

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MACON, GEORGIA
SESSION STATEMENT ON ABORTION

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church, having been charged with the spiritual oversight of the congregation and desiring to faithfully discharge that responsibility, after much prayer, study and careful deliberation, has concluded that it is the duty of the Session to state its position on the issue of abortion and related issues more definitively.

It should be noted that the final authority for all action the Session takes or recommends is the Holy Scriptures. In its deliberation on this particular issue, however, the Session also examined the history of the church, the Westminster Confession of Faith, resolutions of the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in America, as well as statements issued by highly respected Reformed theologians and by other churches.

We believe that God's law, as summarized in the Sixth Commandment (*Thou Shalt Not Kill*), gives concrete protection to that life that bears the image of God, and that we must uphold that commandment (Deuteronomy 5:17; Exodus 20:13).

We believe that God in His sacred word speaks of the unborn child as a person and as one made in the image of God, and that God treats the unborn child as such and so must we (Genesis 4:1, 25:22; Job 3:3; Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2, 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Hosea 12:3; Luke 1:24-56).

We believe that God's people have a special duty to defend, protect, and support the innocent, the widow, the weak and the orphan (Mark 12:40; Isaiah 1:16-20; Exodus 22:22; Micah 6:8; Proverbs 24:11-12). We believe that unborn children are some of these weak and helpless and fatherless that we are called to defend.

The 1973 United States Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion upon demand in this country, as a matter of Constitutional law. The court held that the United States Constitution implies "a right to privacy" which gives every pregnant woman in America the freedom, in consultation with her doctor, to choose to destroy her unborn infant. This decision has resulted in millions of unborn babies being unjustly sentenced to death since 1973.

This is man's law and we believe that between this 1973 Supreme Court decision and God's law, there exists a clear, direct, and specific conflict. Therefore, the Session takes the position that Christians should take action to oppose abortion in spite of the fact that abortion is legal in the United States. The individual Christian must determine the particular method or methods which God is calling him to pursue in his opposition to abortion, but all should be involved in one way or another (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

Some believers will be led to work in the area of influencing those in public office or of supporting judicial and other appointees who stand with us against abortion.

Others will be led to work in the area of teaching, writing, and educating, or in seeking to close abortion clinics through legal process where that possibility exists.

Still others will be led to work in the area of providing alternatives to women who are considering abortions, such as working with agencies that provide pregnancy counseling, foster care and adoption services.

We are also sensitive to the fact that there are many committed believers, including perhaps members of this church, who have had an abortion, in some cases as a result of an extraordinary medical situation, in other cases, where no such extraordinary medical conditions have prevailed, and in some cases where there was very little or no understanding at the time of the seriousness of the moral issues involved or of the consequences. We trust that we speak for all members of the church as we express our love for them and our belief that where there is sin, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9; Romans 8:1; Galatians 6:1; II Corinthians 5:17-21).

Further, we encourage the members of this church to show compassion, love and understanding to families and to those in distress as a result of unwanted pregnancies. In each situation, we encourage Christian love, sympathetic counsel and help. As a positive alternative to abortion for these unwanted pregnancies, we urge that adoption through Covenant Care Services be encouraged (I Corinthians 13, Proverbs 24:11).

In addition, it is essential that as believers we remember that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:10-17). Because the battle is spiritual at its roots it must be supported by much prayer, recognizing the ultimate victory will be a result, not of our work, but of God's grace in answer to the prayers of the saints.

There are other ways, some of them more controversial, in which Christians are getting involved in opposing abortion. Consideration of any action in opposition to abortion should include a careful analysis to determine whether the specific action is a wise and effective means of accomplishing its objectives. We would encourage all believers to search the Scriptures for themselves and petition the Lord for individual wisdom and guidance, but we would caution that whatever individual action is taken must be done in the spirit of humility, out of the sense of duty rather than superiority (II Corinthians 10:17-18).

In this regard, believers should always refrain from harsh judgment of other believers, either because some are responding as they believe the Lord has led them to respond, or because others have failed to respond in a manner one might think they should respond. This issue should not precipitate judgment and criticism of fellow believers who either act or fail to act in a particular way in their opposition to abortion (I Corinthians 13).

As a further guide to those who are wrestling with the issues discussed above, we recommend consideration of the paper on the relationship between church and state received as information and passed on to us by the 1987 General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in America, and especially its last section on the “Propriety of the Christian’s Disobedience to the Civil Magistrate in the Abortion Controversy.”

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