

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PROBLEM PREGNANCIES AND ABORTION

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PROBLEM PREGNANCIES AND ABORTION

Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly (Micah 6:8)

I. Narrative

A. Assigned Responsibilities

The 200th General Assembly (1988) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, was asked to respond both to ever-increasing public turmoil over the issue of abortion and to turmoil within our own denomination, including numerous overtures in recent years asking that the General Assembly change, reconsider, or reaffirm the abortion policy expressed in the 1983 document, *Covenant and Creation*. The response of the 200th General Assembly (1988) was to mandate:

1. That the Moderator of the 200th General Assembly (1988) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) select a Task Force to conduct a study, to be completed within two years, of the National Conference on Abortion Perspectives, designed to give forum to each different theological position in debate of the issues related to problem pregnancies and abortion, and that the members of the commission represent the broadest spectrum of theological positions within the church and in harmony with section G-4.0403.

2. That the above study and other statements of past General Assemblies be used to formulate a new policy statement for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) concerning the issues related to problem pregnancies, including male responsibility and accountability, and abortion that speak within the theological, Scriptural, moral and ethical disciplines of the church. (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, p. 1016)

Moderator C. Kenneth Hall, in response to the mandate of the assembly, appointed fourteen persons during the years of 1988 and 1989, paying special attention to representing diversity in racial and ethnic perspectives; having varieties in background, occupations, and theological perspectives; and making deliberate effort to have a balance of gender and views on abortion. Our work began in May 1989, just prior to the meeting of the 201st General Assembly (1989) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

From the beginning, we have understood that we are only the most recent in a long line of Presbyterian church bodies that have brought the Bible and theology to bear on issues of abortion, and which have attempted to guide with love and understanding those individuals and families who face problem pregnancies and the question of abortion. Assemblies of both the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, as well as of the reunited denomination, have considered and/or adopted statements on abortion issues.¹

B. Process of Our Work

Throughout the three years that our special committee met, we understood our primary task to be twofold: (1) to respond to the mandate of the 200th General Assembly

(1988) to “. . . formulate a new policy statement . . . concerning the issues related to problem pregnancies . . . and abortion” (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, p. 1016); and (2) to be an agent of healing in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our process included attendance at the PC(USA)'s National Dialogue on Abortion Perspectives in 1989; presentations on relevant topics from each member of the committee; presentations by persons outside of the committee with special expertise in areas under discussion; summaries by committee members of all correspondence addressed to our committee, with the letters themselves available to members at each meeting; and open hearings during most of our meetings, with additional hearings in several geographic areas where we were not meeting as a whole committee, utilizing the local presbytery offices and staff to arrange, publicize, and assist with these special hearings. Letters were sent to the moderators of each of the five racial-ethnic caucuses, urging them to make their members aware of the opportunities to share their relevant views and concerns with the members of the special committee.²

The special committee also worked with the Presbyterian Panel as a part of our process in an effort to discover the attitudes of the denomination on the issues committed for our consideration.³ We felt that our task was to discover our church's thinking on these issues, not simply to agree with the responses of the church. The questionnaire was developed by the Research Services Division of the Stewardship and Communication Development Ministry Unit in consultation with the special committee, and was used as the Presbyterian Panel in June 1990.

The responses to the Panel indicated that a majority of members and elders were either unaware that the PC(USA) had a policy statement regarding abortion or they knew there was a policy statement but were not able to describe it accurately. A large majority of pastors did indicate awareness of denominational policy. Large majorities of all samples thought it appropriate for the denomination to have an abortion policy statement. (For a summary of Panel results, see Appendix A.)

The Panel results indicated a lack of clarity in the church on legal and moral issues surrounding abortion. For example, with regard to legal issues, 64 percent of members and elders and 68 percent of pastors did not wish to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned. Yet, when asked whether or not it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion “if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children,” only 42 percent of members, 36 percent of elders, and 43 percent of pastors said “yes.” Asked if abortion should be legal “if she is not married and does not want to marry the man,” only 36 percent of members, 34 percent of elders, and 39 percent of pastors said “yes.” Respondents' conclusions in the specific instances cited would seem to contradict their general position that *Roe v. Wade* should not be overturned.

Regarding moral issues surrounding abortion, again there was lack of clarity among respondents. There was no agreement, for example, as to when life begins. Panelists were also asked about, and differed on, questions concerning whether abortion is murder, whether abortion is moral

under certain circumstances, and whether Christians should try to impose their personal standards of morality on others.

Our committee was faced with a diversity of passionately held views on problem pregnancies and abortion, both within our group and in the church at large. In fact, the struggles of our church over these issues have been reflected in the struggles in our committee. Thus a very vital part of our life has been prayer and worship. We have opened each session with prayer, and have worshiped together at each meeting, including a celebration of the Lord's Supper at one meeting. Each of our meetings has included intensive study of Scriptures relevant to our topic and to our general spiritual growth. We have sought the work of the Holy Spirit in our efforts to hear and respect each other's differing voices and opinions. And we have often interrupted our work to enter into times of obedient prayer, asking the Holy Spirit not only to guide us, but also to heal us and to heal our denomination as we work to serve our Lord and our church.

Throughout our deliberations, we have rarely found ourselves to be in unanimous agreement. However, there are two things upon which the special committee has agreed: that the Holy Scriptures are the ultimate authority for faith and practice, and that the church is subject in all things to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we submit this paper to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), confessing our sinfulness and imperfection, but affirming that we have earnestly sought to be obedient to the leading and Lordship of the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that as the Holy Spirit has united fourteen different persons into one body seeking the glory of God and the proclamation of Christ's Kingdom, so the same Spirit will unite our church in mission, worship, and work.

In preparing our report, the committee relied largely on the expertise within its midst. The report was organized by a committee of the whole and sections were assigned to members to write. The sections were then reviewed and revised by the whole committee.

The members of the Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion are: Howard L. Rice, chair; Margaret Wentz, vice-chair; Elizabeth Achtemeier; Sarai Schnucker Beck; Sam Buchanan; Mary B. Diboll; Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez; Myers H. Hicks; Edna J. Jackson; Thomas A. Miller; Ruth Montoya; Barbara Ndovie; Zolton Phillips III; and J. Courtland Robinson.

On November 15, 1991, Thomas A. Miller, Edna J. Jackson, and Elizabeth Achtemeier informed the group of their intention to submit a minority report.

C. *Context of Our Discussion*

We will not attempt a full review of the medical, legal, sociological, and ecclesiastical history and debate on the issue of abortion, but we have been aware as a committee, throughout our process, that we were not operating in a vacuum. We are one instance of a long and complex debate over issues of problem pregnancy and abortion.

First of all, it should be noted what circumstances, faced by women or couples, are brought to pastors and/or physicians as "problem pregnancies":

- Pregnancies that will result in a baby with congenital anomalies, inborn errors of metabolism, or inherited diseases.
- Pregnancies that result from rape and incest. We would include in these categories any sexual activity without consent with strangers, friends, partners, or husbands, and sexual activity with relatives. This category would also include women unable to give informed consent because of a mental or physical handicap.
- Pregnancies in which the baby is exposed to the potential transmission of HIV, or to a congenital defect induced by self-administered or prescribed drugs, industrial chemicals or toxins, alcohol, x-ray or radioactive exposure, or other probable causes of serious deformity.
- Cases of multiple pregnancy in which reduction to a safe number of fetuses is needed.
- Pregnancies resulting from failed contraception.
- Pregnancies where continuation will threaten the life or emotional well-being of the mother, such as recent breast cancer, terminal stages of cancer, major trauma, severe depression or schizophrenia, or advanced cardiovascular disease.
- Pregnancies in which continuation will cause significant economic problems.
- Pregnancies in which age, either below 15 or over 40, places the woman at increased risk of complications.
- Pregnancies among women who have suffered a disastrous or very stressful previous pregnancy and do not believe they are able to face a subsequent pregnancy.

1. *Medical Context*

Medically, abortion has been a safe option in this country since the advent of antibiotics for the treatment of infection and since the development of safe surgical techniques, which include aseptics, anesthetic and/or analgesics, and blood transfusion. Other, more recent developments, such as the ability to diagnose a pregnancy by blood, urine, and ultrasonographic techniques at five to six weeks past last menstrual period, have made women aware of their pregnancy much earlier than in the past. However, early knowledge of pregnancy and the ability of doctors to perform a safe abortion have been only the first steps in a continuing dialogue over a variety of medical issues surrounding abortion. For example, people within the medical field have been involved in discussions over:

- Who should make decisions about abortion?
- When does life begin?
- When is a fetus viable?
- When does carrying a pregnancy to term pose a threat to the mother's life?
- What constitutes a "severe" fetal deformity?

- Is there an appropriate use of fetal tissue in medical research?

2. Legal Context

Within the legal community, there is also a long history of debate on abortion. Prior to 1973, it was a crime in a majority of states to procure an abortion or to attempt one, except where medically necessary to save the life of the mother. In 1973 (in *Roe v. Wade*)⁴ the United States Supreme Court, in response to a challenge to a Texas criminal abortion statute, ruled that it and similar statutes violate the Constitution in that they fail to give due consideration to the rights of a pregnant woman to have an abortion without unwarranted governmental interference. The high Court instituted a constitutional framework and three-tier (trimester) analysis for balancing the rights of the woman to have an abortion against the rights of the unborn child. The Court also ruled in pertinent part as follows: (1) that prior to the end of the first trimester of pregnancy, a state may not interfere with or regulate a patient's decision, made in consultation with her treating physician, to terminate a pregnancy; (2) that from and after the first trimester and until the fetus becomes viable, the state may regulate abortions only to the extent necessary to preserve and protect the life of the mother; and (3) that from and after the point where the fetus becomes viable, the state may regulate and even prohibit abortions, except those necessary for the preservation of the life and health of the mother.⁵

In 1989 (in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*)⁶ the United States Supreme Court, in addressing a Missouri abortion statute regulating the performance of abortions, ruled that more restrictive abortion statutes may be permissible, thus opening the door for legislatures, on a state-by-state basis, to enact abortion laws that place more governmental restrictions in the path of a woman wishing to have an abortion than had been previously allowed under *Roe v. Wade* and its progeny. The extensive litigation on the abortion issue since *Roe v. Wade* confirms the difficulty our lawmakers have had in trying to legislate this politically charged issue. The end result is that *Roe v. Wade* and the right of a woman to decide whether to terminate her pregnancy is still, as of this writing, the law of the land, but it is a law that is becoming increasingly less secure over time.

