



Statement of Faith:

Abortion

Preamble

- We believe that all matters of faith and conduct must be evaluated on the basis of Holy Scripture, which is our inspired, infallible, and inerrant guide. (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Because Holy Scripture speaks to creation and human life, it is imperative that we correctly understand, articulate, and abide by what Holy Scripture teaches on this matter.
- We believe that God has created mankind in His image (Imago Dei) and that human life begins at fertilization. God, in his infinite sovereignty, uniquely formed human beings and gave them a special dignity, personal freedom, and individual accountability among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God and to be good and faithful stewards of creation. God created each person's inmost being, knitting each person together in his mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13). As God's individualized and personal creation, each person is fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14). God has ordained all the days of each person's life before they came to be. (Psalm 139:16).

Religious Beliefs

Based on Holy Scripture and the constant moral teaching of the universal Church, we believe:

- From the moment of fertilization until natural death, every human life is sacred because every human life has been created by God, in His image and likeness.
- From the moment of fertilization, every human life must be recognized, respected, and protected as having the rights of a person and the inviolable right to life.
- The right to life and physical integrity of every unborn human life is inviolable –it is not a concession made by society or the state, but is instead inherent to the unborn human life by virtue of its creation in the image of God.
- Because human life begins at the moment of fertilization, it is against our religious and moral conviction to formally or materially cooperate in the termination of unborn human life.
- We are strongly committed to the preservation and defense of unborn human life, which compels our religious, moral, and ethical duty to defend unborn human life from destruction, whether by surgical abortion or use of drugs, devices, or services that have the intent, design, effect, or risk of terminating unborn human life or preventing its implantation and growth post-fertilization.
- The Church and all her ministers and ministries should publicly witness to society and to the state regarding the intrinsic, inherent, and inviolable dignity of all human life, from fertilization to natural death.

Biblical Bases

In standing against abortion, this church incorporates by reference the following Holy Scriptures (NIV), which are cited in the statements, resolutions, commentaries, or doctrines of Christian denominations



that are expressly and vocally opposed to abortion: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church in America, Roman Catholic Church, and Southern Baptist Convention.

Genesis 1:26-27 - Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 25:21-22 - Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

Exodus 20:13 - You shall not murder.

Psalms 22:9-10 - Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God.

Psalms 139:13-16 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Isaiah 44:1-2 - This is what the Lord says: he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

Isaiah 49:5 - And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength.

Job 10:8-12 - Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.

Jeremiah 1:4-5 - The word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Luke 1:39-45 - Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"



Early Church Fathers

"Thus, you read the word of God, spoken to Jeremiah: 'Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.' If God forms us in the womb, He also breathes on us as He did in the beginning: 'And God formed man and breathed into him the breath of life.' Nor could God have known man in the womb unless he were a whole man. 'And before thou camest forth from the womb, I sanctified thee.' Was it, then, a dead body at that stage? Surely it was not, for "God is the God of the living and not the dead."

–Tertullian, De Anima

"It is not permissible for us to destroy the seed by means of illicit manslaughter once it has been conceived in the womb, so long as blood remains in the person."

–Tertullian, Apologia

"Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are many efforts at abortion? Where there is murder before the birth.... Why then dost thou abuse the gift of God, and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter?"

–John Chrysostom, Homily 24

"[T]his lustful cruelty, or if you please, cruel lust, resorts to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to destroy the conceived seed by some means previous to birth, preferring that its offspring should rather perish than receive vitality; or if it was advancing to life within the womb, should be slain before it was born."

–Augustine, De Nube et Concupiscentia

"Therefore brothers, you see how perverse they are and hastening wickedness, who are immature, they seek abortion of the conception before the birth; they are those who tell us, 'I do not see that which you say must be believed.'"

–Augustine, Sermon 126

"Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born."

–Barnabas, Letter

Written Statements

Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

Our church's explanation of the Small Catechism puts the matter well when it says, "The living but unborn are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of another person, the mother." The sin of willfully aborting a child, except in those very rare situations where it may be necessary to save the life of the mother, is a sinful act, totally contrary to the will of God. (p. 1)



Since 1973, abortions have been legal in the United States. Abortion remains a sin against God, whether or not it is legal in our society; therefore, we must “obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

A personal decision is not necessarily a private decision. The church, and the church’s ministers, have God-given responsibilities to warn, exhort and rebuke from the Word of God with all authority. (2 Tim. 4:2).

The church is very concerned when Christians make decisions that are contrary to the Word of God and thus place themselves outside the will of God. Living in a state of unrepentant sin is a very serious situation. Thus, the church must warn its members against the temptations of abortions. Furthermore, the church needs to speak out against the sin of abortion, since it is widely presented in our culture as perfectly acceptable.

