts and the children and grandchildren of such converts, under equally infamous and broadly construed “apostasy” laws.

### PRINCIPLES

If people are to fulfill the obligations of conscience, history teaches the urgent need to foster respect and protection for the right of all persons to practice their faith.

If people are to fulfill the obligations of conscience, history cries out for an end to today’s wrongful silence, by Christians as well as others, in the face of mounting persecution of Christian believers.

If governments are to be worthy of the name, or responsive to their national interests and the interest of their people, lessons of history mandate uncompromising hostility to religious persecution.

If, though it is true, the United States government cannot end all evil throughout the world, it can nonetheless adopt policies that would limit religious persecution and ensure greater fulfillment of inalienable and internationally recognized rights to freedom of religious belief and practice.

### CALL TO ACTION

It is lamentable that persecution of religious believers is pervasive around the world.

We are dismayed that the United States government has been indifferent to its obligation to speak out against reigns of terror now being plotted and waged against Christians. At the same time, we confess our own culpability in failing to do all within our power to alleviate the suffering of those persecuted for their religious beliefs.

We know that the United States government has within its power and discretion the capacity to adopt policies that would be dramatically effective in curbing such reigns of terror and protecting the rights of all religious dissidents.

As a matter of conscience, therefore, we respectfully call for the following actions to be taken by the government of the United States:

1. Public acknowledgment of today’s widespread and mounting anti-Christian persecution and the adoption of policies condemning religious persecution whether it results from official policy or from unchecked terrorist activity.

To that end, we respectfully recommend the following steps be taken:

- A major policy address by the President initiating a new public diplomacy commitment to openly condemn anti-Christian persecution wherever it occurs and further announcing a lesser reliance on today's private diplomacy and case-by-case appeals to curb such persecution.
  - Issuance of instructions to all Ambassadors or surrogates to meet regularly with willing church leaders and dissidents in countries where religious persecution occurs.
  - Appointment of a knowledgeable, experienced, and compassionate Special Advisor to the President for Religious Liberty charged with preparing a report indicating needed changes in policies dealing with religious persecution, and recommending remedial action.
  - Issuance of instructions to the United States delegate to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to regularly and forcefully raise the issue of anti-Christian and other religious persecution at all appropriate Commission sessions.
  - Issuance of instructions to consular officials acknowledging the mounting evidence of religious persecution and instructing them to provide diligent assistance when the victims of religious persecution seek refugee status.
  - Issuance of instructions to senior officials engaged in trade or other international negotiations, when dealing with officials of countries that engage in religious persecution, to vigorously object to such religious persecution and to link negotiations with the need for constructive change.
2. Issuance by the State Department's Human Rights Bureau and related government agencies of more carefully researched, more fully documented and less politically edited reports of the facts and circumstances of anti-Christian and other religious persecution.

To that end, we respectfully recommend that the following steps be taken:

- Issuance of instructions to human rights officers to distinguish between the treatment of different Christian groups within countries and no longer to assume that all such groups are similarly dealt with.
  - Issuance of instructions that Human Rights Bureau annual reports are to make explicit findings of whether anti-Christian or other religious persecutions occur, thereby eliminating from such reports any "option of silence" regarding such persecutions.
  - Clarifying and upgrading the role of embassy human rights officers in countries where anti-Christian or other religious persecution is ongoing and pervasive, and ensuring that such officers carefully monitor religious liberty violations on an ongoing and prioritized basis.
3. Cessation of the indifferent and occasionally hostile manner in which the Immigration and Naturalization Service often treats the petitions of escapees from anti-Christian persecution.

To that end, we respectfully recommend the following steps be taken:

- Issuance of an Attorney General's Bulletin to INS hearing officers acknowledging mounting anti-Christian persecutions in many parts of the world, and directing such officers to process the claims of escapees from such persecution with priority and diligence.
- Issuance of instructions by the Attorney General and the Secretary of State directing preparation of annual INS reports describing its processing of religious refugee and asylum claims.

- Issuance of regulations requiring access to written opinions from INS hearing officers clearing stating the grounds for any denial of religious refugee and asylum claims.
  - Establishment of INS listening posts in countries to which refugees from anti-Christian persecution frequently flee.
  - Cessation of INS and State Department delegation of complete responsibility for refugee processing functions to international and United Nations agencies.
  - Development and issuance of training guidelines for INS personnel on issues specifically related to religious persecution.
4. Termination of non-humanitarian foreign assistance to governments of countries that fail to take vigorous action to end anti-Christian or other religious persecution, with resumption of assistance to be permitted only after a written finding is made by the President that the countries have taken all reasonable steps to end such persecution and arrangements are made to ensure that religious persecution is not resumed.

### CONCLUSION

Religious liberty is not a privilege to be granted or denied by an all-powerful State, but a God-given human right. Indeed, religious liberty is the bedrock principle that animates our republic and defines us as a people. We must share our love of religious liberty with other peoples, who in the eyes of God are our neighbors. Hence, it is our responsibility, and that of the government that represent us, to do everything we can to secure the blessings of religious liberty to all those suffering from religious persecution.

We appeal not only to our own government, but to the government of every nation that would be free, to treasure religious freedom. A people cannot be truly free where the elemental justice of religious freedom is abridged or denied. If justice is to “roll on like a river”, religious persecution around the world must cease.

Therefore, before God, and because we are our brother’s keeper, we solemnly pledge:

- To end our own silence in the face of the suffering of all those persecuted for their religious faith.
- To address religious persecution carried out by our Christian brothers and sisters whenever this occurs around the world.
- To do what is within our power to the end that the government of the United States will take appropriate action to combat the intolerable religious persecution now victimizing fellow believers and those of other faiths.

## SECTION C

### THE CHURCH, PERSONAL LIFESTYLE AND ECONOMIC LIFE

In the 1967 report of the Committee on Social Concerns the following statement appears:

The gospels are full of accounts of how our Lord went about doing good, healing the sick, making the lame to walk, the blind to see, and censuring those taking unfair advantage of the helpless. The early church continued to show this same sincere interest in the needs of others, but as society became more complex, the church gradually lost its care for the whole man. As a consequence, the government began to take over what should have been the task of the church. For some time the church seemed content to allow this situation to continue, but now, certain leaders are questioning whether this is an adequate, Christian solution.

If the resolutions in “The Church and Political Involvement” seek to redress the growing divorce between Christian values and the larger society, the resolutions in this section seek to redress the church’s lack of involvement in the realm of economic need in the modern world.

How the church ought to be involved in this area—at the level of public policy—remains unresolved. No “structural solutions” to the problems of economic need or even economic discrimination are presented here. What is affirmed are those base values of compassion and caring that lead us at both their personal and public level to attend to these issues. Also addressed are matters of personal lifestyle which bear on issues ranging from addictive behaviors to the management of both personal and public resources.

#### **Resolutions:**

Economic Lifestyle (1980)

Economic Hardship (1982)

Fiscal Responsibility (1987)

The Christian’s Conscience and Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs (1985)

Gambling (1986)

Hunger and Poverty (1986)

Middle Class Christianity (1988)

Alcohol Abuse (1989)

A Christian Response to the Ecological Crisis (1990)

## **ECONOMIC LIFESTYLE**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1980  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, the men and women who formed The Evangelical Free Church of America nearly one hundred years ago came to the United States in humble circumstances, often poor in earthly goods but rich in the things of God, and

WHEREAS, God has seen fit to bless the constituency of The Evangelical Free Church of America spiritually and to prosper it materially, at the same time great numbers of people in our own land and multitudes throughout the world are in desperate material and spiritual need, and

WHEREAS, the Scripture warns repeatedly against the snare of riches and the competition which inevitably emerges between God and mammon;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the local churches of The Evangelical Free Church of America give careful attention to the instruction of both Old and New Testaments regarding material possessions and the stewardship of God's creation, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that careful study be given in our local churches, our educational institutions, and the appropriate boards and committees of the EFCA to explore ways for our constituency to share meaningfully and responsibly with those who have material need. And

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that care be taken to stress our biblical identity as strangers and pilgrims on earth in order to avoid the narrow class identity which so typically characterizes segments of our population leading to a bias against those of different socio-economic circumstances, and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that we pray for a new spirit of giving and generosity among all the people of The Evangelical Free Church of America that we may glorify God by obedience to our confession of the gospel of Christ and by our liberality (2 Cor. 9:13).

## **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1982  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, the problems of hunger and the suffering due to economic dislocation, unemployment and various kinds of discrimination are not new in our society, the present economic crisis has nevertheless dramatized these problems among a broad segment of our population, and

WHEREAS, we have often failed to show the concern which the Lord urges for those who have suffered in these ways (Matthew 25:40);

BE IT RESOLVED that the congregations of The Evangelical Free Church of America be urged actively to serve the needy by the sharing of good and clothing, and where need requires and means permit, even with the provision of shelter.

**FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**  
Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1984  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In 1978 NAE passed a resolution expressing concern about a national budget deficit which was then growing at the rate of approximately \$60 billion a year. Today, with the predictions of \$200 billion annual deficits, the situation has grown far more grave.

Therefore, the National Association of Evangelicals calls upon the President of the United States and both Houses of Congress to demonstrate moral leadership and fiscal integrity by reducing the staggering federal deficit problem.



## THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSCIENCE AND ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND DRUGS

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1985  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, there is increasing evidence of the disastrous mental, spiritual, physical and psychological effects of the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs (prescription and non-prescription, as well as illegal) upon the abuser; and

WHEREAS, the abuse of such substances contributes measurably to the ruin of society by lessened productivity in the work place, heightened violence in the home and elsewhere, family dysfunction, sexual abuse, highway accidents and other tragic consequences; and

WHEREAS, such abuse, including any inappropriate use of or dependency upon alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is contrary to the letter and spirit of Scripture. (Eph. 5:18; Luke 21:34; Gal. 5:21; Is. 28:7, 5:11; Hos. 4:11; I Cor. 6:10; Deut. 21:20; Hab. 2:15; Matt. 24:49; Prov. 21:17, 23:21, 29, 30; Romans 13:13, all in context).

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Free Church people strongly consider total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and illegal drugs, and that we furthermore examine our use of prescription and non-prescription medications for evidence of abuse or dependency; and

THAT we take these steps, not to foster a legalistic approach to God nor to advertise a false piety before people, but as a socially appropriate and responsible choice within the liberty we have in Christ; and

THAT we use all available resources to educate our children, young people and peers concerning the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco and drugs; and

THAT we learn from and become fellow servants with those agencies within our communities which are effectively combatting alcohol and drug abuse and assisting its victims.

## **GAMBLING**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1986  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

There is a growing trend in many states to legalize gambling in one form or another, with a disregard for the negative social effects such as regressive taxation, teenage gambling, compulsive gambling and increased opportunities for corruption and organized crime.

We believe gambling encourages such unbiblical attitudes as greed (Ecc. 5:10), materialism and discontent (I Timothy 6:6-9), "Get rich quick" attitudes (Proverbs 28:20), unjust distribution of resources (II Cor. 8:13-15), and a reckless investment of God-given resources (Matthew 25:14-30). Gambling discourages honest labor (Proverbs 28:19) and confidence in the sovereign provision of our Heavenly Father for all of our needs (Matt. 6:28-34).

We encourage the constituents of our Evangelical Free Churches to abstain from gambling in all its various forms.

We believe that gambling in any form is potentially addictive. It is a social evil that feeds upon greed and sells a set of fantasy values that exploits people. It harms especially the poor who can least afford to forfeit their financial resources on the promise of instant wealth. The tragic end result is often deepened poverty and increased welfare rolls, to say nothing of the emotional damage and disillusionment experienced by the vast number of planned losers.

Gambling undermines the economic base of a nation in that it reduces the purchasing power of the people. Money gambled by wage earners cannot be seen to purchase goods and services of constructive and productive businesses.

Compulsive gambling causes the individual's character to be weakened and to disintegrate. It leads to indolence and self-delusion, breaks up families and can lead to crime, loss of jobs and even suicide.

Since we deplore the exploitation of the weakness of humanity, the Evangelical Free Church of America calls upon all who are in positions of influence and decision-making to seek other means by which to raise revenue. We further call upon churches and schools to conduct programs that will inform people of the evils and dangers of gambling.

## HUNGER AND POVERTY

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1986  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The Evangelical Free Church of America commends those of our churches and individuals who have been reaching out to the poor and hungry. We need to give sacrificially to help our neighbors. However, solutions to hunger and poverty must be grounded in faith in God, commitment to work, personal responsibility and family solidarity. As evangelical Christians, we must model these values even as we care for the needs of the poor. As they see Christ's love in us, our evangelistic witness will become more credible.

Our concern for meeting physical needs is rooted in Scripture. Biblical doctrines such as the creation of man (Gen. 2:7), the incarnation of Jesus Christ (John 1:4), and the resurrection of the body (I Corinthians 15:4-8) testify to God's concern for people's physical needs. While our Lord's primary mission was to die for the sins of many (Mark 10:45), He demonstrated God's mercy and compassion by healing the sick and feeding the hungry. The Bible teaches us to "do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). We are to be rich in good deeds, to be liberal and generous, and to show hospitality to strangers (I Tim. 6:18, and Heb. 13:2,3). Moreover, the Scriptures bluntly warn us that if we close our hearts against a needy brother, the love of God does not abide in us (I John 3:17).

These Christian duties are especially relevant because, according to reliable sources, the number of Americans who are periodically hungry or malnourished totals in the millions. Limited government resources and the ineffectiveness of some government programs make personal and private sector assistance essential. Christians may disagree about appropriate government roles and they should debate political prescriptions for addressing human needs. However, most would agree that government programs alone are no panacea for the problem of poverty. Therefore, individually and corporately, evangelicals have the duty and privilege to minister to people in need. By so doing, we give integrity to our witness and bring moral and spiritual renewal to our land.

## MIDDLE CLASS CHRISTIANITY

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1988  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In recent decades the growth of the Evangelical Free Church of America has been most prominent within the American middle class. While this affords material blessings to our churches, it also creates special temptations which as responsible Christians we must be alert to avoid. The lure of materialism creates a false sense of “need” and a false sense of “ownership,” tempting us to:

- Become pre-occupied with consumption, diverting our resources from God’s work and inhibiting the Christian call to compassion and sharing;
- Become calloused toward the needy, who are then abandoned to fend for themselves;
- Become “self-sufficient,” which replaces an attitude of dependence upon God as we falsely trust our own ability to plan and organize for the future.

The values of efficiency and specialization that have resulted in an increase of material production in our society, can distort our outlook when uncritically applied to the church and to Christian ministry. We are then tempted to:

- Professionalize the ministry of the church;
- Transfer to the church the responsibility of training our youth;
- Make the church the sole environment of spiritual nurture;
- Develop such a heavy program of church activities that families are robbed of leisure time and quiet moments for rest and reflection.

The material success of our society can also improperly exalt the business model of management and the business measure of success. The church is then tempted to:

- View ministry as investment with strictly calculable returns;
- Adopt a marketing mentality which gives attention only to the young, to the upscale, or to new communities—disregarding those who are older or less attractive, whose hidden wisdom or “different” perspective becomes obscured and ignored;
- Dismiss “non-productive” persons as irrelevancies to be discarded as “throwaways;”
- Approach commitment to the church and worship from the perspective of a consumer, counting involvement solely in terms of personal benefit.

In light of these many temptations:

- We determine to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness;
- We seek to view our abundance as a blessing to be shared;
- We resolve to reflect upon the possibility of our cultural captivity, that we might resist the lure of materialism and those attitudes which threaten to compromise our faith and blunt our witness to Christ and His saving gospel.

We call upon churches to:

- Address these issues through teaching and preaching;
- Have creative programs that portray the needs around us;
- Exercise restraint in expenditures which are of limited value or are self-serving in nature;
- Develop wholistic ministries within and among our churches to meet the staggering needs of individuals and families.

We encourage families and individuals to:

- Adopt a lifestyle that reflects an attitude of servanthood toward the less fortunate;
- Pursue a pattern of sacrificial giving, releasing resources otherwise spent on self-indulgence, to be used in the glorious service of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- Adopt a needy family, a child in another country, a resident of a nursing home, or to volunteer for work in a church food pantry or clothing exchange
- Explore uses of capital that would create jobs and provide job training for those who for various reasons are ill-equipped to find a job or hold employment.

God help us to find our strength and our life's purpose in Him and His Holy Word, that we might keep our focus on the eternal glory of His kingdom, and have the courage to make "spiritual" decisions about the use of our time, our abilities, and our resources.

## **ALCOHOL ABUSE**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The EFCA has previously addressed with alarm the social, moral, and spiritual consequences of alcohol abuse. We have called for the enforcement of existing laws on alcohol sales, possession and use, as well as the enactment of new laws against drunken driving. In keeping with our historic stance, we call on our churches to take seriously the national problem of alcohol use, educating their members to its dangers and encouraging them to practice abstinence.

Today, the problem of alcohol use has been so aggravated that among experts in the field of substance abuse, a growing consensus is condemning alcohol as a “gateway drug” into illegal drugs and addiction. Statistics are also mounting which show that there is a link between alcohol and crime, fatal accidents, domestic violence, family breakdown, personal debilitation and suicide. Children and youth have become victims and abusers.

The magnitude of the problem is so great that a number of groups have emerged to fight alcohol abuse. These groups, however, are not currently supported by a significant public consensus or by the political, media, corporate or religious communities. Parents who use alcohol are caught in the contradiction of trying to be a role model for their children while failing to set an example for them.

The time has come for the EFCA to speak and act again in the following ways:

1. Strongly encourage those national organizations which are against alcohol use and abuse, and to join them in condemning the media message that equates alcohol with the good life for adults and which communicates to youth the message: “You can’t have fun without alcohol.”
2. Urge our EFCA churches to make alcohol education and ministry to alcohol victims a priority.
3. Request the media and the corporate community to join in sponsoring informative programs on the “down side” of alcohol use.
4. Request public figures, such as athletes and entertainers, to avoid endorsing alcohol use.
5. Promote congressional legislation that would:
  - a. Label alcohol as a dangerous drug which can result in personal and social harm;
  - b. Ban advertising of alcohol on television.
6. Urge corporate advertisers not to jointly sponsor television programs, such as the Olympics and other athletic events, with the alcohol industry.

## A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1990  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The unusually hot and dry summer of 1988 in the United States spawned a series of discussions and conferences on the growing ecological crisis. The “greenhouse effect” and “global warming” trends continue to be topics of urgent concern.

Indeed, these topics have been of concern for evangelical Christians because we are entrusted by God with the stewardship of the earth. We acknowledge the teaching of Scripture that God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, and He retains sovereignty over the creation (Psalm 24:1). The care of the earth, its creatures and environment, has been entrusted to mankind as a stewardship (Genesis 1:28-30). This stewardship, like all others which God has entrusted to us, is one for which we must someday give an account (Luke 19:11-27).