3. Sociological Context

In addition to the medical and legal aspects of the abortion discussion, an essential element of the debate for some is the struggle of women for power and control over their own lives.⁷ For centuries, women have struggled for self-determination, or even for the realization that many opportunities and choices were not open to them simply because they were women. Especially since the nineteenth century, women in the United States have fought to be able to vote, to preach, and to control the number of their offspring, and thus their health, through the use of contraceptives. Women have struggled to support their

families through equal access to jobs, equal pay, and adequate child care. They have struggled to be free from harassment and from the use of force, both at home and in the work place. In all these ways, women have pursued a dream of freedom from external control and freedom to decide for themselves the direction of their own lives. But even while such changes as the vote, the use of contraceptives, and increasing job opportunities have given women a growing perception of self-worth and control, the circumstances of problem pregnancies—poverty, immaturity, lack of supportive relationships, inadequate child care, peer pressure—can re-create and intensify powerlessness. For women of color, the additional oppression of racism adds to their burden.

Another major social factor affecting the question of abortion is the increasing hiatus between the rich and the poor. In many instances, the extreme poverty deprives women of the freedom to choose. Finances and living conditions are such that an individual would have grave concerns about bringing a child into such an environment with little likelihood of sufficient means to provide even basic living conditions. These same individuals often have the most difficulty in obtaining adequate medical care. The church has made very feeble and inadequate efforts in this area. Our statements of concern far outweigh our practical resolution of this problem.

For many people, a significant factor is the eroding and demeaning of the importance of the conventional family. Attitudes of society, actions of the federal government, and portrayals in the media have contributed to this decline. Many of today's families lack adequate support systems, dependable relationships, and positive role models.

4. Ecclesiastical Context

The church also has debated women's roles. Within the church many women have experienced the use of Scripture to justify women's subservience to men. Some women feel that the church itself has contributed to women's powerlessness by disseminating a negative view of women, by imposing significant restrictions on women's use of their God-given gifts, and by encouraging men in a belief that social control of women is appropriate. But at the same time, the church has also been an agent of change for women, both by holding up Scriptures that proclaim women's worth, dignity, and equality (Gen. 1:27-28; Gal. 3:28) and by giving women an increased role in the church's life and leadership.

Abortion has been a topic of discussion for Christians as far back as the second century. Within the Presbyterian church, however, the first General Assembly to take a position on abortion was the 1869 assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Old School). It was concerned over "unscriptural views of the marriage relation, in consequence of which the obligations of that relationship are disregarded" (*Minutes*, 1869, p. 937). It was pained at the ease with which divorce was obtained, and viewed abortion as a crime against God and nature.

By the 1970s, both the former PCUS and the UPCUSA were affirming the pregnant woman's ability to reach a morally justifiable decision to abort. In the PCUS statement adopted in 1970, possible justifying circumstances for an abortion included: "medical indications of physical or mental deformity, conception as a result of rape or incest, conditions under which the physical or mental health of either mother or child would be gravely threatened, or the socio-economic condition of the family" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1970, Part I, p. 126). The assembly emphasized, however, that "the decision to terminate a pregnancy should never be made lightly or in haste" (*Minutes*, PCUS, 1970, Part I, p. 126).

In 1983, the reunited church received a paper originally drafted by a task force of the Advisory Council on Church and Society of the former UPCUSA, and adopted the policy statement and recommendations of that paper. This document, *Covenant and Creation: Theological Reflections on Contraception and Abortion*, has become a particular point of contention for many in our denomination.

Covenant and Creation focused its Bible study particularly on the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and on the themes of: (1) life as a gift for which humans, created in God's image, are responsible; (2) the burden of decision-making as integral to humanness; (3) the affirmation of human life by God and its inherent sanctity; and (4) the church as a listening and caring community. The paper affirmed that while "[t]here is no point in the course of a pregnancy when the moral issue of abortion is insignificant . . . [nevertheless] [a]bortion can . . . be considered a responsible choice within a Christian ethical framework when serious genetic problems arise or when the resources are not adequate to care for a child appropriately" (p. 59). The paper also insisted that "[t]he morality (or immorality) of a particular abortion is not contingent on the kind of problem that prompts its consideration, but on the seriousness of that problem in the particular case" (p. 36). The paper did not argue that abortion is a woman's right, but rather insisted that ". . . for the genuine exercise of conscience to take place, women must have the right to make the decision" (p. 52). It also affirmed that Christians ". . . have a responsibility to work to maintain a public policy of elective abortion, regulated by the health code, not the criminal code" (p. 52).

Covenant and Creation has engendered much heated debate within our denomination. Supporters of the document praise: (1) its emphasis on stewardship and on the covenantal relationship between God and human beings as helpful categories from which to approach issues of problem pregnancy and abortion; (2) its insistence on the moral agency of women, including both their responsibility and their ability, guided by the Holy Spirit, to make good moral choices; and (3) its emphasis on the church as both a caring and a socially active community.

Opponents of the paper argue that: (1) it is not grounded in a full presentation of Scripture, and especially not in those texts pertinent to the issues of abortion; (2) it does not articulate strongly enough the value of human life, particularly unborn human life, and places the prerogatives of the woman ahead of those of the

fetal life in her womb; (3) its view of human decision-making does not adequately take into account the fallenness of our world and of our rational abilities; (4) the paper does not give significant moral guidance to those struggling with problem pregnancies; (5) not enough consideration is given to the variety and value of alternatives to abortion; (6) the concept of Christian family and parenthood is vague; and (7) it is theologically unsound to think of abortion as an act of faithfulness before God.

All of this discussion and debate—over the beginnings of life and fetal viability, over the legal limits to the right to privacy, over the struggles of women to find an increased role in their own lives and in the life of the church, and over the interpretation of Scripture and the role of the church—all have stimulated the debate within our committee. Members of the committee have disagreed at many points, both on matters of "fact" within the debate and on questions of interpretation and significance. We have felt throughout our process the double challenge of both protecting life in the womb and protecting the dignity of women and their freedom to make responsible decisions. Weighing and justly balancing these dual interests based on biblical truths and in light of our knowledge of God's world is a continuing challenge for us and for the whole Christian community.

D. *Biblical and Theological Presuppositions*

Out of the wide spectrum of Christian theology, the special committee found the following affirmations to be basic for dealing with the issues committed to its consideration. We found that we could agree on these, though such agreement does not necessarily lead to agreement on what recommendations or policies should be developed from them.

1. *Jesus Is Lord*

The final authority for Christians is Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. In Jesus, Christians acknowledge the ultimate revelation of God. "Lord" is a title bestowed on him by God (Phil. 2:9–11), and not only a human ascription. Lordship, however, is also a human term, with human counterparts, and therefore needs to be clarified when applied to Jesus. For instance, in an ancient society a lord had great power and prestige, but it was often to the detriment of the common people who worked the land and lived at bare subsistence levels. There is still enough of the oppressive nature of this term left in our vocabulary that some are hesitant to use it with reference to God. We retain the word in terms like "landlord," and in European culture we know of lords who are quaint, wealthy, but not very powerful remnants of a past age. But we would not want to equate the Lordship of Christ with such human counterparts.

However, the term "lord" does carry with it major truths that Christians wish to affirm. First, Jesus is the one to whom we give our ultimate loyalty. His claim to sovereignty is not by democratic election, but by his nature and work. He is God. We have not promoted him,

but rather have recognized and acknowledged his authority and rule.

Second, his authority is over all of life. He is the Lord of the whole creation, not simply of human beings, and not only of those who affirm his rule. Therefore, it is not only our religious life, but the whole of life, that is under his dominion.

Third, because Jesus is Lord, he is to be honored, glorified, worshiped, and obeyed in a way that no mere human should be. This is both a statement about Jesus and a critique of human societies that do offer such adulation to one of their own members.

Fourth, since Jesus is Lord, we are therefore his servants. Servant and lord are the correlative terms of ancient society. It is his goals that are to be our goals, not ours that are to be his. It is his will that is to be done, not ours.

At the same time, both the life of Jesus and the witnesses to him make very clear that he acted in ways that do not accord with many of the characteristics of human lordship. He was both a lord and a servant. He was a suffering servant. He suffered for those who were his servants. He was not distant, but came among us, as one of us. He gave up his life for those who did not acknowledge him. He continues to intercede for us. He calls us friends, not servants. These characteristics simply do not fit with any human model of lordship. Therefore, to call Jesus "Lord" has to be understood so that it is clear there is a serving in the midst of this lordship. The model of his life as a servant to others also gives us the pattern our lives should take as his servants. His service also brings perfect freedom to those who are his followers.

In our lives as Christians, in the decisions we make, in the purposes we seek, the fact that Jesus is Lord, and that he is this particular kind of Lord, is the basic confession that we make.

2. *The Role of Scripture*

The unique and authoritative witness we have for the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is Scripture. Although we have come to know the revelation of God in Christ through the witness of the church, the source and norm of the church's understanding is Scripture. The revelation of God, through the history of Israel, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and in the witness of the earliest church, has, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, been recorded and collected into the Scriptures we possess.

