

On late term pregnancy

Resolved, that the presbytery of _____ overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) to declare the following: We affirm that the lives of viable unborn babies—those well-developed enough to survive outside the womb if delivered—ought to be preserved and cared for and not aborted. In cases where problems of life or health of the mother arise in a pregnancy, the church supports efforts to protect the life and health of both the mother and the baby. When late term pregnancies must be terminated, we urge decisions intended to deliver the baby alive. We look to our churches to provide pastoral and tangible support to women in problem pregnancies and to surround these families with a community of care. We affirm adoption as a provision for women who deliver children they are not able to care for, and ask our churches to assist in seeking loving Christian adoptive families.

This General Assembly holds this statement as its position on a Christian response to problems that arise late in pregnancies. We find it to be consistent with current General Assembly policy on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion (1992), and declare that it supercedes and replaces all other statements on late term pregnancies and abortion.

Rationale

The church's support for the protection of human life is based on the biblical teaching that human beings are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), that we are charged to protect the lives of innocent human beings (Prov. 31:8,9; James 1:27), and forbidden to shed innocent blood (Jer. 7:6) and that God expects us as followers of Christ to minister to those who are needy as if we were serving our Savior himself (Matt 25:40). Our confessions affirm this teaching of Scripture (Westminster Larger Catechism, 7.244-7.246)

Our General Assembly has affirmed as policy that:

After a human life has begun, it is to be protected and cherished as a precious gift of God, and the strong Christian presumption is that since all life is precious to God, we are to preserve and protect it. (From Problem Pregnancies and Abortion, the General Assembly's current policy, adopted in 1992, page 11.)

In addition to the support for the preservation of life in Scripture, our confessions, and church policy, sound and common medical practice favors delivery over abortion as a safer and more humane method of terminating a late term pregnancy.

Particularly in pregnancies where babies could live if delivered live, the church is called to speak and act in ways that protect the lives and health of the unborn as well as their mothers. Both mother and baby benefit physically and spiritually from live birth.

Today, in the United States, there are more than two million couples waiting to adopt a child. Many of these waiting couples are willing to adopt babies with medical problems and other special needs. The church should encourage and undergird this desire among its own members to minister to the needy and vulnerable among us.

Since General Assemblies have addressed the matter of late term abortion several times and have a statement that has been so modified that it is unclear in intent, this new statement is meant to provide the church with a clear moral and pastoral position.