

On making support for abortion voluntary

Resolved, that the presbytery of _____ overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) to direct its offices and entities to ensure that no mission or per capita funds, or mandatory dues to the PC(USA) medical benefits plan, are used either to support abortion advocacy, or to pay for abortion except in cases of physical threat to the mother's life; and further

That General Assembly encourages individual Presbyterians and lower governing bodies to establish voluntary funds and criteria for the use of those funds to pay for abortions for members within their jurisdictions where majorities of presbytery membership requests such help; and further

That the General Assembly Council and the Office of the General Assembly include in their reports to the 218th General Assembly (2008) the actions taken by G.A. offices and entities to effect these changes, including communication with the lower governing bodies.

Rationale

Current General Assembly policy supports both the protection of human life and individual decisions about terminating human life. It seeks to protect access to abortion while strongly encouraging the church to be involved in decreasing the numbers of abortions and in supporting alternatives to abortion. However, in its funding and advocacy, denominational offices and entities are unbalanced.

The PC(USA) covers unrestricted abortion in its medical benefits plan that is mandatory for all installed pastors. The dues for the plan are paid with church members' tithes and offerings. The PC(USA) contributes financially to the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and to Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options, thus supporting abortion rights and unrestricted access to abortion. But the PC(USA) does not contribute financially to organizations that provide or promote alternatives to abortion or adoption as an alternative to abortion. The PC(USA)'s Washington Office advocates actively for legislation in support of abortion as a moral option. No denominational office advocates for restrictions on abortion or alternatives to abortion.

Therefore, the contributions of Presbyterians to their churches are being used to support only one perspective of the General Assembly's abortion policy and against the convictions of a significant number of Presbyterians.

This overture provides for fairness in support and advocacy for abortion. Those and only those who favor the availability of abortion would contribute to its advocacy and funding of ministries and organizations that match their convictions; those and only those who favor restrictions on abortion would contribute to the advocacy and funding of ministries and organizations that match their convictions.

Justice and fairness, along with moral considerations, requires that the General Assembly bring its practice into line with current church policy. The most equitable way to do that is to encourage voluntary support for abortion services and advocacy of abortion as a moral option so that the convictions of both pro-life and pro-choice Presbyterians may be provided for and General Assembly policy properly administered.