In the sixteenth century, during the Protestant Reformation, when the Reformed tradition of which we are a part was in process of formation, there was a sharp debate as to the relative authority of Scripture and the decisions and teachings of the church. The Reformed tradition, with other Protestant groups, affirmed that Scripture is the unique authority for the church's teachings and life. Where another authority, such as a tradition that does not have a biblical base or is the result of human reason alone, is given weight equal or superior to Scripture, the church loses its way and begins to alter the revelation that has

been given to us. Jesus then ceases to be the Lord of the church, and the church becomes its own authority.

Scripture is not a book of formulas, of directions in a mechanical sense. It is a book of history, of poetry, of letters, of stories, and in the midst of these forms are commandments and teachings. It is not always obvious how contemporary Christians should determine their actions from this ancient literature. But we are promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit when we seek it. We need such guidance, not only because of the form of the literature but also because we are sinful human beings and as such approach Scripture. We come as those who have a tendency to seek our own purposes rather than God's. We need, therefore, not only a sincere desire to hear God's Word to us, but also guidance by the Holy Spirit so that we can hear it.

This guidance may come through our private reading, when we approach the Bible acknowledging Christ's Lordship. It may come in the corporate worship of the church, particularly in the preaching. It may come through Christians reading and studying Scripture together, seeking with the help of others to separate our own wills and desires from what Scripture is leading us to see and do.

Even though the tradition of the church cannot be the norm for our knowledge of God, it is helpful to hear these voices from earlier generations of Christians. This is particularly true of the creeds and confessions of the church. Though Scripture is the unique authority, we are part of a confessional tradition, and therefore take seriously the history of the church's earlier biblical interpretations.

In Scripture we learn again the character, will, and purposes of God that should govern our lives. We reapropriate the ways in which the people of God in the past have been led to do what God wanted them to do in their situations, so that we are open to God's guidance in our own. We learn what is unchangeable in the midst of constantly changing historical and social circumstances: the character, will, and purposes of God, the goals God has for the world, God's faithfulness, and the call to us to be faithful servants of the One who is Lord.

If we are to seek God's will for us in Scripture, we need to become familiar with it through diligent and constant study. It is the whole of Scripture that needs to be used. We cannot easily find references to many issues that we face in the contemporary world. On other occasions, simply looking at a passage that mentions the topic we are struggling with may give us a very incomplete answer. It is the whole of Scripture that needs to be brought to bear on the decisions we face. The more we immerse ourselves in Scripture, the more ready we are to let it really be our guide when we turn to it. Even more, the constant, faithful study of Scripture—the entirety of Scripture—will help our lives be formed in accord with it.

If we seek Scripture's guidance only in the midst of controversy, we run the danger of seeking too simple an answer or the justification of our own current opinion rather than being open to the complexity, the unity, and the surprises that are there in the depths of the Bible. In the same way that we affirm the Lordship of Jesus, we need to approach the study of Scripture as servants who

seek in it the Word to us from the One whose faithful disciples we wish to be. If we do not have broad familiarity with Scripture before we need its guidance, we may well have difficulty understanding it when we really seek that guidance. The Holy Spirit can and may overcome these obstacles and allow us to hear the Word we need, but the Spirit seeks to have us love and cherish that Word through serious and purposeful study throughout the whole of our Christian lives.

This special committee has been charged with making recommendations for the church concerning the issues of problem pregnancies and abortion. We are not in agreement as to whether these issues are directly addressed in Scripture, yet they raise profound theological concerns about creation, about the value of human life in God's eyes—both before birth and after, and about the decision-making capacity of human beings—both in general and particularly in regard to procreation. We have wrestled with the guidance that Scripture gives to us in the midst of the controversy that has divided our society as well as the church. In this, the committee represents the state of the wider church. We have studied Scripture together, believing that this is the unique and authoritative witness to the guidance that the church needs and seeks.

3. *God's Work of Creation*

Scripture is clear that God is the creator of all that is. No other power, no other being, is in any sense a creator. God only is the author of all that is, everything that we know about, and all that is beyond our human comprehension. Several characteristics of God's work of creation impinge upon the concerns of this special committee:

a. Human sexuality is part of God's good creation. God created male and female. God intended their attraction to each other and that future generations would occur by means of their marital union. Scripture teaches the ideal of fidelity in marriage and abstinence in singleness. God intended the relationships of parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandparents, in-laws, and all the other relationships that are part of our living in families.

Pregnancy is also emphasized in Scripture as a special state, precious in God's eyes, and treated with utmost care. Isaiah 40:11 speaks of the gentleness with which those who are with young should be handled. In Amos 1:13, 14, the Lord summarizes the transgressions of the Ammonites and the reason why they will be punished. Among these transgressions is the abuse that these people had toward pregnant women in that they "ripped up women with child."

Plants and insects, birds and bees, fish and mammals, all have forms of sexuality. But in the human creature, there is a decision-making capacity, a rational, intellectual, and moral responsibility to God, to other human beings, and to the rest of creation that is unique, in addition to the instinctual drive toward reproduction that is to be found in other portions of creation.

b. This decision-making character of the human creature points to the fact that human beings stand in a

particular relationship to other parts of creation. In the words of Genesis 1:26-28, we are created in the image of God and given dominion over the rest of the creation. This dominion is based on the fact that we are created in the image of God, and therefore have a particular role in governing the earth as God's stewards.

In the familiar portions of Genesis 2, Adam is given the task of "keeping the garden" and "tilling it." This does not mean simply inhabiting a certain place. It involves altering the environment that is given, plucking up some things and nurturing others. It includes planning—deciding what should be planted and harvested. It does not mean leaving the world exactly as it was found. This is a particular reference to the sort of dominion that human beings have been given and the responsibility that is included. God is the Creator, but human beings have a very important role in governing and planning for that creation, faithful to the intentions and goals God has for this world. This decision-making role of human beings is a serving of the rest of creation, and not a selfish domination.

c. God is concerned for all of creation. There is purpose and intentionality in all of God's work. However, it is also clear from Scripture that God is particularly concerned for that portion of creation that is in God's own image. Human life, therefore, has great value in God's eyes and must in our eyes as well. This is true for life before birth as well as after.

According to the Bible, God is the author and sustainer of all life and has created all persons and things. By God's faithful care they exist. (See, for example, Psalm 24:1; 50:10-11; Nehemiah 9:6; John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 10:26.) The Christian, therefore, has concern for all life, animate and inanimate, as the creation of God. But God has given a special place to human beings. According to the words of Jesus, "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field . . . Will he not much more clothe you?" (Matt. 6:26, 28, 30). This passage points to God's concern for all creatures, but in particular the regard for humanity. (Passages detailing these considerations include: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 9:6; Job 10:8-12; 12:10; 33:4, 6; Psalm 8:3-8; 100:3; 119:73; 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:24; 45:9-12; John 1:2-3; Acts 17:24-25; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11.)

4. *The Fallenness of Creation*

Though Scripture is unambiguous about God as the Creator of all that is, it is equally clear that we cannot simply equate this world as we find it with the good creation of God. Something has happened. Sin has entered into the human creation and its effects are throughout the whole earth. In the terms of Genesis 3, there is pain in childbirth, subjection of wives to husbands, thorns and thistles, all of which make life difficult, and have altered the relationship between men and women and between human beings and the rest of creation. Later, in Genesis 9, after the story of the flood, human beings are given permission to eat animals, a change from the earlier

chapters of Genesis (1:29–30). And the animals are now afraid of human beings, a sign of the broken relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. Scripture connects all of these changes with human sinfulness.

a. The fall of creation has had great effect on human sexuality and procreation. The distortion of the relationship between men and women has led to the kinds of power struggles that make it difficult to come to common decisions about sex in general and procreation in particular. Rape and incest are the extreme instance of sex as a power weapon and misuse of sexuality, but other instances occur throughout human society. One can understand developments in birth control as a form of increasing human decision-making ability, and therefore a way of carrying out human responsibility. The Presbyterian church has seen this as a positive development. But where the relationship between men and women has been corrupted by sin, responsible decisions in regard to its use are often missing. Our contemporary American society frequently deals with sex as a recreational activity, unconnected with responsibility, with marriage, or with the possibility of pregnancy. Such an atmosphere has been devastating for many young people, who become involved in distorted sexual conduct before they have the mature moral sense that would place sexual relationships within a healthy marriage. There are similar problems for older people. It is as though the instinctual level of human sexuality has been left without the moral decision-making character that human beings were intended to have.

But even where there is a good sense of responsibility and clear attempts to make the proper use of human sexuality, all does not go well. The effects of a fallen creation are distributed generally. Thorns and thistles grow in fields without regard to the faithfulness of the farmer. A high proportion of conceptions end in spontaneous abortions—miscarriages—even when the pregnancy is desired. Children are born with serious birth defects and defective genes are passed on from generation to generation. We cannot say that these tragedies are part of the good creation God intended. But we affirm Romans 8:28, that all things work for good for those who love the Lord.

b. Sin has had terrible effect on the dominion given to human beings. Some people have assumed a dominion that is without regard to God's intentions. Their dominion has ceased to be a stewardship and has become the use of power over as much of creation as possible for selfish profit and use. Others have abdicated or have been left without power. Dominion has been unevenly distributed and, where it exists, has been corrupted. This has been true in the relationship of the sexes, of races, and between nations. The maldistribution of power usually has political, economic, and social effects leading to injustices throughout the world.

In our society, in recent decades, women have been reclaiming some balance in decision making within male-female relationships. New issues have been raised, particularly in regard to procreation, an area where the different roles and experiences of the sexes are greatest. Advances in contraception have given women and couples far more control over their lives than existed earlier and

have allowed women to plan their lives in ways previous generations could hardly imagine. Yet no method of birth control is absolutely certain and unintended pregnancies occur. Nor have there been changes in the rest of society that make childcare the responsibility of both parents, as well as employers and the whole society. Because of economic changes, the income of women is often needed for the support of the family and yet the care for any children remains largely the woman's private concern.