Presbyterian Church in America

Abortion in distinction from miscarriage, and is the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth. The moral question raised in any abortion is whether the life of the unborn child is included in the Biblical teaching respecting the sanctity of life. The special protection God gives to human life is founded upon His making man “in His own image.” (Gen. 1:26, 27 (p. 14))

What we see revealed in Scripture is a marvelous truth, often expressed in doxological language, that there is a continuity of the individual man from “before the foundation of the world” into eternity. (Psalm 139, Luke 1:24-56, Gen. 25:22, Job 3:3, Isa. 44:2, 49:5, Hos. 12:3 (p.15))

In Psalm 51:5, the continuity extends back to the actual time of conception. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” The point of continuity is David’s humanness even at conception. To speak of oneself at conception in terms of personal sinfulness is to affirm one’s humanity. (pp. 15-16)

Our obedience to the Word of God leaves us with no option regarding how we perceive the unborn child. He is a person, providentially given and cared for by God, with uninterrupted continuity into post-natal life. There are many explicit and implicit passages of Scripture that further support this conclusion. (p. 18)

We are not given unlimited or autonomous sovereignty over our own bodies or the bodies of others. (1 Cor. 6:15, 7:7 (p. 18))

Scripture repeatedly affirms the joy and blessing of conception, while barrenness is seen as a curse. God’s involvement with the unborn child has already been mentioned. We are even told that John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15 (p.18))

These and many other references are adequately set forth in other studies. (p. 18)



Although there has been much discussion of when life begins, the scientific community does not seem to have much doubt on this issue. The question is usually raised to obscure the real issue, namely, that abortion is the intentional killing of a living unborn child. The conclusion of the First International Conference on Abortion held in Washington, D.C., in October of 1967, was that no point in time could be found between the union of sperm and egg and the birth of the infant which could not be considered human life. (p. 18)

It must be pointed out here that this developing baby is a separate but dependent new life with its own chromosomal pattern and at no stage of development can be considered as an appendage or part of the mother's own body. Physiologically it is the baby that determines the development of the pregnancy not the mother. The baby, however, is highly dependent upon its mother for protection and nourishment. (p. 20)

Roman Catholic Church

2270 - Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you."

"My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth."

2271 - Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law:

"You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish."

"God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.

2272 - Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life:

"A person who procures a completed abortion incurs excommunication latae sententiae," "by the very commission of the offense," and subject to the conditions provided by Canon Law.

The Church does not thereby intend to restrict the scope of mercy. Rather, she makes clear the gravity of the crime committed, the irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, as well as to the parents and the whole of society.



2273 - The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation:

"The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death."

"The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of a state based on law are undermined. . . . As a consequence of the respect and protection which must be ensured for the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for every deliberate violation of the child's rights."

2274 - Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being. Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safe guarding or healing as an individual.... It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence."

2275 - "One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival."

"It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material."

"Certain attempts to influence chromosomic or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity," which are unique and unrepeatable.

In Brief

2318 - "In [God's] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10).

2319 - Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.



2320 - The murder of a human being is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator.

2322 - From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, is a "criminal" practice (GS 27 § 3), gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church imposes the canonical penalty of excommunication for this crime against human life.

2323 - Because it should be treated as a person from conception, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed like every other human being.

Southern Baptist Convention

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans in June 1982, clearly stated its opposition to abortion and called upon Southern Baptists to work for appropriate legislation and/or constitutional amendment which will prohibit abortions except to save the physical life of the mother; and

WHEREAS, In addition to legislative remedies for this national sin, it is incumbent that we encourage the woman who is considering abortion to think seriously about the grave significance of such action by presenting information to her about the unborn child in her womb, who is a living individual human being, and encourage her to consider alternatives to abortion; and

WHEREAS, Christlike love requires that such alternatives be made available.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, June 12-14, 1984, encourage all of its institutions, cooperating churches, and members to work diligently to provide counseling, housing, and adoption placement services for unwed mothers with the specific intent of bringing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ and/or a sense of Christian responsibility; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we deplore the practice of performing abortions, as well as dispensing to minors without parental consent or even notification, contraceptive medications which have potentially dangerous side effects, and deplore also the use of tax funds for such activities; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we call upon all Southern Baptists to renew their commitment to support and work for legislation and/or constitutional amendment which will prohibit abortion except to save the physical life of the mother; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to inquire whether or not their physicians perform abortions on demand or give referrals for abortions, and that we commend those of the medical profession who abstain from performing abortions or making abortion referrals; and



Be it finally RESOLVED, That we urge our agencies and institutions to provide leadership for our cooperating churches and members, by preparing literature to take a clear and strong stand against abortion, and to inform and motivate our members to action to eliminate abortion on demand.

Application

All of our members, employees, and volunteers must affirm and adhere to this Statement of Faith on Abortion to qualify for involvement with the ministry of this church. This is necessary to accomplish our religious mission, goals, and purpose. Behavior or counter-witnessing that does otherwise will impede and burden our integrity and religious mission, inviting scandal on this church.

This church believes that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and should seek redemption through confession, repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, church members must welcome and treat with respect, compassion, and sensitivity all who have endured the tragedy of abortion but are sincerely and resolutely committed to conform their behavior to this church's Statement of Faith on Abortion.

Authority

Holy Scripture is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, acting as the source of authority over morality, our beliefs, Christian lifestyle, and conduct. The Elders of Rivertown Church are charged with the ministerial responsibility of Biblical interpretation and application as well as determining final matters relating to church policies, Christian practice, faith, divine truth, morality, and theological and doctrinal resolutions.