

Petition 2015-01

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES: 3

TITLE: **Supporting Adoption and Common Ground on Abortion**

DISCIPLINE PARAGRAPH: *Discipline ¶ 161J*

GENERAL CHURCH BUDGET IMPLICATION: None

GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS: Yes

“WHEREAS, Scripture teaches us that all men and women are preciously created in the very image of God (Genesis 1:26-28), that God “fearfully and wonderfully made” us by knitting us together in our mothers’ wombs (Psalm 139:13-14), that the first man to rejoice at Christ’s coming into the world was the unborn baby John (Luke 1:44), and that Jesus Himself began His life on earth as a tiny, unborn child in Mary’s womb; and

WHEREAS, in His ministry on Earth, our Lord Jesus Christ was continuously extending welcome and compassion to human beings whose full humanity was not honored by society; and

WHEREAS, from the earliest era of church history, Christian leaders have led the way in affirming the dignity of all human life; and

WHEREAS, reason and science tell us that every individual’s physical life on Earth as a genetically distinct human being began at conception; and

WHEREAS, the regret and pain many women (and men) feel over past abortions, along with the positive experiences of countless individuals who have considered but ultimately decided against abortion testify to the value of life-affirming alternatives; and

WHEREAS, in extending compassion to unborn children, we must never forget to be compassionate to women facing difficult circumstances, and must never forget how equally dependent we are all on the unearned grace and forgiveness of God; and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has officially admitted that “the members of our denomination are not of one mind over the precise conditions in which abortion can be supported” (“Resolution #2026: Gender-Selective Abortion,” *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012*, pp. 122-125); and

WHEREAS, differences of conviction over such matters as when abortion should be legal or the morality of abortion in “hard cases” need not prevent United Methodists representing a range of perspectives from agreeing that we generally prefer alternatives to abortion, that we encourage behaviors that would lead to fewer abortions, that we support efforts to protect the lives of mothers as well as babies capable of survival outside of the womb, and that we do not want anyone coerced into participating in an abortion;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the Indiana Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary, to petition, in a timely

and appropriate manner, the 2016 General Conference to amend Paragraph 161J of The Book of Discipline to read:

J) Abortion -- The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.

We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection or eugenics (see Resolution 3184).

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. This procedure shall be performed only by certified medical providers. Whenever the unborn child may be capable of surviving outside his or her mother's womb, every reasonable effort should be made to preserve both lives. Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia. We support vigorous enforcement of laws in civil society protecting the right of health care professionals not to participate in abortions as a matter of conscience.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion. We entrust God to provide guidance, wisdom, and discernment to those facing an unintended pregnancy.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We mourn, and are committed to ~~promoting the diminishment of~~ diminishing, high abortion rates. The Church shall encourage ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies such as comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education, promotion of premarital abstinence, ~~advocacy in regard to~~ information about contraception, and support of initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls around the globe.

Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. ~~They should also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy.~~ We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption as a generally preferable alternative to abortion. (See Paragraph 161L.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the Indiana Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary, because of the fifty-word limit on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: “United Methodists with a range of views on abortion agree that our Church should not be ashamed to clearly say that we generally prefer life-affirming alternatives to abortion, that we broadly want to protect women and late-term babies, and that no one should be forced to participate in an abortion.”

Submitted to Indiana Annual Conference 2015 by
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