The Reformed tradition has consistently stressed the sinfulness of even the most moral human beings. We do not see clearly either the motives we have or the rightness or wrongness of our actions. Our self-interest and ethical blindness all corrupt our consciences, our wills, and our minds. Our certainty does not guarantee our righteousness.

It is in the midst of this fallen world that human beings still must make decisions. Dominion, though distorted, still remains. The image of God we bear has been seriously distorted by sin. Yet our power over the rest of creation has increased through scientific and technological advances. Many of these are positive: the causes of some birth defects have been discovered and tests for such disabilities have been developed. Premature babies who once would not have survived now do. But the gains are often ambiguous: infertility can sometimes be overcome in dramatic ways, but some methods leave us wondering who actually are the parents of a child. New forms of birth control are being developed, but are not always effective. Methods of abortion have been made safer for the woman, but abortion is chosen in shocking numbers (see Appendix B).

All of these developments have raised new questions and new debates. The human family has increased in power over processes of nature, but our ability to make good decisions remains drastically compromised by sin—and the conditions about which we must make decisions are those of a fallen creation. We live in a fallen society and our decisions are rarely made in isolation from the rest of society. It is no wonder that it is difficult to reach unanimous conclusions. Even when we reach reasonably good and ethical decisions, we often find such actions difficult and costly to carry out.

5. *God's Work of Redemption*

God has not left us alone in the midst of this fallen world. From the very beginning God has been working toward the redemption of creation. When we compare Genesis 9:1–5—the directions given to Noah and his family after the flood—with Genesis 1:28–30—the original directions given in creation—it is clear that God is working with humanity in this new situation of a fallen creation. This is a point that must be emphasized as one of the strands throughout Scripture.

Are we to make our decisions on the basis of the original creation or on the basis of the fallen one? What does this mean in concrete terms? It may very well be that it is precisely judgments on this matter that lead to significant differences in biblical interpretation

among Christians. Some may hold to the demands of the original creation with little or no allowance made for the conditions of a fallen world. Others may be so aware of the conditions of a fallen world that they find little room for the ultimate goals of God's creation. Would there have been problem pregnancies in God's good creation, or are they the result of a fallen world? Would the same pregnancies have occurred, but not have been viewed as problems?

The giving of the law to Israel was a high point in the guidance that God has provided. Yet adherence to law is not sufficient, for it leads to a sinful reliance on ourselves rather than on God. The law cannot lead to salvation (Rom. 7:7-25). A sinful humanity does not simply follow such guidance. God who gave the law also has provided forgiveness for those who have gone astray and have turned to God again. The message of God's forgiveness has been constant in the Scriptures of Israel and the church. The law is the guidance for a redeemed people, who because of their awareness of the astonishing grace of God, now seek to form their lives in accordance with the will of their Creator and Redeemer (Rom. 8:9-11).

Guidance is important, but not enough. Forgiveness is astonishing, but not enough. What is needed is human transformation: a breakthrough to see God's will and purposes and to choose them instead of our own; to desire them as our own; to use the power of human dominion as true stewardship. In the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we become part of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:16-21) and are made ambassadors for Christ to those in the old creation. We still live under the conditions of a fallen world, but with increased clarity about the will of God and the goals of God's good creation. The cross is the conflict with the sin of this world and God's judgment on it. The resurrection is the first fruits of the victory of the new creation.

Those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord are redeemed to take their proper role in creation, since they are no longer their own lords; nor are they powerless in the grip of sin and oppression. Redemption also makes us the willing servants of others, as well as the reconcilers of broken human relationships, with the word of God's reconciling love to speak to others. The vision of true human life is given to the Christian community with increasing clarity. Redemption also gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide, transform, and empower us, both as a community of faith and as individual Christians, to wrestle with difficult decisions and be open to God's guidance and power.

In the words of Paul:

The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will

obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:19-23a)

Within the community of faith, the futility under which the creation labors leading to problem pregnancies has indeed caused great groaning. Even though we have been given the first fruits of the Spirit, the issues remain complex and ambiguous. But within the church we have the possibility of overcoming the broken relationships that exist between human beings and to see more clearly what decisions faith would lead us to make.

6. *The Witness of the Church in a Fallen World*

The church has its existence in the midst of this fallen world, as a witness to the new life God has made possible in Jesus Christ. Christians are not removed from this world and must live their lives under the same conditions that affect the whole of humanity. Yet, through faith, we have glimpsed the future God has for the creation and can begin to live in accord with that. The church as a community of faith recognizes the sin present in our common life and is not content to consider such sin natural or insignificant. It proclaims the forgiveness of sin, the possibility of new beginnings, and hope where human wisdom sees only futility. In its own life, the church tries to live as a model of this proclamation. In its witness to the world around it, the church announces both the judgment and mercy of God and offers the new life possible as part of the body of Christ.

The church witnesses to the redemption God has given to a fallen world in the work of Jesus Christ. Faith in him leads to new possibilities, different decisions that we could not have imagined by ourselves. Such faith leads us to see the needs in the world around us and minister to them with love and compassion. Faith allows us to keep clearly in view God's purposes and intention for the world, in spite of the fallenness and sin that affect all life, including the lives of Christians.

Part of the task of the church is to wrestle clearly and faithfully with the difficult issues that face human beings in the midst of a fallen creation. But this does not mean that answers are obvious, or that Scripture addresses clearly and directly all our contemporary concerns. The church is the body in which Christians can come together to seek guidance through the Holy Spirit. Such help may well come through the voices of other Christians who see things differently.

When we have faithfully engaged in such discussion, even though we do not agree on all matters and significant differences remain, we may be able to speak with one voice on what we do see. We can also proclaim with great confidence that the God who created a good world continues, through Word and Spirit, to love and work with a fallen one.

Though we agreed on this biblical and theological foundation, there remain significant differences beyond this point. What follows are two different approaches as to the biblical material that is seen as central to this issue. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor are they the only approaches.

Position A

For some of us, there are biblical passages that speak clearly and directly to the issue of abortion. For example:

The Scriptures clearly testify that not only is all life precious to God, but that all life also belongs to God. Despite the fact that human beings have been made in the image of God—an image now distorted by our sinfulness—we do not own either human beings or anything in the world that God has made. No. “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it; the world and those who live in it” (Ps. 24:1), and this view is supported by a multitude of texts (see Deut. 10:14; 1 Chron. 29:11–12; Ps. 50:10–11; 60:7–8; 95:7; Isa. 66:1–2; Jer. 27:5; 1 Cor. 10:26). It therefore follows that since God alone created life, God has the right of life and death over it (see Gen. 9:1–6; Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Matt. 5:21–22).

God’s ownership of life extends not only to those who have been born, however, but also to those still in the womb. In the biblical view, God is actively involved in the creation of life in utero, before birth. This activity is vividly and poetically portrayed in Job 10:11–12, 31:15, and Psalm 139:13. There is also this statement about all persons: “Did not he who made me in the womb make them? And did not one fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15). The life that is formed in the mother’s womb, as well as that already born, is made by God and therefore belongs to God.

To be sure, there is no doubt that the formation of life in utero is sometimes corrupted by the sin of the human race, and that miscarriages, congenital deformities, and birth defects occur because of the fallen nature of our universe. But the glad promise of God in Jesus Christ is that when the Kingdom of God, begun in the Son, comes in all its fullness, such grievous effects of the sin of the whole human race will be done away forever (see Isa. 33:24; 65:20; Rev. 21:3–4). God is the Ruler yet.

Nevertheless, by God’s grace and mercy, God has also formed you and me and all persons while we were in our mothers’ wombs, and we and all persons belong to God (see Mal. 2:10). It follows, therefore, that when we are dealing with life in the womb, we are dealing with that which belongs to God alone and we must always answer to God, both now and hereafter, for what we do with that life.

Interestingly enough, the Scriptures also never deal with life in the womb in impersonal terms. John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit even while he is in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15) and Luke says that John leapt with joy at the arrival of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:41). Paul testifies that he was set apart and

Position B

Some of us would focus on the biblical material that emphasizes human decision making. Real decision making is one of the gifts of God to us as human beings. It is part of being created in the image of God. God’s own dominion over all of creation does not deny this intention of the Creator: that human beings must make real decisions that have real consequences for their lives and for the world. Were every conception directly willed by God, it would be difficult to understand why methods of birth control are legitimately matters of human decision making. Would that not be preventing conceptions God has intended? What of conceptions that take place outside of marriage, or as a result of rape or incest? Did God intend that these parents marry, though that would have been difficult or abhorrent to the people involved? It is also difficult to claim that God’s intentionality is present in every conception when there are so many genetic deformities and such a high percentage end in miscarriages.

To be created in the image of God and to be given dominion are gifts made jointly and equally to male and female (Gen. 1:25–28). The responsibility and consequences for sin are assigned to both (Gen. 3:16–19). These consequences include a distortion of the image of God and a corruption of dominion. The social barriers that stem from our fallenness, including those of gender, are broken down in the community of faith (Gal. 3:25–28). In his own ministry, Jesus affirmed the full moral responsibility of women in ways that contradicted their low status within the Jewish and Palestinian community. For example, his instruction to the woman at the well (John 4:7–42), his teaching of Mary and the confirmation of her choice to be taught by him which challenged Martha’s choice (Luke 10:38–42), and his resurrection appearance to the Marys at the tomb (Matt. 28:1–10), all demonstrate that Jesus recognized women as responsible persons, capable of making decisions in the light and power of the good news of the gospel.

This stress on human responsibility does not take away from God’s providence. Human reproduction brings human responsibility and God’s sovereignty together in ways that are often confusing. Passages of Scripture do point to God’s intentionality in the conception and birth of specific individuals, raised up for the continuity or preservation of the people of God. For instance, the theme of the barren woman makes it very clear that the survival of the people is in God’s hands and is not left simply to the natural order. Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, John the Baptist, and others all are born to women who had been barren.