From a biblical perspective the ecological crisis is an effect of the fall (Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:19-21). Problems such as air and water pollution, the poisoning of the soil and the proliferation of waste, can be traced in many areas to the selfish and shortsighted actions of sinful humanity. Evangelical Christians must take the lead in the care and custody of the earth and speak out against a selfish and wasteful use of the material resources with no regard for future generations.

We assert that the motivation, for the Christian, in addressing solutions to the ecological crisis is properly found in love for God and respect for His creation. We deny the arguments, such as those found in the New Age Movement, that a pantheistic outlook is necessary in order to address the ecological crisis—for pantheism deifies nature and devalues the human place in God’s creation. We also believe that an incentive to faithfulness in the protection and restoration of the environment is to be found in the anticipation of the return of Christ and the revelation of His glory (Luke 12:35-48, Luke 20:9-19, Romans 8:22-25).

As responsible stewards we must commit ourselves to be involved in those practices which exhibit love toward God and to our fellow human beings. The recycling of waste, the efficient use of non-renewable energy (such as adding insulation to our homes or driving fuel-efficient cars) and the development of an environmentally sensitive lifestyle are but a few of the ways we can personally be involved.

In areas of concern which are beyond our personal control (such as toxic waste, acid rain, emission control standards), we urge governments, non-government organizations, and businesses to work cooperatively and conscientiously toward the restoration and protection of the environment.

Finally, we affirm the necessity of international cooperation on global ecological issues (such as the deterioration of the ozone layer and deforestation), and we urge our government to be an active participant in these matters.

## SECTION D

### THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION

The entire Judeo-Christian tradition affirms the important place of learning and instruction for young and old alike. This is why it can be said that the modern public education system is in large measure a daughter of the church. What happens when the offspring turns against its source? This is too commonly the case in the educational institutions of our society—which often display indifference and at times positive opposition to Christian values.

In the same spirit that calls Christians to enter the political dialogue over public policy, these resolutions call Christians to be active in the dialogue over the values which shape the content and policies of public education. In addition, the role of the church in educating its own—in the home, in Sunday schools, and in private Christian schools—is affirmed. Finally, this section gives attention to special topics like the New Age Movement which challenge the church to be faithful in its teaching and alert to issues of the day.

#### **Resolutions:**

The Sunday School Bicentennial (1980)  
Public Education and the Christian Family (1981)  
Public Schools (1982)  
Free Exercise of Religion in Public Schools (1984)  
Parental Rights and School-Based Clinics (1987)  
Public and Private Schooling (1988)  
The New Age Movement (1990)



## **THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BICENTENNIAL**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1980  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, the modern Sunday school will mark its 200<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 5, 1980, and

WHEREAS, the positive influence of the Sunday school has blessed the Christian world for two centuries, and

WHEREAS, this agency of the Church has done much to influence, support and improve the spiritual life of our nation, and

WHEREAS, the Sunday school provides an evangelistic outreach extending love and concern to those who need Christ, and

WHEREAS, the Sunday school keeps the focus on the family and offers meaningful fellowship and nurture in a society which becomes increasingly nameless and faceless, and

WHEREAS, the Sunday school involves a larger number of people than any other department in the local church;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Conference of The Evangelical Free Church of America reaffirm its commitment to the ministry of the Sunday school, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Evangelical Free Church of America call upon all of our churches to celebrate this great work of the Church and recognize the ministry of those involved.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1981  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, free public education is a privilege granted to Americans under the laws of the United States of America which privileged Christians should appreciate and support, and

WHEREAS, the trend in tax-supported public education is toward a secular humanistic outlook that ignores and sometimes even denies God;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Christians use opportunities through parent groups, school board meetings and parent-teacher conferences to speak against the growing influence of secular humanism in the schools, taking every opportunity to introduce Christian alternatives in curriculum and program development in public education, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christian parents become aware of the material being presented to their children in the classroom so that they can share biblical teaching with the child at the appropriate time and in the appropriate context, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our Evangelical Free Churches prepare themselves to assist parents by alerting them to the dangerous assumptions of secular humanism and by providing help in approaching children with biblical perspectives on a world view, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, The Evangelical Free Church of America recognize the need in some instances for independent Christian schools and that our churches, when they feel it becomes necessary, cooperate with other churches in the development of Christian schools.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1982  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS, Evangelicals are becoming increasingly disturbed by what is being taught in our public schools in the name of education, which has a deteriorating influence on the family structure, on the moral standards of our people and our nation; also our alarm at the increasing influence of secular humanism in public education to the extent that it is destroying our traditional Judeo-Christian ethic;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that we as Evangelicals strongly oppose on the local and national level this increasing influence of secular humanism in our public educational system;

And that we become increasingly involved in the educational system to counteract the teaching that leads to a breakdown of the family structure and the authority of parents, and that teaching which is contrary to the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic;

And that we oppose the inclusion of teaching of such things as transcendental meditation, teaching of the occult, and permission given to homosexuals to espouse their way of life as normal, and that we oppose any sex education that does not have the Judeo-Christian, biblical, God-given approach to sex;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if necessary, we take such drastic action as to work for the removal of educators and administrators who teach, or who seek to influence our children against these traditional Judeo-Christian norms, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we work toward the removal of textbooks in our public schools that also have a deteriorating effect upon the moral standards of our youth and the breakdown of the family structure and parental authority, and that help to instill a disloyalty to our nation, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commend many of our public school teachers who uphold God-given standards and are doing their best to help stem the tide of secular humanism, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage evangelical people to seek positions of leadership in our public school system and use their influence for good in this significant institution.

## **FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1984  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Millions of school-age young people, through the virtual exclusion from our public schools of all reference to God in prayer, are left to conclude that the State recognizes no power higher than its own. The resulting spiritual vacuum has been filled by pervasive secularism, an environment which subtly makes man the measure of all things. Religious expression must be allowed in public education if the schools are truly to be constitutionally balanced in the matter of religion.

The EFCA therefore urges Congress to act in the following way:

### **Equal Access Legislation**

We urge Congress, as an accommodation to the free exercise of religion, to pass legislation prohibiting discrimination against public school student groups on the basis of the religious content of their speech. In using the physical facilities of public education, students who want to meet for student-initiated prayer, Bible study or other religious expression should not be treated differently from students who meet for non-religious purposes. Any teacher involvement with a religious student group should not relate to the content of any religious expression.

## **PARENTAL RIGHTS AND SCHOOL-BASED CLINICS**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1987  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In recent years the development of sex education courses in public schools has failed to curb an alarming increase in the rate of teenage pregnancies, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases. Presently, School-Based Clinics are being established to provide on-campus health services which include the distribution of contraceptives, pregnancy testing, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, and abortion referrals.

We are opposed to the establishment of School-Based Clinics (SBC's) for the following reasons:

First, SBCs can usurp authority formerly retained by parents regarding the establishment of moral values and sexual activity. On several occasions, SBCs have been established without parental consent.

Second, SBCs are unnecessary to provide on-campus medical treatment due to the close proximity of hospitals and clinics in most communities.

Third, treatment, counsel, and contraceptives distributed by SBCs open up the potential of liability suits for medical malpractice against local school districts if complications arise.

Fourth, since sex education classes have failed to deter sexual activity, the establishment of SBCs will only encourage further sexual activity among teenagers.

Fifth, the failure of sex education classes and SBCs to give moral guidance has resulted in furthering the distorted view of sexuality which already exists in the lives of many teens.

We view the current practices of School-Based Clinics to be an abdication of moral authority. In those cases where SBCs have already been established in a local school, we urge the following steps be taken:

1. SBCs should come under the control of local school board and parental authority.
2. Parents must be assured of the right to have their children restricted from objectionable practices of SBCs.
3. SBCs should be restricted from offering contraceptive counseling, contraceptive devices, and abortion referrals.
4. Where local SBCs fail to be responsive to parental concerns they should be abolished.

We are convinced that human sexuality is a precious gift from God which finds its highest expression in marriage. Anything which detracts from this high view of sexuality will jeopardize the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of men and women. We urge that those schools which have sex education classes be required to teach sexual abstinence prior to marriage as a viable and favorable option for teens.

We believe that education is the inherent right and responsibility of parents. In sending their children to public schools, parents have delegated certain responsibilities to schools, but have not relinquished their parental rights and authority.

## **PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLING**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1988  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Public education has a long, auspicious history in the United States. However, in recent years public schools have come under growing criticism due to their secular, “morally neutral” character. As a result, there has been an increase in Christian schools as well as a renewed interest in home schooling. Alternately, some parents have chosen to assume responsibility, together with the church, for training in Christian world view, encouraging their children to live their faith while acquiring education in the public schools.

Feelings on what is appropriate for the Christian family run deep and there is no one position that prevails within the evangelical community. The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), therefore, calls upon Christian families to carefully consider all relevant factors touching the education and schooling of their children.

The EFCA affirms that education is not simply pouring facts into a mind. It is a life-long endeavor which involves building understandings, perspectives, values and life skills through direct experience, personal processing of information, social interaction and inner struggle. The success of these learning processes depends on the readiness of the student to grow, as well as the quality of education offered.

The home, church and school all play important educational roles. Clearly both the church and family are responsible for communicating Christ and Christian values, the foundation on which all learning will build. Furthermore, the positive witness of Christian families and the broader family of the church ideally will complement what is learned in school. However, we live in a world where the “ideal” and the “reality of life” are rarely synonymous.

