

2004 Abortion

Presented by Dearborn Covenant Church, Dearborn, Michigan, adopted by the delegates to the 119th Covenant Annual Meeting.

For the Evangelical Covenant Church, a Christian understanding for interpreting the moral dimensions of abortion and Christian sexuality arises from Scripture, prayerful dependence on the grace of God, and the support of the community of believers within the church.

Scripture reveals a God who is loving and kind, merciful and just. It teaches that humanity is in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and that the family is an institution created by God in which husband and wife are to be devoted each other. When children are born, they are to be received as a trust (Deuteronomy 6:6-8), giving joy to parents, the community, and society.

Scripture teaches us of the presence of sin in the world, which affects all of God's creation. In the human realm, sin causes such things as the breakdown of community, of family structure, and of interpersonal commitments. For the individual, these breakdowns may lead to a loss of security, a sense of alienation, low self-esteem (Psalm 51), or inordinate pride (Psalm 32). It manifests itself in a secular philosophy of self-gratification where others exist primarily to serve one's own ends and where one can act as one pleases without consequences to oneself, to others, or to society.

Scripture also teaches of God's love, power, and grace in this world by the offering of redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because of him, we can have hope in facing any situation in this life. His grace is sufficient for us (1 Peter 1:3-6; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Our task as a church and as individuals, redeemed by the grace of God, is to be ministers of peace and reconciliation, on both personal and social levels, to a world filled with sin. Specifically, we are called to put away evil thoughts and actions while proclaiming mercy in the name of Christ. Paul summarizes these and other admonitions with the single observation that

the whole law is fulfilled in the love of one's neighbor (Galatians 5:14). He also warns that this love requires careful expression in specific instances. In the area of sexuality, he advised that there must not be even a hint of immorality among us (Ephesians 5:3).

We believe that we are stewards of the expression of our human sexual nature, just as we are stewards of every other gift from God. We are responsible to God, to ourselves, to each other, and to the new lives we are capable of bringing into existence. We recognize that every sexual act could result in conception and we affirm the equal responsibility of men and women for sexual behavior and the pregnancies that may result.

We deplore the use of abortion as an alternative to abstinence or, within the covenant of marriage, other appropriate contraceptive measures. We affirm women who continue their pregnancies to full term despite personal hardship, distress, suffering, and even the risk of death. We affirm and encourage women who choose to place their newborn infants for adoption, preferably through Christian placement agencies. We believe abortion to be wrong and grieve whenever an abortion takes place. However, we recognize that in some tragic instances abortion may need to be considered to safeguard the life of the mother. In all cases we urge immediate steps to seek medical and pastoral assistance. Aware of our own frailties and living in an imperfect world, we humbly seek God's guidance in all matters of sexual behavior, and pregnancy.

We encourage the Evangelical Covenant Church at all levels to continue discussion in the whole area of sexuality, under guidance of the Holy Spirit and reliance on Scripture. We challenge our churches, first, to support women—married or single—as they carry through their unexpected pregnancies and the decision of parenting or adoption; second, to provide healing and restoration to those who have been affected by abortion; and third, to educate youth and adults on responsible sexual behavior.