The list culminates in the Virgin Birth of Jesus in which God’s direct involvement is of an even greater order, even as the role of Messiah is of a greater order

called before he was born to be the preacher to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16). Jeremiah is told that before he was born, he was appointed a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5). The psalmist tells how God planned all his future days even before his body in the womb took on recognizable human shape (Ps. 139:16). Life in the womb may be just an embryo or a fetus or an impersonal blob of flesh to some, but that is not the case in God's eyes, and surely the grief of a woman over a miscarriage mirrors something of that reality. For God, the unborn child is human life, created for a purpose and belonging to God, incorporated into God's plan and loved by God, and then birthed and surrounded by God's mercy (Ps. 22:9-10; Gen. 4:1). Surely we must deal with such life only in reverent awe and responsibility toward the God who has given it.

than that of patriarch or prophet. In all these cases, the child born had a crucial role in the continuity of the people of God and, therefore, such cases ought not to be made into a universal model of God's direct involvement in the planning of every conception.

We cannot conclude that God intends some children, but not others. Even the child whose conception was under circumstances that are totally at odds with a biblical understanding of how human life should be ordered, is nonetheless loved by God as much as the child conceived by a loving, married couple. Sarah stopped believing the promise of a child for Abraham would be fulfilled in her and so she offered her slave Hagar to her husband. The child, Ishmael, was not the one God intended as the fulfillment of the promise. Yet God did not abandon Hagar or her child, but rather protected them and worked them into God's purposes (Gen. 16:1-15; 21:1-13). The first child of David and Bathsheba was the result of adultery. This pregnancy led to the intentional killing of Bathsheba's husband. God did not permit this child to live, perhaps since God did not wish the future ruler of Israel to be the result of such violence. Yet the next child of this union was blessed by God, who continued to work with the family in this new situation. In neither of these instances was the willingness of the woman considered. In the case of the Virgin Birth, Mary's consent is recorded and significant: "Let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). The Virgin Birth is not a violent act or a show of God's dominion without the need for human decision.

There is a mystery at the heart of life, a mystery that holds together God's providence, human decision making and responsibility, and the wider nature of which our bodies are a part and over which we do not and cannot exercise total control in regard to fertility and procreation. But there is a clear realm for decision making, for moral choice that faithfulness can and must carry out. It is in this area of decision making that the difficult choice of abortion can arise.

E. Policy Development

Clearly there is both agreement and disagreement in our use and interpretation of Scripture. There is also agreement and disagreement on the basic issue of abortion. The committee agreed that there are no biblical texts that speak expressly to the topic of abortion, but that taken in their totality the Holy Scriptures are filled with messages that advocate respect for the woman and child before and after birth. Therefore, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) encourages an atmosphere of open debate and mutual respect for a variety of opinions concerning the issues related to problem pregnancies and abortion.

The following areas of substantial agreement form the policy for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

1. Areas of Substantial Agreement on the Issue of Abortion

a. The church ought to be able to maintain within its fellowship those who, on the basis of a study of Scripture and prayerful decision, come to diverse conclusions and actions.

b. Problem pregnancies are the result of, and influenced by, so many complicated and insolvable circumstances that we have neither the wisdom nor the authority to address or decide each situation. Christians seek the guidance of Scripture in the midst of relationships and circumstances of awesome proportions that affect their interpretation and decision making.

c. We affirm the ability and responsibility of women, guided by the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, in

the context of their communities of faith, to make good moral choices in regard to problem pregnancies.

d. We call upon Presbyterians to work for a decrease in the number of problem pregnancies, thereby decreasing the number of abortions.

e. The considered decision of a woman to terminate a pregnancy can be a morally acceptable, though certainly not the only or required, decision. Possible justifying circumstances would include medical indications of severe physical or mental deformity, conception as a result of rape or incest, or conditions under which the physical or mental health of either woman or child would be gravely threatened.

f. We are disturbed by abortions that seem to be elected only as a convenience or to ease embarrassment. We affirm that abortion should not be used as a method of birth control.

g. Abortion is not morally acceptable for gender selection only or solely to obtain fetal parts for transplantation.

h. Under circumstances in which abortion is the decision, it is preferable for it to happen earlier rather than later.

i. We do not wish to see laws enacted that would attach criminal penalties to those who seek abortions or to appropriately qualified and licensed persons who perform abortions in medically approved facilities.

j. We reject the use of violence and/or abusive language either in protest of or in support of abortion, whether this occurs in places where abortions are performed, at the homes of physicians who perform abortions, or in other public demonstrations.

k. As God has expressed love and grace in Jesus Christ, so we are to express that love and grace to one another when faced with this difficult and complex subject. Despite our diversity of opinion, we should pray for one another and exhibit grace and peace toward one another.

l. The strong Christian presumption is that since all life is precious to God, we are to preserve and protect it. Abortion ought to be an option of last resort. The large number of abortions in this society is a grave concern to the church.

m. The Christian community must be concerned about and address the circumstances that bring a woman to consider abortion as the best available option. Poverty, unjust societal realities, sexism, racism, and inadequate supportive relationships may render a woman virtually powerless to choose freely.

n. Presbyterians hold varying points of view about when human life begins. The five most common viewpoints are:

(1) at conception, when a woman's unfertilized egg is fertilized by a male's sperm, producing a zygote,

(2) when the following criteria, developed by the Harvard Medical School, are met: (a) response to

external stimuli, (b) presence of deep reflex action, (c) presence of spontaneous movement and respiratory effort, and (d) presence of brain activity as ascertained by the electroencephalogram.

These criteria would be met by the end of the third month in almost all cases.

(3) at "quickening," when movements can be subjectively perceived by the woman, usually around four to five months.

(4) at "viability," when the unborn child is potentially capable of living outside the woman's womb with artificial help (life support system). Today, our medical technology makes this possible at around 20 weeks.

(5) at birth, when the baby is physically separated from the woman and begins to breathe on its own.

Those holding these varying points of view agree, however, that after human life has begun, it is to be cherished and protected as a precious gift of God.

While Presbyterians do not have substantial agreement on when human life begins, we do have agreement that taking human life is sin.

o. By affirming the ability and responsibility of a woman to make good moral choices regarding problem pregnancies, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not advocate abortion but instead acknowledges circumstances in a sinful world that may make abortion the least objectionable of difficult options.

p. It must be clearly stated to the individual who has undergone an abortion and who believes the abortion to be sinful that there is no biblical evidence to support the idea that abortion is an unpardonable sin.

We all sin and fall short of God's purpose for us. In caring, compassionate love, we who have experienced God's amazing grace are called to be instruments of healing, comfort, and support to all who are struggling through traumatic experiences. Together we become God's redeemed, forgiven, forgiving, community—the church.

2. Implications for the Life and Witness of the Church

It is a strong part of our Reformed heritage that the Christian is always under obligation to try to shape public life according to the will of God. The church and individual Christians, therefore, are called to work for laws of the state that will accord with their understanding of the will of God. But the church must remember that it fulfills its obligation to try to shape public life not by the imposition of law, but by preaching, teaching, and living its gospel. The church cannot demand that its ethic, which is born out of its faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture, become the law of the state (especially of a pluralistic state like ours) for all persons. To give an analogy, from the standpoint of the Church's faith, idolatry is a violation of the first and greatest commandment. But the Church cannot demand that the state punish

by legal means all of those who do not worship the God we worship.

However, the church should do everything in its power to further the will of God in the body politic. For example, it can remind the state continually that it is not absolute, but stands under the governance and judgment of God, just as it reminds every individual of those facts. It should assist those who face difficult situations in bearing and rearing children. It should hold up before society biblical standards of sexual morality and Christian family life. And it should, by the example of all its members, model the Christian way of life, which stands in such contrast to the lifestyles of our secular society.

The church should lead the community in wholesome nurture and loving support of people. This should include children, singles, families, and those who bear and raise families—often in tragically poor circumstances. Because we view parenthood as a vocation, the church should provide training in parenting skills. This should emphasize the responsibility of both mother and father with mutual support.

We recognize the concern that men and other family members have in decisions related to abortion, and we urge their inclusion in pastoral counseling surrounding the woman's decision.

The church cannot take lightly the violations of women by men, which frequently lead to problem situations. All too often, the loneliness, neglect, and even abandonment of women result. The church is called upon to challenge the societal norms that allow these tragedies to continue.

Even in more natural settings, the man as well as the woman share the burden of guilt for irresponsible sexual decisions.

In the community of faith, positive male/father role models must be displayed and lived out on a daily basis. This is essential especially for young men who are surrounded by models of exploitive masculinity, absentee fathers, and dysfunctional families.

Creative youth ministry in the context of the transforming work of the Spirit of God can assist in establishing relationships that are both responsible and faithful to the gospel of Christ Jesus.

The church has the opportunity to provide pastoral care for all who are troubled and in need. While the church, of necessity, must speak boldly and firmly about exploitation, injustice, and the causes of problem pregnancies, it needs to speak gently and sensitively with those in need (Psalm 46:1).

In this situation, it carries on its ministry with humility as sinner with sinner. The community of faith is called upon to provide pastoral care in at least the following ways:

- work with men and women in times of critical decision;
- seek to nurture faithful and responsible relationships;
- proclaim the gracious gift of God's mercy and forgiveness;
- encourage new life in the spirit of God.

It is with this understanding of the church's role in society that the following public policy initiatives and suggestions for the life of the church are encouraged as ways that might both reduce the numbers of unintended pregnancies and the numbers of women who choose abortion.

a. *Encourage a Climate That Supports Responsible Sexuality*

We believe that the church must work to create a climate, both within our own midst and in the world, that supports the equal responsibility of men and women for sexual activity and that is opposed to both early sexual activity and to irresponsible sexual activity at any age. Because some adolescents are so much at risk of unintended pregnancy, many of our efforts, both in the church and in the larger community, must be devoted particularly to them.