Schools, whether public or private, are not all of equal quality. Before enrolling a child in any school, parents must explore the school’s educational philosophy and environment and decide, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how to best fulfill the responsibility to raise their children in the nurture of the Lord. We urge honest consideration of the following:

1. The quality of education offered;
2. The perspective or world view expressed in that education;
3. The specific needs of each child—the ways the home, church and school can work together to help the child mature in faith;
4. The best methods for Christian teachers, parents and students to serve as salt and light in a needy world;
5. Whether the decision reflects the practice of good stewardship of time and financial resources.

The EFCA recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

In support of all parents seeking to make good decisions regarding the schooling of their children, the EFCA affirms the responsibility and right of parents to choose the educational options most consistent with their religious conscience and best suited for their children. We further affirm the importance of mutual respect between parents whose views on schooling may differ, and the EFCA encourages all Christian parents to develop a Christian world view and lifestyle and to discipline their children in that view.

## THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1990  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The New Age Movement is a religious system of growing influence which seeks to give meaning to human existence and resolve the complexities of human life. It is incumbent upon the Christian community to understand its teaching and expose its errors.

As Christians we believe that the Bible, God's revelation to man, is the standard for truth and that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, whose life, death, and resurrection provide the only means by which mankind can come into a right relationship with the Creator.

As Christians we need to be aware that the teaching of the New Age Movement is in deep conflict with Christian truth. We recognize that the Christian faith and the New Age Movement address many of the same issues.

1. The emphasis of cooperation instead of competition.
2. The protection of earth instead of exploitation and destruction of its resources.
3. The promotion of creativity.
4. The promotion of peace.
5. The call for radical transformation, a total change of mind.
6. The importance of the body and its care; exercise, healthy food, rest.
7. The importance of human potential and positive self-image.
8. A sensitivity to the global village and our responsibility to people in other lands.

However, the basis for working toward these goals and ideas comes from a very different understanding of truth. The Christian sees him or herself as accountable to Scripture and to the God of creation who will ultimately judge the actions of each human being. The New Age thinker sees him or herself as a god, determining his or her own destiny in a global unification and by means of various life experiences.

The Christian believes that God is the Creator and that He is distinct from His creation. The New Age thinker believes that human beings and all they experience are already one, that this essential unity is god and therefore all humanity is god.

Christians believe that human beings are sinful and that they trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin in order to be transformed to a new way of life. The New Age thinker believes that as human beings become more aware of their oneness with the universe they will be transformed in their way of thinking.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to come into a right relationship with the Creator and that all other religious claims concerning redemption are false. The New Age thinker believes that all religious systems are part of the oneness of truth in the universe.

Finally, the Christian believes that God, of His own initiative, will establish a new heaven and a new earth, and that at the present time we ought to act in a way consistent with the new age to come. The New Age thinker believes that a new and better world will come as humanity realizes its oneness with the universe.

We therefore call upon the constituency of The Evangelical Free Church of America to:

1. Be aware that the Bible teaches that the adversary maintains a conspiracy against mankind.
2. Be aware that spiritual deception has been part of Satan's plan through all the ages.
3. Be aware that the Christian is called upon to fill his mind with the things of God as revealed in Scripture, not to empty his mind through meditation in order to find God.
4. Be aware that we should be wise in our understanding of the teaching of the New Age Movement and be prepared to warn against its deception and speak the truth of God in love.
5. Be fully convinced that true freedom and eternal truth comes to us through Jesus Christ our Lord as revealed in the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments.



## **DECLARATION FOR LIFE AND MORALITY**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1977  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

We uphold an unborn child to have the rights of a person from conception and these rights may not be properly abrogated by law.

We hold that it is the responsibility of parents to protect the rights of an unborn child and that abortion as commonly practiced today is not a legitimate means of handling unwanted, inconvenient or embarrassing pregnancies. We further hold that the rights of marriage should not be taken out of the context of marriage, but, even when they are, any resulting child is not to be viewed as having any less right to life and liberty from conception than any other child.

We hold that the state should guarantee the rights of the unborn child as it would guarantee the rights of any of its citizens, but that where the state adopts a lesser morality it is the duty of the Christian to adhere to and foster a higher morality.

We also hold that the eclectic morality currently upheld by the courts relative to abortion bodes ill, not only for the defenseless, but also for the aged and the infirm, and represents an overall trend which, if persisted in, will have repugnant consequences in the lives and consciences of every individual in our nation and in our national heritage and destiny.

Recognizing that the underlying social impetus in the abortion movement is the problem of unwanted children, we encourage our churches to take positive action in ministering to those situations where this problem of unwanted children exists. This could be done through counseling services or personal assistance to families where there is inability to provide for the means of children, in order to become an agent of grace and support to the mother and her child.

## **HUMAN REPRODUCTION AND GENETIC ENGINEERING**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1981  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS the Word of God explicitly teaches that God made man, male and female, in His own image and likeness, and that His work of creation is very good, and

WHEREAS modern medical and biological science now offers mankind new possibilities of facilitating, affecting, and changing the natural patterns of human reproduction, including genetic screening, genetic counseling, amniocentesis, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, genetic manipulation, and asexual reproduction, and

WHEREAS such possibilities range from legitimate and prudent therapy to procedures that may fundamentally alter the Creator's handiwork and modify the basis and conditions of human existence, and

WHEREAS the development of technical means in any area of human research does not automatically legitimate its utilization;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Christians should refrain from using medical technology to engender offspring other than within a lawful marriage, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christians should refrain from, and urge society to refrain from, experimental efforts to modify the human genetic heritage by genetic engineering, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Christians not countenance experiments and efforts intended to create human life by asexual reproduction (cloning).

**AIDS**  
**(Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1986  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In light of the AIDS epidemic which is sweeping across America, we note the following:

Most AIDS victims have been involved in a homosexual lifestyle which the Bible expressly condemns (Lev. 18:22) and which God will judge (I. Cor. 6:9-10).

There are also other victims of AIDS who have not been involved in homosexual activity but who are suffering the consequences of this presently incurable disease: Haitians, hemophiliacs, children and some innocent heterosexuals.

As Christians we are called to uphold biblical standards of righteousness and a godly lifestyle, and part of our task in proclaiming the good news of the gospel is to announce God's judgment upon sin and the penalties which accompany patterns of sinful living.

As Christians we are also called to minister compassionately to all who have need, who suffer as a result of sin or as innocent victims. We are called to be in the world and to be with sinners in order to communicate the gospel (I Cor. 5:9-13) and to minister to those in need.

As Christians we are called not only to trust in the Holy Spirit to bring conviction of sin through the Word of God, but to trust in God to deliver us from fears and to protect His people as they faithfully proclaim the Word and serve in His name.

As Christians and citizens we are legitimately concerned about issues of public safety which surround the AIDS epidemic.

Therefore as Christians we reaffirm our commitment to the full proclamation of the gospel, the word of judgment and the word of God's mercy.

We reaffirm our responsibility as Christians to show Christian compassion to the victims of AIDS, both to those who are guilty of sin and those who are innocent victims.

We trust in God for strength to be bold in the condemnation of sin and to trust in His gracious protection as we minister to those in need.

We support the efforts to minister to victims of AIDS, and we pray for progress in research efforts to combat the AIDS epidemic.

## **SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1988  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Human life is a gift from God to be cherished from the time of conception until natural death. Since God has chosen to involve Himself with human life at every age and to affirm its value under all conditions, it is imperative for us to maintain this same high regard for life.

In recent years our society has developed an increasingly ambivalent attitude toward human life. On the one hand society applauds the technological advancements which prolong and rescue life, while at the same time it questions the worth of the handicapped, the aged, and the unborn.

Consequently, we affirm the God-given right for all humans to enjoy the length of life willed by their Creator. The handicapped must not be left to die at birth, or be deprived of appropriate medical care. Their parents must be affirmed and encouraged. If biological parents are unwilling to care for their own, adoptive parents should be sought. If none can be found, the care of the handicapped should become the responsibility of the church and the society as a whole.

Likewise, we affirm the dignity of the elderly among us. We deplore the ageism in our society which reflects a bias against the elderly, leading them to a sense of worthlessness, despair and increasing rates of suicide. We also deplore the growing support for active euthanasia. We believe it is the responsibility of the church to challenge this bias of our culture. While we believe it is wrong to needlessly prolong an imminent death, we strongly disapprove of those measures, such as withholding of food and water, for the purpose of hastening prematurely the death of the individual.

We call upon our society to embrace the value of human life and to affirm the dignity and worth of the handicapped and the aged. We call upon the church to embrace the handicapped and the elderly as an expression of our love for Christ and his love for the human race.

\*See EFCA resolution on abortion.

## MEDICAL DECISIONS AND CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Recent advances in medical technology present some unusual ethical challenges for individuals who seek to make decisions about medical care from a Christian perspective. On the one hand, these advances are a source of great human benefit and an occasion for thanksgiving to God. At the same time, the indiscriminate embrace of every available technology risks obscuring fundamental biblical convictions about the nature of human life.

While we affirm the value of medical care, we also recognize that decisions regarding medical treatment must go beyond the question of mere technical feasibility to include biblical principles which affect these decisions.

Fundamentally, the care of the human body is a stewardship from God based on the fact that as human beings we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and as Christians, our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). In light of this stewardship, we affirm the following:

The human body is a gift from God and is to be treated respectfully as part of His good creation. While we humbly recognize the limitations of human physical life (Isaiah 45:9-10), we also affirm the right to pursue such treatment as would enhance the quality of our lives as well as our service to Christ.