This means that we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, a part of which is that sexual activity is understood to belong in the context of a marriage marked by love and faithfulness for God, love for each other, respect for our partner and his or her bodily integrity, self-respect, equality, mutual support and caring, and fidelity. Responsible sexuality in such a setting may include the use of contraceptives. Much as we might wish it otherwise, the church recognizes that sexual activity happens outside the marriage relationship. Thus the church continues to proclaim to the world the importance of love, respect for our partner, self-respect and equality, mutual support, fidelity, and the use of contraceptives.

In order to encourage a climate that supports responsible sexuality, our committee has considered and supports the following kinds of activities:

(1) *Influence the Media*

Influence the media—including television, print and TV advertising, magazines, newspapers, and the music industry—through such means as letter-writing campaigns and boycotts. Our hope would be that the various media might be encouraged to: (1) more frequently portray men and women in caring, committed relationships of mutual respect and equality, rather than in abusive or adulterous relationships in which one or both partners are treated merely as objects; (2) portray sexual activity both less frequently and more responsibly, for instance, by including in story lines the use of contraceptives; and (3) show that sexual activity has consequences, many of which may be tragic and unintended.

(2) *Work to Limit Pornography*

Work to limit pornography through such means as:

- a. writing letters to the media with views in opposition to pornography;
- b. communicating with television networks and cable services about opposition to programming considered to be pornographic;

c. communicating with store owners about opposition to the inappropriate display of pornographic materials; and

d. boycotting materials and companies which market or produce pornographic materials (from the Recommendations section of *Pornography: Far from the Song of Songs*, a study paper adopted by the 200th General Assembly (1988) of the PC(USA) [*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, p. 684]).

The Special Committee on Problem Pregnancy and Abortion commends this report to anyone interested in further study of the effects of pornography.

(3) *Encourage and Provide Training for Quality Sex Education*

Sex education is one key to preventing unintended pregnancies and subsequent abortions. Christian sex education should first be done within the family and the church can help to support and train parents in this important task. The church can also provide quality Christian sex education. (See *God's Gift of Sexuality: A Study for Young People in the Reformed Tradition in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Reformed Church of America*, Presbyterian Publishing House, 1989, including a leader's guide, a book for parents, a book for younger youth, and one for older youth.) Finally, the church can advocate quality sex education programs in the public schools, beginning in the elementary grades. Such school programs should include discussions of the value of abstinence outside marriage and discussions of how to build relationships with the opposite sex based on mutual respect and equality.

(4) *Support and Provide Programs That Promote Healthy Family Life*

As we all know from our own experience, families come in many shapes and sizes—from two parents with children to single parents with children, from grandparents caring for grandchildren to stepparents with stepchildren, from unmarried adults with no children to multiple generations under one roof. Whatever shape our family takes, communication, cooperation, openness to the feelings and ideas of others, commitment, power sharing, mutual respect, and self-respect are all elements of a healthy family that need to be worked at and practiced over a lifetime. The church can provide within its own walls programs that teach and model Christian family life. It can also provide, and support within the larger community, programs such as peer counseling, parenting classes, and support groups that will help some to overcome dysfunctional family backgrounds and that will encourage healthy relationships in all families.

(5) *Promote Quality Public Education*

Although this committee has neither studied nor can we claim to be experts in the field of public education, we feel strongly that the public education system can contribute to the lessening of unintended pregnancies and abortion. In particular, we are concerned about: (1) lack

of self-esteem in our young people; (2) lack of respect for the rights and property of others; (3) low expectations for the future and an inability to set goals and meet objectives; and (4) lack of learning as a necessary preparation for a fruitful role in society. These are certainly problems not only for the schools—many are perhaps first of all deeply rooted family problems. But most families cannot change without help, and our flawed social welfare system is already overburdened and underfunded. Our schools have an opportunity to change lives by creating and nurturing in our young people self-respect and respect for others—by encouraging a sense of personal responsibility for one's own future and for the future of the community, by teaching the process of moral decision making, and by teaching fundamental values that should be shared by all members of our society. The church must support and assist our schools in this effort by participating in their work whenever possible and by being advocates for their needs.

(6) *Provide Appropriate Activities for Young People After School and in the Evenings*

Even though we live in a society and an age when the lives of many of our young people seem to be programmed to the point of exhaustion, our committee still feels that the church has a role to play in offering to young people activities grounded in our Christian commitment to community and to leading valuable, useful lives. We encourage churches to provide youth programming such as support groups, church-sponsored sports, tutorial sessions, recreational programs, and Bible studies after school and in the evenings.

b. *Contraception*

In addition to creating a climate opposed to unintended pregnancies, the church must also address itself to questions of contraceptive access and education if its intention is to help reduce unintended pregnancies. Leaving aside for the moment questions of how different contraceptives work, churches must nonetheless support

- mutual responsibility for contraception, with particular emphasis on programs and educational material that stress the equal role of men in preventing unplanned pregnancies;
- contraceptive education as an integral element of quality sex education programs;
- full and equal access to contraceptive methods; and
- contraceptive research to develop both safer and more reliable methods and to develop specifically male contraceptives.

In recent years, contraceptive access and education have also become important because of the growing AIDS epidemic, as it has become clear that some contraceptives inhibit the spread of the AIDS virus.

c. *Reducing the Number of Abortions*

Because it will never be possible to eliminate completely unintentional pregnancies, our denomination and its member congregations must commit themselves to reduce the overwhelming number of situations in which women choose to abort. There is an alarming trend in the large numbers of women making this difficult choice. The church must affirm the importance of trying to reduce these numbers. Three general directions the church might take are as follows:

(1) *Address Economic Realities*

It is the economic realities of many women's lives that cause them to consider abortion. This society does not vigorously support children, parents, or families. Many women cannot imagine how they might afford to bring a child into a world in which they have a poorly paying job or no job at all. Many have no husband or have children with an absent father who provides little or no child support. Many have no guaranteed health care for themselves or their children. There are few affordable, quality day-care centers where they might safely and with integrity leave their children while they work or go to school. There is much the church can do within its own walls to help such women, for example church-based health clinics or day-care centers. But ultimately, if we are to reduce the number of abortions that take place, we must commit ourselves as a church to working for legislative measures that will secure economic strength and stability for women and children. Our committee encourages the following kinds of activities:

- Advocate universal access to health care so that pregnant mothers and families with few economic resources might feel assured that their own and their children's health will be protected.
- Advocate measures that can help to break the cycle of poverty—such as job training; affordable, safe, and accessible day care; and efforts to provide affordable, adequate housing.
- Advocate increased effort to persuade the child's father to provide economic and social support by measures to collect child support, provide marriage counseling, and reformed divorce and separation laws to better protect the child.
- Advocate workplace policies that support parenthood and children—such as family leave and pregnancy leave policies that guarantee income and job protection, or on-site day care.
- Advocate and provide respite care for families whose children are disabled.

(2) *Emphasize Alternatives to Abortion*

Christian churches have historically been leaders in providing assistance to women with unintended pregnancies. Presbyterian churches are urged to consider

expanding or offering such resources as adoptive services, homes for pregnant women who lack the necessary financial and emotional support for childbirth and child rearing, and pregnancy counseling. In 1986, the General Assembly of the PC(USA) took a step in this direction in recommending that resource centers be set up for alternatives to abortion within each presbytery. In addition, the church should advocate legislative measures that would buttress alternatives to abortion, such as tax incentives for adoption.

(3) *Reduce Some Medical Reasons for Abortion*

There are many reasons why men and women turn to drugs and alcohol—family patterns of abusive behavior, low expectations for the future, peer pressure, and economic frustrations. Whatever the reasons, alcohol and drug abuse, and diseases such as AIDS that may be consequent upon such abuse, can result in fetal deformity and are thus sometimes a reason for abortion. Many of the measures we have already discussed—better public education, universal access to health care, job training, affordable day care—may help a parent or family break a pattern of substance abuse. In addition, churches can also support, within their communities, family development programs, the aim of which is to break the repeated patterns of abuse that can exist within multiple generations of a family.

3. *The Church and the Law*

There is diversity of opinion in the church as to whether or not abortion should be legal and on the extent to which the government should be permitted to regulate or prohibit abortions. The church acknowledges that many of its members find fault with the philosophical basis of *Roe v. Wade* and its division of pregnancy into three trimesters, preferring that the state be permitted to regulate and even prohibit abortions throughout the pregnancy, rather than just at the stage of viability. Others feel that *Roe's* framework effectively safeguards the constitutional liberties of pregnant women while also recognizing the state's interest in protecting the unborn child and the woman.

The special committee also recognizes that if fetal development is no longer the standard by which the government measures the extent of its involvement in abortions, then our lawmakers must find some other acceptable standard by which the rights of the mother to terminate her pregnancy will be balanced against the state's interest in protecting the unborn child.⁸ Based on prior experiences of the courts and legislatures, it will not be easy to present a standard that will balance the competing interests in such a manner that will not lead to additional litigation. Courts and legislatures have not always well represented the interests of the economically disadvantaged, the undereducated, and women. Some among these groups historically have had greater difficulty in circumventing the obstacles posed by restrictive abortion legislation than have the more affluent.⁹

The special committee concedes that we cannot respond definitively to every legal aspect of the abortion issue in a manner that will garner consensus among the church constituency. We believe that in the shaping of the future law, the following affirmations are of vital consideration.

a. The state has a limited legitimate interest in regulating abortions and in restricting abortions in certain circumstances.

b. Within this context of the state's limited legitimate interest, no law should impose criminal penalties against any woman who chooses or physician who performs a medically safe abortion.

c. Within this same context of the state's limited legitimate interest, no law should deny access to safe and affordable services for the persons seeking to terminate a problem pregnancy.

d. No law or administrative decision should provide for a complete ban on abortion.

e. No law or administrative decision should

- (1) limit access to abortions;
- (2) limit information and counseling concerning abortions; or

- (3) limit or prohibit public funding for necessary abortions for the socially and economically disadvantaged.

f. No law should prohibit access to, nor the practice of, contraceptive measures.

g. No law should sanction any action intended to harm or harass those persons contemplating or deciding to have an abortion.

h. No law should condone mandatory or forced abortion or sterilization. Such laws should be abolished where they do exist.

II. Responses to Referrals

A. *Overture 89-63. On Providing Financial and Other Support to Crisis Pregnancy Centers—From the Presbytery of Shenango*, with assembly comments (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, pp. 85, 613).

Response: The special committee supports the intent of the overture to encourage support for crisis pregnancy centers that encourage alternatives to abortion, but does not wish to imply that such centers should not provide information about safe abortion alternatives or assist with abortion referrals.

The special committee would like to respond to the comment concerning *Overture 89-63* from the 201st General Assembly (1989), which requested the special committee to develop a program to promote adoption. The committee believes that program development is not within the scope of the special committee.

B. *Overture 89-75. On Supporting Ministries That Provide Alternatives to Abortion—From the Presbytery of Twin Cities Area* (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, pp. 617-18).

Response: The special committee concurs with the intent of the overture, and believes its response to *Overture 89-63* answers this overture also.

C. *Commissioners' Resolution 89-30. On Gender-Selective Abortion*, with assembly comment (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, pp. 86, 648).

Response: The special committee concurs with the intent of the commissioners' resolution in its opposition to gender-selective abortion, but wishes to note the following:

1. The issue of the Board of Pension coverage of abortions is being considered by the "Workgroup on Conscience" of the Board of Pensions and the Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion. The special committee has been represented on that committee, and the responses to this portion of the commissioners' resolution will be before the 204th General Assembly (1992) as part of the report of the Board of Pensions.

2. The special committee does not concur that communication on this issue to the American Medical Association and its state affiliates or to the president of the United States or Congress is helpful.

D. *Commissioners' Resolution 89-33. Elective Abortion to Obtain Fetal Tissue* (*Minutes*, 1989, Part I, p. 649).

Response: The special committee concurs with the intent of the resolution to oppose abortions for the express purpose of selling or providing tissues for research or transplantation, and is opposed to the sale of fetal human tissue obtained in elective abortion. However, we are opposed to, and cannot concur with, calling on Congress to prohibit the use of federal funding for research using fetal tissue.

E. *Commissioners' Resolution 90-21. On Pensions and Gender Selection* (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 841-42).

Response: The special committee's response to *Commissioners' Resolution 89-30* answers this referral.

F. *Commissioners' Resolution 90-19. On Late-Term Abortions* (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 840-41; and *Minutes*, 1991, Part I, p. 116).

Response: The special committee concurs with the intent of the resolution to object to late-term abortions, but notes the difficulty in agreeing on an understanding about the point of viability, and notes that there are congenital anomalies and other medical conditions that may provide exception.

G. *Overture 91-72. On Providing Relief for Those Whose Conscience Forbid Them from Participation in a Medical Plan That Includes Unrestricted Coverage for Abortion—From the Presbytery of Donegal*, with assembly comment (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, pp. 64, 954).

Response: The special committee has participated with the Board of Pensions in a review of possible responses to this overture. The special committee wishes to find measures that could provide for relief of conscience, provided that the integrity of the plan is not compromised. The response to this overture will be found in the report of the Board of Pensions to the assembly.

III. Recommendations

A. The Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion recommends that the General Assembly approve this paper and adopt as policy Section I. E. (1-3).

B. We recommend that future publications of the denomination and its ministry units reflect the diversity of positions about problem pregnancies and abortion found herein.

C. The special committee, having experienced in its own work the value of open debate and mutual respect, encourages the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels to seek such an atmosphere in the future in this and other areas of controversy and debate.

D. We recommend that the General Assembly acknowledge the prerogative of presbyterian entities to participate in ecumenical and interfaith organizations that represent different points of view concerning abortion. We also urge the General Assembly Council and the presbyteries to affirm procedures by which particular churches may be assured that their mission funds will not be used in violation of conscience on this issue.

E. We recommend that the Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion be dismissed with thanks and also that it be commended for its efforts to address the difficult issue of problem pregnancies and abortion in a reconciling and healing manner.

Endnotes

1. See the PCUSA (Old School) *Minutes* of 1869 (pp. 937-38); UPCUSA *Minutes* of 1962 (pp. 264, 275-77), 1965 (p. 418-23), 1970 (pp. 888-91), 1972 (pp. 265-67), 1976 (pp. 597, 602-3), 1978 (p. 67), 1979 (pp. 417-18, 433-35), 1980 (p. 68), 1981 (pp. 84-85); PCUS *Minutes* of 1970 (pp. 124-26), 1971 (pp. 60-63, 101), 1972 (pp. 64, 140, 182), 1973 (pp. 133-44), 1974 (pp. 74, 76, 83, 164), 1975 (pp. 77-78, 122, 399), 1977 (pp. 174-75), 1978 (pp. 91, 193), 1979 (pp. 235-37), 1980 (p. 222), 1981 (pp. 148-50, 285-304), 1982 (p. 127); and PCUSA *Minutes* of 1983 (pp. 88, 362-70), 1984 (pp. 56-57), 1985 (pp. 80-82, 317-28), 1986 (pp. 77-78, 641-42), 1987 (pp. 68-69, 580-81, 820-21, 873), 1988 (pp. 94, 1015-16), 1989 (pp. 77, 84-86, 500-503, 615), 1990 (pp. 93-94), 1991 (pp. 64, 115-16, 1035).

2. The special committee held open hearings at the 202nd General Assembly (1990) in Salt Lake City, and at the 203rd General Assembly (1991) in Baltimore. Hearings were held during all of the committee's 1990 meetings: January 13 in Los Angeles, Calif.; March 30 in Dallas, Tex.; September 14 and 16 in Minneapolis, Minn.; and November 16 and 18 in San Francisco, Calif. Five additional hearings were scheduled in other areas, at which at least three committee members were present. These took place in Newark, N.J. and Charlotte, N.C. on October 6, 1990; and in Birmingham, Ala., Pittsburgh, Pa., and Denver, Colo. on October 27, 1990. In each instance and location every effort was made to encourage racial ethnic participation. The committee thanks the presbytery and synod staff in all these areas for their assistance in publicizing these hearings.

3. The Presbyterian Panel is a group of approximately 3,950 Presbyterians who have agreed to respond to an ongoing mail survey, each panelist agreeing to serve for a three-year period. Participants are divided into four separate groups: church members, elders, pastors, and

specialized clergy (those not serving in a parish). Participants in each group are selected according to scientific sampling procedures, and are selected in such a way that each of the four geographic regions of the country, as well as congregations of all sizes, are well represented. The panel is maintained by the Research Services Division of the Stewardship and Communication Development Ministry Unit of the PC(USA). Its purpose is to aid the General Assembly, its entities, councils, governing bodies, and special committees in planning and evaluating their work.

4. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 93 S.Ct. 705 (1973).

5. *Ibid*, 410 U.S. 163.

6. *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490, 109 S.Ct. 3040 (1989).

7. While there was substantial agreement within the committee that these power issues do exist, we did not agree on their significance for the abortion debate.

8. *Newsweek*, July 17, 1989, 16.

9. See Olsen, *Unraveling Compromise*, 103 HARV. L. REV. 105 (1989); Colker, *Abortion and Dialogue*, TUL. L. REV. 1363 (1989) *Newsweek*, July 17, 1989, 17.

Appendix A

PRESBYTERIAN PANEL SUMMARY

JUNE, 1990 ABORTION

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
Number of panelists	912	847	1,096	563
Number of questionnaires returned	497	493	810	373
Percent returned	54%	58%	74%	66%

The June, 1990 Presbyterian Panel questionnaire was developed at the request of the General Assembly Task Force on Problem Pregnancy and Abortion.

STRONG MAJORITIES SUPPORT THE CURRENT LEGAL SITUATION

When asked whether or not they would like to see the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*, (which made abortion legal nationally) overturned, 64% of members and elders, 68% of pastors, and 83% of specialized clergy responded "not overturned."

SUPPORT FOR LEGAL ABORTION VARIES BY CIRCUMSTANCES

In every sample, fewer than one in 10 panelists favor the legality of abortion at all times for any reason. Majorities hold that abortion should be legally available during the first three months of a pregnancy, but should be severely restricted later in a pregnancy.

As the table on the next page shows, panelists' attitudes are also affected by reasons for seeking an abortion. Panelists strongly favor legal access to abortion when a woman's or fetus's health is threatened, or when a woman becomes pregnant as the result of rape. Opinion is more divided for more social or personal reasons.

Opinions vary by other characteristics of panelists. Among members, the proportion who believe that abortion should be legal under each

of the eight particular circumstances listed in the table is greater for those with more years of education than for those with fewer years of education. Among pastors, higher proportions of women than men support the legality of abortion under most circumstances. For both members and pastors, middle aged persons (40-55 years) support the legality of abortion in specific situations to a greater degree than do younger persons (under age 40).

Table. Percentage Supporting the Legality of Abortion in Specific Situations

Question: Please tell us whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion [under each of eight specific circumstances].