Our bodies will one day perish (Hebrews 9:27). We fully understand that some suffering is an inevitable part of life. While the control of disabling pain may be sought (Proverbs 31:6-7), the use of addictive and debilitating medication must be carefully weighed in light of our calling to join in the sufferings of Christ (Philippians 3:10). In all of our suffering, we are reminded of the sufficiency of the grace of Christ (II Cor. 12:9).

In certain cases, we recognize that illness is the result of personal disobedience and moral failure (Psalm 32:3-5; I Cor. 11:29-10). When this is the case, steps must be taken through prayer and the confession of sin to clear the conscience and find reconciliation with God and with others.

Prayer is essential for those involved in making decisions about medical treatment. By prayer, we seek wisdom and accountability before God: first, as we assess the advice of medical experts, pastors, church leaders, and friends (James 5:13-16; Proverbs 15:22); then, as we attempt to measure the impact of treatment upon our own lives, the lives of family members and the broader community. Finally, prayer is the means by which we appeal to God for His healing mercies and a display of His power.

While advancing medical technology has opened up unprecedented options for elective medical care, our stewardship before God reminds us that our freedom involves not simply the right to do what we want or what is available, but the power to do what we ought (1 Peter 3:16). In the complex issues which confront modern Christians on medical care, it is God's desire that we consistently take counsel from His Word. When we do so, we are assured in Scripture (Psalm 1:2-3; Joshua 1:8) that we will receive the wisdom and insight needed to make proper decisions, even in this difficult area.

## **MINISTRY TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Over 35 million Americans are physically or mentally disabled. Difficulties associated with disability often cause individuals and their families stress and trauma and sometimes raise questions about God, His power, and His goodness.

Families with members who suffer from disabilities also experience pressures that can result in a higher incidence of poverty, unemployment, family disintegration, substance abuse and suicide.

Adding to the problem is the mobility of American families as they move and lose the support groups that are needed in times of personal distress.

The EFCA desires to take positive steps of action to compassionately respond to people in such situations. We acknowledge that Jesus' ministry on earth singled out the weak, the poor and the disabled for special concern. Because of the model Jesus provided and the need that exists, we call upon our member churches and Christians everywhere to:

1. Reach out to disabled people and welcome them into the life of the church.
2. Establish among members of the church a Christian ethic that gives respect, acceptance and assistance to all disabled persons.
3. Remove physical and communication barriers that hinder access of disabled people to the worship services and to the recreational and social activities of the church.
4. Extend transportation services, as needed, to those of limited mobility so that they might participate in church activities.
5. Celebrate the spiritual gifts of disabled people by allowing them not only to be served but to serve by incorporating their gifts into the life and worship of the Body.
6. Provide the leadership necessary to minister effectively to disabled persons by offering curriculum, instituting programs, and providing special training for workers.

## FETAL TISSUE RESEARCH

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1990  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Medical research as recently demonstrated the potential for the utilization of fetal tissue in transplant operations for the treatment of many diseases. Because fetal tissue grows more rapidly and bears less potential for rejection, it is preferred to adult tissue. This research has indicated promising results in treatment of individuals suffering from diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's and other debilitating illnesses.

While we have great empathy for individuals suffering from degenerative illnesses and have great sympathy for their situations, we must clarify that not all ends are morally acceptable in justifying the means of treatment. In the matter of fetal tissue, researchers have asserted that tissue from the unborn child is preferable to tissue from a miscarriage or stillborn child because it is assumed that it is relatively free from genetic defect. Consequently, tissues obtained from elective abortions have been most desired by researchers.

In the case where fetal tissue is made available because of a miscarriage or stillbirth, we find no ethical objection as long as the decision to donate the body of the child is made without coercion. However, since the utilization of tissue from an elective abortion would by necessity require the destruction of an unborn child, we find this method of obtaining tissue for research and/or treatment to be against the sanctity of human life.

For this reason we affirm the recent guidelines by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services which prohibit research on fetal tissues obtained from elective abortions. We urge state governments to take similar action to assure the sanctity of human life and to protect the lives of the unborn. Further, we urge that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) place all fetal tissue and organs under the Organ Transplant Act, which forbids the sale and use of certain body parts for transplantation.

## LIVING WILLS

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1990  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

As medical technology becomes ever more sophisticated, individuals are faced with increasingly difficult ethical decisions concerning medical treatment and care, especially in terminal situations. Two concerns arise in relation to terminal care. One is the concern that a patient will be kept alive indefinitely by artificial means. The other is that too little care will be given, and a patient will suffer unnecessarily or die prematurely.

One way of addressing these concerns is by means of an Advance Directive or Living Will, a legal arrangement, which is now provided by statute in many states and the District of Columbia. Advance Directives or Living Wills are legally binding documents which permit a person to communicate, in advance, his or her wishes and feelings regarding medical treatment in the instance of a terminal medical condition whether or not extraordinary means may be employed to prolong life. Or, in most states, an individual may specify a proxy, who will see that the individual's instructions are carried out, or who will be empowered to make decisions about care should the individual become incapacitated. Living Wills are legally binding on all parties, though an individual who has made such an arrangement is free to revoke it at any time.

We recognize that Living Wills can provide a clear communication with one's family (or in their absence, close friends), and with one's physician and pastor. But in situations where death is imminent, or where it is deemed to be imminent, the use of Living Wills raises serious questions for the thoughtful Christian regarding the appropriate limits of human responsibility. Measures which artificially extend life or prematurely shorten it, involve moral questions about what constitutes killing, and/or what constitutes a human attempt to usurp the place of God in the issues of life and death.

As Christians, we affirm the sacredness of human life. The value of life is not based on quality or productivity, but on the fact that life is a gift from God (Gen. 2:7, Job 12:10). He determines when life begins and ends. Therefore, we oppose all forms of euthanasia, mercy killing, assisted suicide or suicide as morally wrong.

Secondly, we recognize that there comes a time to die and we need to be ready for it (Ecclesiastes 3:2, Hebrews 9:27). It is not morally or medically required that we use every possible means to extend life indefinitely. When the burden of care far exceeds the benefit, or when life can only be sustained by extraordinary means, there comes a time when it is not wrong to allow the natural process of death to run its course. Wisdom is needed to know when extraordinary measures are no longer appropriate.

Thirdly, we affirm the right of the individual and his or her family to decide what is best within these parameters. We encourage consultation with one's pastor, physician, family and friends. We affirm the need to pray and seek God's wisdom in every medical decision, including the decision about whether or not to establish a Living Will (James 1:5 and 5:14-16).

We urge that individuals know the legal provisions of their own state with regard to Living Wills. Since it is very difficult to make well-informed decisions about treatment before a medical illness or injury actually occurs, we urge that Living wills be used with caution. And finally, since someone will have to make critical decisions about medical treatment if a terminal crisis does occur, we strongly urge that individuals give attention to these matters in advance of the situation itself.



## **BIRTH CONTROL AS IT RELATES TO ABORTION**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1991  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

We recognize that the decision to use or not to use a method of birth control is a very personal matter. However, since some birth control methods are abortifacient, that is, they act to cause an abortion in the early days of pregnancy, this matter needs to be addressed.

Some methods of birth control, such as condoms and the diaphragm, prevent conception by forming a barrier between the sperm and the egg. Some birth control methods, such as foams, jellies, creams, and sponges, contain spermicidal substances that kill the sperm before they reach the egg. These methods are not abortifacient.

The Morning-after Pill is a synthetic estrogen called DES. When administered in large doses, it works by making the uterine lining an inhospitable place for the fertilized egg to implant itself. RU-486, another new drug, has been used in France during the first seven weeks of pregnancy. RU-486 is believed to work by starving the cells lining the uterus, thus causing the fertilized egg to abort. Pro-abortion groups are lobbying to allow this drug to be legalized in the United States. Both the Morning-after Pill and RU-486 are abortifacient.

The use of birth control methods that are abortifacient, that is, those that work by causing a fertilized egg to abort, is inconsistent with the position taken by the EFCA on abortion. Should a couple choose to use a birth control method, care should be taken to use a method that works by preventing conception solely and not to use a method that may cause an abortion.

## THE MYTH OF CHOICE

Resolution adopted at the General Conference, 1993  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In the twenty years following the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, during which period the lives of over thirty million unborn children have been prematurely and deliberately brought to an end, it is clear that "pro-choice" forces have succeeded in defining the terms of the debate over abortion. Because we have a "pro-choice" president who has already begun implementing a "pro-choice" agenda, which includes the appointment of a "pro-choice" justice to the Supreme Court, the next crucial battles over *Roe v. Wade* demand our urgent and prayerful attention. The battle for the lives of the unborn must continue to be waged on many levels over the next Supreme Court nominee, in the halls of Congress and in the legislatures of the fifty states. It must also be waged at the level of public opinion and specifically over how the central issue in this battle is defined. It is the burden of this resolution that the central issue has been mid-defined in the public mind as a debate over "choice". Fundamentally, it is and always has been the issue of life.

By defining the abortion question as a debate over a woman's right of choice, pro-choice advocates have succeeded in creating a myth in which choice is seen as an unqualified right. The fact is that choice is never an unqualified right—our choices as human beings are always qualified by the rights of others.

It is important that we press this point in the public debate as part of a two-fold strategy. First, we must argue the illogic of casting abortion as simply a matter of choice. This form of the argument is present when someone says, "I don't believe in abortion myself, but I can't deny the right of a woman to choose." To see how contradictory this statement is, we need only change the terms slightly: "I don't believe in killing aged grandparents or three-year old children, but I cannot deny your right to make that choice." Obviously, what is really at issue is whether aged grandparents, three-year olds and unborn children are human beings. In the final analysis, the abortion question always reduces to a question of life!

The second stage in our strategy is to present clearly the reasons why we believe that is life in the womb—in our preaching and teaching, in our casual conversations, and in any public or private forum to which we have access. Genetically, all that is human is there from the moment of conception, and human beings are sacred because they are made in the image of God. In this, the worth of every human being is guaranteed, and every human is rendered worthy of full respect and protection. If we deny that claim, we do so only at the risk of disobeying God and denying our own humanity.

We must be faithful to make the case for life patiently, assertively and prayerfully, remembering the opportunities to do so will largely be determined by our ability first to alter the terms of the debate by casing it fundamentally as a question, not of choice, but of life.

Finally, we must remember to accord primacy to the proclamation of the gospel itself. The gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus can transform those who have been deceived by the myth of "choice." Also, the gospel of God's grace can forgive and reclaim those who are guilty and scarred by the sin of abortion. God's grace can reclaim and restore all of us to love Him, to respect His creation, and to love and support in every way we can all those who are created in His image—the unborn, the single mother and her children, even the wayward father. To this end we pledge ourselves afresh.

## THE CONTRACEPTIVE SOCIETY

Resolution adopted at the General Conference, 1993  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

The widespread availability and use of birth control methods has led some to label America the “contraceptive society.” Accompanying this development has been a growing tendency to detach sexual experience from committed marriage relationships, and to a general rise in sexual promiscuity. In addition, a negative attitude toward children has emerged, in which children are seen as an intrusion into adult experience and an impediment to personal freedom and fulfillment.

These developments call for a series of responses, not the least of which is a reflection on the meaning and appropriateness of birth control.

First of all, we acknowledge that couples have the freedom within marriage to choose whether or not to use birth control methods, as long as these methods are not abortifacient. This conclusion rests on the view that the purpose of marriage should not be solely for procreation, but that within the boundaries of marriage, the gift of sexuality is to be celebrated as a means of expressing love and commitment between a husband and a wife.

Secondly, we note that questions which surround the role of human agency in relation to the birth of children do not arise simply with the advent of sophisticated contraceptive techniques. With even the most rudimentary knowledge about the processes of reproduction we are confronted with questions about how human agency relates to divine sovereignty in the birth of children. The mystery of the relationship between human agency and divine sovereignty in the birth of children is not, therefore, something being confronted afresh with the advent of modern reproductive technologies. We affirm that children are always a gift from God without respect to human reproductive intent.

In addition, we reject as offensive to God and as a perversion of human sexuality the treatment of sexuality as a recreational activity outside the context of love and a committed marital relationship. We deeply lament the growing tide of sexual sin which easy access to birth control methods seems to encourage.

We reject the appropriateness of slogans like “safe sex,” which promise a measure of physical safety in extramarital sexual relationships, even while they mask the moral and spiritual damage which such practices inflict.

We deplore the rising bias against children, who are to be viewed as a gift and a blessing from the hand of God.

We affirm afresh the institution of marriage as established by God for our joy and our good. We affirm marriage as the foundation of the family, which is the most important human institution for the development and nurture of children into healthy adults.

## **PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE**

Resolution adopted at the General Conference, 1994  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Adapted from:  
Christian Medical and Dental Society Resolutions

We believe that human life is a gift from God and is sacred because it bears God's image. Human life has worth because Christ died to redeem it, and it has meaning because God has eternal purpose for it. In light of this, suicide is devaluation of the biblical view of human life.

Suicide is in opposition to the sovereignty of a loving God, the Creator of all life, and it is an inappropriate exercise of the control that God has given over our own lives as created beings.

Release from suffering is thought by some to justify suicide. However, suffering is a part of the current state of God's redemptive plan. Relief of family or societal burden is thought by some to justify suicide. However, the biblical view of family and community includes an obligation to attempt to meet the needs of the individual. Proponents of physician-assisted suicide argue from the perspective of compassion and radical individual autonomy. However, the sovereignty of God places a limit on human autonomy.

The role of the physician is to affirm life, to relieve suffering and pain, and to give compassionate, competent care as long as the patient lives. Therefore, we oppose active intervention with the intent to produce death for the relief of pain, suffering or economic considerations or for the convenience of patient, family or society.

We do not oppose withdrawal or withholding of artificial means of life support in patients who are clearly and irreversibly deteriorating, in whom death appears imminent and beyond reasonable hope of recovery.

In order to affirm the dignity of human life, we advocate the development and use of alternatives to relieve pain and suffering, provide human companionship and give opportunity for spiritual support and counseling.

We oppose physician-assisted suicide in any form!

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PRESIDENTIAL VETO OF H.R. 1833**  
**The Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act**

Presented to the General Conference, 1996  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

**I. Partial Birth Abortion**

“Partial-birth abortion, also known as dilation and extraction (“D and X”), is a procedure for ending late-term pregnancies. The mother visits the abortion facility on three successive days. On the first two days, her cervix is mechanically dilated. On the third day, the abortionist extracts the baby, feet first, from the womb and through the birth canal until all but the head is exposed. Then the tips of surgical scissors are thrust into the base of the baby’s skull, and a suction catheter is inserted through the opening and the brain is removed, collapsing the skull and making it easier to deliver.”

**II. Background**

On April 10, 1996, President Bill Clinton vetoed the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act (H.R. 1833). This bill, approved by the Senate (54-44) and the House of Representatives (286-129), would have banned partial-birth abortions except for a “mother whose life is endangered by the physical disorder, illness or injury.” In a statement released through the Office of Management and Budget by the Clinton Administration on November 7, 1995, President Clinton had promised to veto the bill because

“The President believes that the decision to have an abortion should be between a woman, her conscience, her doctor, and her God...The President has long opposed late-term abortions except where they are necessary to protect the life of the mother or where there is a threat to her health, consistent with the law...Therefore, the Administration cannot support H.R. 1833 because it fails to provide for consideration of the need to preserve the life and health of the mother, consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade*.”

The supporters of H.R. 1833 sought to limit the use of partial-birth abortions to situations in which the mother’s life was in danger. To incorporate the health of the mother as a consideration for use of this abortion procedure would make the ban meaningless, since “health” has been interpreted to include “all factors—physical, emotional, psychological, familial and the woman’s age—relevant to the well-being of the patient.” (*Doe vs. Bolton*, U.S. Supreme Court, 1973). As long as the physician and mother agree that carrying the pregnancy to birth affects some aspect of the mother’s “health”, then a partial-birth abortion would not be prohibited by this ban.

**III. Response**

The Evangelical Free Church of America opposes President Clinton’s veto of H.R. 1833 for the following reasons:

- A. We believe that God creates a human being not by passage through birth canal or by a surgical procedure such as Cesarean section. Nor does God create a human being when a fetus is capable of existing outside its mother’s womb. Rather, we believe that God creates a human being when conception occurs.

The abortion debate is not really about a woman’s freedom to choose (see also “The Myth of Choice” Resolution adopted at the EFCA General Conference, 1993). What the abortion debate is really about is our society’s definition of a human being. Those who want to frame the abortion debate as a matter of choice seek to move our society’s definition of a human being as far away from conception and as close to birth as possible. We, on the other hand, strive to push society’s definition of human being back to the point of conception.

The partial-birth abortion assumes that an unborn baby becomes a human being at complete birth. This view holds that a fully viable, healthy, unborn baby is not a human being, even though its legs, arms, and body are outside the mother's body, as long as its head is still within the mother's body. The choice of the head being the last body part remaining within the mother's body is a purely pragmatic one. The head cannot be removed until its skull is first collapsed. According to the logic of partial-birth abortions, it's never too late to perform an abortion, as long as some body part, even a foot, remains within the mother's body. As long as some part of the baby remains inside the mother, the baby has not yet been born; and what has not yet been born is not a human being and can therefore be aborted.

President Clinton's veto of H.R. 1833 clearly supports the worldview that one's status as a human being depends not on a creative act of God in conception, but on a human-defined set of biological criteria (is it viable, inside the womb, dependent on an umbilical cord?) that ignores the spiritual nature of a human being. As supportive of such an un-Scriptural worldview, we oppose the presidential veto of H.R. 1833.

- B. We also disagree with President Clinton's position that "the decision to have an abortion should be between a woman, her conscience, her doctor, and her God." Why is it that the decision to steal a car, rob a bank, murder someone, cheat on taxes, etc., is not a decision between the perpetrator, his or her conscience, and his or her God? The reason why is that laws against theft, murder, cheating on taxes, etc., are based on fundamental moral truths that apply to everyone in society. No individual has the authority to choose which of these fundamental moral truths do or do not apply to himself or herself.

The morality of abortion depends on the fundamental moral truth of whether or not an unborn baby is a human being. Claiming that the decision to have an abortion belongs to individual women, implies that individual women can choose for themselves, whether or not the fundamental moral truth of who counts as a human being, does or does not apply to their babies.

We believe in the existence of fundamental moral truths, absolute and universal. The understanding of when a human being comes into existence is one such fundamental moral truth. As a repudiation of the universal nature of this truth, we oppose the Presidential veto of H.R. 1833.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In a consumer oriented and materialistic society such as ours today, the world tends to define one's humanity according to his or her usefulness to society. Only those who contribute are seen as having a right to share in the consumption of resources necessary to support our lifestyle. Those lacking "normal" cognitive skills, people with other serious disabilities, the unborn, the elderly, and those with limited socio-economic opportunities, are seen as a waste of resources, a negative return on investment. Those who argue for the freedom to choose promote a dark vision of a society that culls the less than useful from its ranks by denying them status as human beings and thus making them disposable.

Freedom to choose is freedom for some to decide who doesn't count as a human being and thus who is disposable. Whether in the beginning stages of life through abortion, or in the latter stages of life through suicide and euthanasia, no one has the authority to disenfranchise someone (even themselves) of his or her humanity. Such authority belongs to God, the one who brings human beings into existence by his creative power.

As the people of God, our calling is to defend the humanity of all people, especially the most vulnerable (unborn, elderly, disabled, and powerless) from others who would seek to declare them less than human. We oppose all efforts that seek to make the disenfranchising of human beings an accepted norm or practice in our society. As we value the life and humanity of all people, we stand in stark contrast to those who would deny even the basic essentials to the "least of these."

## SECTION F

### THE CHURCH AND RECONCILIATION

Throughout the world, racial, ethnic and socio-economic tensions are increasing, and in many places they are reaching new levels of intensity and conflict. In the midst of this situation, God's people are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation. Out of God's own reconciliation, purchased for us on the cross by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are able to envision a reconciliation between human beings. In the faithful proclamation of the gospel, we call humanity to be reconciled to God and to one another. In our won life as individuals and as churches, in our attitudes and actions toward all those around us—those of different races and ethnic groups, different socio-economic position and circumstance—we seek to model the reconciliation which God has provided for us with himself. In the spirit of that reconciliation the following resolutions have been fashioned. In a day of rising tensions there is much yet to be done. May God lead us in His truth and may we be faithful to love mercy, seek justice and walk humbly with our God!

#### **Resolutions:**

Refugee Resettlement (1980)

Apartheid (1986)

Ethnic Ministries (1989)

Persecuted Christians in the USSR (1989)

Prison Ministry and Prison Reform: A Call to the Church (1990)

The New Racism (1992)

Our Resolve for Reconciliation

A Call to the Churches to Intentional Reconciliation

A Resolution Condemning the Burnings of African American Churches

## **REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1980  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

WHEREAS thousands of refugees have fled Cambodia, Afghanistan, Cuba, and other countries to find refuge in sympathizing lands, and

WHEREAS most of the lands to which the refugees have fled are unable to care for all the refugees, and

WHEREAS it is incumbent upon Christians to help those in need in response to Christ's command;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that local churches of The Evangelical Free Church of America set an example of Christ's love by sponsoring refugee families in resettlement in our neighborhoods through the World Relief Refugee services of the National Association of Evangelicals, or that we cooperate with other local churches in the resettlement of refugees, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if our local Evangelical Free Church is unable to care for a refugee family themselves, that as a church they provide to the World Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals to help provide necessities for these refugees in the refugee camps.



## **APARTHEID**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1986  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In the light of the tensions, unrest and bloodshed in the Republic of South Africa, The Evangelical Free Church of America wishes to express its oneness with our Christian brothers and sisters of all races in that nation and to assure them of our prayers for peace and justice.

Furthermore, we affirm the fact that we are opposed to discriminatory practices against people on the basis of race; and we deplore violent means to achieve or to prevent the achievement of civil rights. It is our firm conviction that the practice of apartheid is an affront to a just God and is contrary to the Bible's teaching. We lift up to God all the peoples in South Africa, that they might resolve their differences by peaceful means in a spirit of brotherhood and love. We will pray and work for a speedy and peaceful end to this injustice in the Republic of South Africa.

## ETHNIC MINISTRIES

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

As the United States moves toward the beginning of the twenty-first century, we see several significant social changes which will dramatically alter the cultural and spiritual landscape of American society. Urbanization, secularization, and the rapid increase of many ethnic people groups are forces which continue to impact our culture.

The increase of ethnic populations throughout the country has accelerated to the point where demographers predict that the United States will become a “majority of minorities” by the year 2000. As the majority of these minority groups are traditionally non-Christian or only nominally Christian, we will continue to see the demise of Christian influence and culture in major metropolitan areas unless significant action is taken to proclaim the gospel of Christ to these groups in their language and cultural settings.

The Evangelical Free Church of America itself enjoys a rich heritage of both ethnic and urban ministry. Both the Swedish and the Norwegian-Danish groups which later formed the EFCA were themselves ethnic churches of their time with their largest and most effective churches located in urban settings.

It is vital for us to understand that the biblical mandate for evangelism found in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8 specifies that the gospel is to be taken to all ethnic groups, as well as geo-political areas. The ethnic peoples of our cities and rural areas are often unreached and are just as much a mission field as are the most remote regions of our planet.

With this understanding of the ethnic backdrop and the clear teaching of Scripture, we realize the importance of mobilizing our resources for ethnic ministry in the United States while continuing to expand our mission efforts around the globe. We urge churches and church members to consistently pray and creatively plan for outreach to the various ethnic groups and by-passed peoples of our land.

We as a national conference reaffirm the stated ethnic ministry goals of CMD 2000. That is, the recruitment and training of personnel for ethnic evangelism and church planting, the development of ethnic leadership, the targeting of ethnic groups for church planting, and the creation of an international church network. We reaffirm the goal of having 600 ethnic churches by the year 2000.

We encourage individual churches to consider extension of their ministries to ethnic groups by the redistribution of building use, the establishment of special worship services, the calling of additional staff and/or the development of special ministries to fit the needs of ethnic groups which live within their ministry area.

We call churches to consider financial support for new churches to be started in ethnic communities and to support church planters who are working as frontier missionaries in these strategic areas.

We support the mobilization of training resources for the development of ethnic leadership, and the development of Christian education material in other languages to meet specific needs. We support the inclusion of ethnic individuals into our churches as well as the inclusion of the various ethnic and multi-cultural churches into our district and national fellowships.

We believe that the Word of God reveals a clear mandate to create a unified body of redeemed individuals through our Lord Jesus Christ. People of various backgrounds—cultural, economic, and racial—are united in His Church (Revelation 7:9). Christ’s directive to the Church in the Great Commission compels us to reach out to all individuals.

We recognize that such effort and inclusion will bring change. We view this as valued change. Our lives and our understanding of the Lordship of Christ will be enhanced through our relationship with Christians

from diverse cultural and language backgrounds but who are likewise called into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as part of His Body, the Church.

## **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN THE USSR**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1989  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Thousands of persecuted Christians have emigrated from the Soviet Union during the past year. This unprecedented event presents the evangelical community with the opportunity to welcome fellow believers to America, assist them in their efforts to become naturalized citizens and help them adjust to life in the United States.

For decades, many believers in the Soviet Union have struggled vigorously for permission to leave because of harsh religious persecution. A thaw in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union in recent years is partly responsible for the sudden surge in the number of Christians and other religious minorities who have been allowed to emigrate. Refugee experts predict that perhaps up to 10,000 Christians and 30,000 Jews will leave the Soviet Union in 1989. The majority of Christians in the Soviet Union are prepared to endure whatever hardships occur because of their faith and to remain in their country. A small minority, however, have chosen to leave and seek refuge in countries where they can exercise their faith freely. These Christians believe they do not have a place in Soviet society.

The EFCA calls on the evangelical community to provide a generous and enthusiastic response to our brothers and sisters in Christ in their journey to freedom. We who live comfortably in this free society can learn from those who have suffered and endured persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

We call upon our government, as we have in similar situations, to consider the plight of these believers, recognizing that they have a well-grounded fear of further persecution and are thus entitled to refugee status. We also ask that serious consideration be given to increasing the number of refugees that will be allowed to immigrate to America from the Soviet Union.

Moreover, we call upon our individual members and churches to continue to support the efforts of the World Relief Corporation of NAE, our international assistance arm, as it responds to meet the needs of believers from the Soviet Union who need to be speedily processed in Western Europe and resettled in the United States.

## **PRISON MINISTRY AND PRISON REFORM: A CALL TO THE CHURCH**

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1990  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

America's prison population is in a state of crisis. Though largely hidden from public view, the nearly 900,000 men, women, and juvenile offenders who inhabit America's federal and state prisons and municipal jails, are being forced through overcrowding to live under increasingly inhumane conditions.

Growing concern over crime—especially crime related to America's burgeoning drug problem—has created, on the one hand, increased public pressure to pass stiff sentences on criminal offenders, while at the same time fiscal constraints have reduced the amount of funds available for new prison construction.

This is a problem which Christian people cannot ignore. The direct teaching of Jesus calls for a ministry response from God's people to those who are imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46).

The problems that face America's prison population are as complex as sin itself, and as varied as all the ways that sin can be expressed—from the consequences of individual transgression to structural injustice. God's people must first recognize their responsibilities in this area of ministry need, and then act in both short- and long-term ways.

Prison Fellowship Ministries, started by Charles Colson, is an example of a parachurch organization that can provide direct ministry within prisons. Not everyone can have direct access to prisoners. Those who do have access need to be supported and encouraged by the broader Christian community.

Operating at a more long-term level is Justice Fellowship, a branch of Prison Fellowship, which seeks reform of the prison system itself. One of the most promising developments in the area of prison reform is a revival of the biblical concept of restitution, stressing what some have called "restorative justice." This emphasizes the idea of restitution, in which crimes are viewed not only as a sin against God, but as an offense by one individual against the rights of another. Justice Fellowship has been active in exploring concrete ways in which the system of justice can be modified to include restitution as a response to crime. This is a promising alternative that addresses the problem of prison overcrowding directly, while at the same time it honors the biblical understanding of justice both for the criminal, for the victims, and for the broader community.

Therefore we call upon the constituency of The Evangelical Free Church of America to respond in the following ways:

To pray for and commend those local churches and individuals involved in this divinely ordained ministry.

To seek God's wisdom for additional ways we, as individuals and congregations, could respond to this area of need.

To teach faithfully our responsibilities—through Sunday School classes, Bible studies, and pulpit ministries—and to minister to even the least of those who are in prison.

To undertake some effort to be involved in such ministries as Prison Fellowship's Pen Pal Program or Project Angel Tree, either as individuals or as congregations, or to help and encourage those who are involved in these or similar ministries.

To prepare in our churches for the larger societal debate over the issues of prison reform through study, prayer, and reflection.

To call for a promotion and implementation of the concept of “restorative justice,” for nonviolent offenders as part of the solution to the problem of overcrowding and recidivism among prisoners.

Finally, to commit ourselves to the Lord that we may be faithful in this ministry through the strength which God supplies (Hebrews 13:20-21).

## THE “NEW” RACISM

Resolution adopted at General Conference, 1992  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

AS CHRISTIANS, WE DEPLORE RACISM as sin against fellow human beings who are created in the image of God. Racism has undergone a recent resurgence, with an increase in violence evidenced by racial confrontations on college campuses, numerous racially biased crimes, the increased visibility and boldness of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and various other separatist movements. Racism is also present in more subtle and passive forms in institutional settings where systems of discrimination prevent the upward mobility of gifted and qualified individuals. It is also present in racially discriminatory housing patterns, in the neglect and avoidance of people who are racially different, in the use of racially offensive language and humor, and at the level of individual prejudices and biases which heighten tension and perpetuate misunderstanding between racially different people. Even though our society benefits from progress made in the area of racial harmony during and following the Civil Rights Movement, we believe that racism continues to exist and at the present time appears to have found renewed energy.

Racism is an irrational belief in the superiority of one's ethnic or racial group causing the hatred of those of another group. Inequalities of economic and political resources and competition for economic and political advantage often cause this irrational belief to surface. In America, this unhealthy attitude of racial and ethnic superiority has resulted in discrimination predominately by whites against people of color such as Asians, African-Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics. It has also provoked a racist response against the dominant culture and often heightened tensions between minority groups as well. God's ideal is that humans exist in harmonious relationships regardless of racial and ethnic differences (Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:28; Revelations 5:9-10), but racism militates against the formation of these harmonious relationships.

Realizing that even as Christians we are not immune to the sin of racism, we resolve first of all to search our own hearts and repent of any racist attitudes we may have, no matter how subtle. We further resolve to work toward eliminating racism in our local churches, educational institutions and throughout the EFCA family as a whole (particularly in light of our commitment to plant and nurture many new ethnic churches). Some ways in which we can work are:

- Speaking out against racism in whatever setting we find ourselves.
- Preparing spiritually for the inevitable tensions and conflicts that will threaten the unity of the body as the Free Church family becomes multi-ethnic and multi-racial in composition.
- Teaching in our homes and in our churches against racism, and noting God's desire for reconciliation between races (Eph. 2:14).
- Developing relationships of mutual education and submission (Eph. 5:21) with people of different races, on both an individual and congregational level.
- Celebrating the presence and participation of our brothers and sisters in Christ from all ethnic and racial backgrounds in our local churches, our Districts and national ministry efforts.

## **OUR RESOLVE FOR RECONCILIATION**

Adapted from NAE Resolution

Resolution adopted at the General Conference, 1995  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Recognizing the need for racial reconciliation, a convocation was convened in Chicago on January 6-7, 1995. The Convocation of Reconciliation, sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals, (NAE) and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA), was called out of a conviction that God had called believers to disciple the nations of the world, and we are hindered in this task by our fragmentation over the sin of racism. The convocation was proposed so that Christians could come together and strategize on how to address the sin of racism and undo its harmful effects in the evangelical community. The convocation isolated five major barriers to reconciliation within our community, and established action steps to overcome each one. Those barriers, which we resolve to address through the continuing work of our “Evangelical Task Force on Reconciliation,” are as follows:

### 1. Unbiblical Theology

Racism has in great part been validated, defended and practiced through the preaching, teaching and living of an unbiblical theology. There is a need to repent for this distortion of the Word of God that has resulted in subtle and blatant expressions of racism. We call on the entire evangelical community, especially Christian organizations, colleges and seminaries, denominations and local churches, theological journals and magazines to raise and address this issue in ways that challenge us to develop, practice, and model the unity of all God’s people as members of the Body of Christ.

### 2. Repentance and Forgiveness

There exists an unwillingness on the part of many to repent and forgive. We call for services of confession and forgiveness throughout the evangelical community in order that barriers to the reconciliation process may be removed. This process, which began at the convocation, is expected to continue at the 1995 conventions of both NAE and NBEA, and to culminate in a joint meeting of both groups. Furthermore, to continue modeling the spirit of reconciliation, we call upon NAE and NBEA to maintain and strengthen close working ties. We further call upon the Evangelical Free Church and the broader evangelical community to read on the subject of racial reconciliation and enter into a cross-cultural accountability relationship to put the information into practice. We also call upon all evangelical institutions to include racial justice and reconciliation as one of their core values.

### 3. Fear and Mistrust

Racial reconciliation is hindered by fear and mistrust. We call upon evangelical leaders to take the risk necessary to develop honest, loving relationships across racial lines, and to educate our various constituencies on the biblical basis for racial harmony and reconciliation, recognizing we best combat fear by demonstrating love that is wholistic in word and deed.

### 4. Attitudes and Perceptions

Attitudes toward other races can be subconscious and subliminally acquired, based on erroneous perceptions caused by fear, ignorance, misleading media images, negative experiences, misinterpretation of Scripture, cultural and historical myths, traditions and stereotypes, and poor modeling from parents, teachers and others. These attitudes and perceptions are difficult to change and require commitment to intentional action to raise the awareness of the need, possibility and benefits of change. We call upon evangelicals to seriously address this issue and develop strategies to remove this barrier to reconciliation through personal and institutional involvement



with people of other races. We also call for the development of curriculum to train children and adults that reflects a correct exegesis of Scripture and teaches an appreciation for racial and cultural differences and similarities, and encourages the celebration of unity in the midst of diversity.

5. Institutional Racism

Given that conscious and unconscious institutional racism within the church and society continues to exist in the form of systemic and structural discrimination, segregation, and stereotyping, so that one need not consciously think racist thoughts to carry out exclusive, selective racist policies, we call upon evangelicals to prophetically engage these injustices in all of their ungodly forms. We acknowledge that “judgment must begin at the house of God” because of our exclusive hermeneutic, our privatized faith and our unbiblical notion of the kingdom. As we set our own house in order, we call upon evangelicals to prophetically and courageously engage society’s injustices, and to seek out and establish permanent, committed relationships that will serve to foster among evangelicals an aggressive new climate for the pursuit of true justice and opportunity for all. In so doing, we believe that effectiveness of our Christian witness and our efforts to evangelize our nation will be greatly enhanced.

## A CALL TO THE CHURCHES TO INTENTIONAL RECONCILIATION

Presented to the General Conference, 1996  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

In light of the commitments which the Evangelical Free Church has made in recent conference resolutions in opposition to racism<sup>1</sup> and in affirmation of ministry to those of diverse ethnic backgrounds<sup>2</sup>, we call our churches, district church planting committees and national agencies to examine their policies, their strategies for growth, and their “vision” for the future to make sure that they are consistent with these commitments. We are especially concerned about a widespread and seemingly unqualified commitment to a principle of homogeneity in the composition of our churches for the sake of promoting growth. We recognize the right of people from every background to hear the gospel in terms that they can understand, and we must never give the impression that people must adopt another culture in order to become a Christian. But we must also be cautious that our efforts to reach people in their own cultural terms does not violate the unity of the body of Christ, and especially that it does not introduce an alien principle of separation into our doctrine of the Church. May we practice a spirit of reconciliation to the Glory of God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The New Racism,” Christian Compassion and Social Concern, Second Edition (Minneapolis, MN: The Evangelical Free Church of America, 1992)

<sup>2</sup> “Ethnic Ministries,” Christian Compassion and Social Concern, Second Edition (Minneapolis, MN: The Evangelical Free Church of America, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> II Corinthians 5:16-21; Ephesians 2:11-18; Romans 15:1-7

## **A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE BURNINGS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES**

Presented to the General Conference, 1996  
THE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA

Since 1995, a significant number of African American churches, located primarily in the Southern United States, have been burned by arsonists. As national media coverage of this movement of hate has grown, so too has the number and frequency of church burning. During the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960's, we fought against our African American brothers and sisters in Christ through our criticism of their actions, our unfriendly indifference towards their condition, and our willful "looking the other way" when they called for help. Not this time.

While we may not agree on all points of doctrine and theology, African American Christians and members of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) are members of the same universal church. We are all equal sons and daughters of God, and equal brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all "fellow citizens" with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19b, NIV) Hebrews 13:1-3 states:

**Keep on loving each other as brothers.** Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.  
**Remember** those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and **those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.**

Our response to the suffering and loss of our African American brothers and sisters in Christ should be no different than if it were our churches being burned.

As the EFCA we condemn the burning of African American churches and the racist hate that motivates those burnings. We call on all EFCA churches to humbly offer assistance, in a manner appropriate to each circumstance, to our African American brothers and sisters who are being affected by this wave of burnings.