	Members	Elders	Pastors	Specialized Clergy
if there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby	78%	73%	72%	83%
if she is married and does not want any more children	32%	29%	36%	51%
if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy	92%	90%	93%	95%
if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children	42%	36%	43%	60%
if she became pregnant as a result of rape	88%	84%	84%	92%
if she became pregnant as a result of incest	88%	83%	84%	92%
if she is not married and does not want to marry the man	36%	34%	39%	57%
if the woman wants it for any reason	26%	26%	22%	33%

MAJORITIES FAVOR SOME PROPOSED LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

Large majorities of all samples favor "prohibiting abortions that are performed because the parents want a child of the other sex." Majorities in all samples except specialized clergy favor a requirement of parental notification before someone under age 18 can obtain an abortion, and majorities of members and elders favor a requirement of parental consent for under-18 year olds. Panelists are almost evenly divided on whether the consent of the "natural father" should be necessary before a woman can obtain a legal abortion.

ABORTION AN APPROPRIATE SOCIAL CONCERN FOR CONGREGATIONS

Majorities in all samples chose "abortion" and "teenage pregnancy" as "appropriate social concerns" for their congregations. Higher proportions, however, selected "aging," "local hunger/poverty," and "alcoholism/drug abuse."

MANY CONGREGATIONS HAVE STUDIED/SUPPORTED ABORTION, ABORTION-RELATED PROGRAMS

About one-half of pastors indicated that their congregations have studied abortion in the last five years, primarily in small gatherings such as women's groups, church school classes, and Bible study groups. Smaller proportions of congregations (one in five, based on pastors' responses) have provided money or volunteers for an abortion-related program.

CLERGY AWARE, BUT MEMBERS AND ELDERS IGNORANT OF DENOMINATIONAL POLICY

For over twenty years, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor bodies have debated the issue of abortion, with the most

recent policy statement, "Covenant and Creation," adopted by General Assembly in 1983. This document affirms both "the church's commitment to minimize the incidence of abortion" and "women's ability to make responsible decisions, whether the choice be to abort or to carry the pregnancy to term." A lengthy and multifaceted document, on balance, "Covenant and Creation" places the denomination generally to the "pro-choice" side of a continuum from "pro-choice" to "anti-abortion."

While nine in ten clergy indicated awareness of denominational policy on abortion, only about one in six members indicated that they not only know that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a policy statement but were able to describe it accurately ("pro-choice," "woman's right to choose," etc.). Two-thirds of pastors and one-half of specialized clergy have read "Covenant and Creation." Whether aware of the policy or not, large majorities of all samples (65% of members, 90% of both clergy samples) agree that it is appropriate for the denomination to have an abortion policy statement.

MAJORITIES BELIEVE ABORTION IS NOT MURDER, BUT ARE MORE DIVIDED ON WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE BEGINS

In all samples, majorities—ranging from 51% of elders to 76% of specialized clergy—disagreed when asked, "Is abortion murder?" When asked their view "concerning the beginning of an individual's life," opinions were almost evenly divided among the three options: "an individual's life begins at conception"; "an individual's life begins at birth"; "an individual's life begins somewhere between conception and birth."

PANELISTS DIVIDED IN VIEWS ON BIBLICAL GUIDANCE

Two-thirds of pastors and over seven in 10 of other clergy "believe that scripture gives guidance to Christians on the issue of abortion." A majority of members and 42% of elders responded "not sure." In all samples, of those who indicated that they believe "scripture gives guidance to Christians on . . . abortion," a majority further responded that the Bible's guidance is "subject to varying interpretation."

MORALITY OF ABORTION DEPENDS ON CIRCUMSTANCES

In response to a question on "whether it is consistent with Christian morality for a pregnant woman to have an abortion" under each of the eight circumstances listed in the table, proportions responding that abortion is moral were similar, but slightly lower, than those supporting the legality of abortion under the same circumstances.

Overall, majorities of all samples believe abortion is consistent with Christian morality "if there is a serious defect in the baby," "if the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy," "if she became pregnant as a result of rape," and "if she became pregnant as a result of incest." In contrast, majorities of all samples believe abortion is not consistent with Christian morality "if the woman wants it for any reason."

CHRISTIANS SHOULD TRY TO CHANGE LAWS THAT VIOLATE THEIR BELIEFS, BUT SHOULDN'T IMPOSE PRIVATE MORALITY ON OTHERS

Over one-half of all samples (except members, at 45%) agree to some degree with the statement, "When my own Christian beliefs differ from the law, it is my duty as a Christian to try to change the law." At the same time, however, majorities of all samples also agree to some degree with this statement: "Christians should try to follow Christian standards of behavior in matters of private morality, but shouldn't try to impose those standards on others."

FETAL TISSUE RESEARCH SUPPORTED

Majorities in all samples support the use of tissue from aborted fetuses for both "basic biological research" and "to study embryology in order to reduce birth defects and to help more women carry their pregnancies to term."

For a more detailed report of the June, 1990 Presbyterian Panel findings, send \$3 with a request for the copy of the full Report to the address below, or request a copy from your presbytery's resource center, from your synod's office or from a Presbyterian seminary library.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); Presbyterian Panel; 100 Witherpoon Street; Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396

Appendix B

Medical Statistics

(Materials excerpted from MMWR (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report), Vol. 39, No. SS-2; Vol. 40, No. SS-1; and Vol. 40, No. 47)

Summary *

Since 1980, the number of legal abortions reported to [the Center for Disease Control] (CDC) has remained fairly stable, varying each year by <3%. In 1988, 1,371,285 abortions were reported—a 1.3% increase from 1987. The abortion ratio for 1988 was 352 legally induced abortions/1000 live births, and the abortion ratio was higher for black women and women of other minority races and for women <15 years of age. However, the abortion ratio for women <15 years was lower in 1988 than in any previous year since 1972. Women undergoing legally induced abortions tended 1) to be young, white, and unmarried, 2) to live in a metropolitan area, 3) to have had no previous live births, and 4) to be having the procedure for the first time. Approximately half of all abortions were performed before the eighth week of gestation, and 85% were performed during the first trimester of pregnancy (<13 weeks of gestation). Black women and women of other minority races tended to obtain abortions later in pregnancy than did white women; however, age was a more dominant influence than race. Younger women tended to obtain abortions later than older women. Educational level strongly influenced when an abortion was performed; better educated women had an abortion earlier in gestation.

Report For 1988

Number of Abortions:

In 1988, 1,371,285 legal abortions were reported to the [Division of Reproductive Health] (DRH)—an 1.3% increase over the number reported for the preceding year. . . . The national abortion rate increased from 23 abortions/1,000 women ages 15-44 years in 1986 to 24/1,000 in 1987 and remained at that rate in 1988. The abortion ratio rose slightly from 354 abortions/1,000 live births in 1986 to 356/1,000 in 1987 and then declined to 352/1,000 in 1988. . . .

In 1988, as in previous years, most abortions were performed in California, New York City, and Texas; the fewest were performed in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Alaska. . . . For women whose state of residence was known, approximately 92% had the abortion done within their state of residence. The percentage of abortion obtained by out-of-state residents ranged from approximately 50% in the District of Columbia to <1% in Hawaii. . . . Data on the percentage of abortions obtained by out-of-state residents were not available for 12 reporting areas in 1988.

Age of Those Having Abortions:

In 1988, 40 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City reported legal abortions by age. Women 20-24 years of age had approximately 33% of all abortions, whereas women <15 years of age had approximately 1%. . . . The abortion ratio was highest for the youngest women (949 abortions/1,000 live births for women <15 years of age and 624/1,000 for women 15-19 years of age) and for women of the oldest age category (514/1,000 for women ≥40 years); the ratio was lowest for women ages 30-34 years (188/1,000). . . . Although the abortion ratio was highest for teenagers, the proportion of abortions they obtained decreased slightly—from 26% of all legal abortions in 1987 to 25% in 1988. Among teenagers, the abortion ratio was highest for those <15 years of age and lowest for 19-year olds. . . .

Table I: Proportion of Abortions According to Maternal Age. (This information comes from the CDC and the Allan Guttmacher Institute, "Facts on Abortion").

Maternal Age	Proportions of Abortion
11-14	2%
15-19	24%
20-24	33%
25-29	22%
30-34	10%
35-39	6%
40 and up	3%

Fetal Age at Time of Abortion:

In 1988, approximately 48% of reported legal abortions were performed at or before 8 weeks of gestation, and 87% were done at or before 12 weeks of gestation. . . . Four percent of the abortions were performed at 16-20 weeks of gestation and approximately 1% were performed ≥21 weeks of gestation.

Table II: Proportion of Abortions According to the Fetal Age in Weeks.

Fetal Age	Percent of Total
under 8 weeks	48.7%
9-10	26.0%
11-12	12.5%#
3-14	3.9%
15-16	2.5%
17-18	2.0%
19-20	2.0%
21-22	.5%
23-24	.4%
over 24	.1%+
unknown	1.5%

Note: # The end of the first trimester is generally put at the end of 12 weeks.

+ More careful review at some hospitals suggests some of these cases are wrong dates, some are already dead and the rest are serious congenital anomalies.

Method of Abortion:

Approximately 98% of legal abortions were performed by curettage . . . and approximately 1% by intrauterine saline or prostaglandin instillation. Hysterectomy and hysterotomy were rarely used; <1% of abortions were performed by these methods.

Race, Marital Status, and Previous Pregnancies:

Almost two-thirds of women obtaining legal abortions were white; this finding continued a previously noted trend. . . . The abortion ratio, however, was 1.9 times higher for black women and women of other minority races (489 abortions/1,000 live births) than for white women (259 abortions/1,000 live births).

The percentage of women undergoing legal abortions who were unmarried increased from 76% in 1986 and 1987 to almost 78% in 1988. The abortion ratio was 11.7 times higher for unmarried women than for married women: 1,027 abortions/1,000 live births versus 88 abortions/1,000 live births. . . .

Fifty-one percent of the women obtaining legal abortions had had no previous live births, and approximately 89% had had two or fewer live births. . . . The abortion ratio was highest for women who had had no live births and lowest for women who had had one live birth. Approximately 56% of women obtaining abortions had the procedure for the first time, whereas 15% had had at least two previous abortions. . . .

Place of Residence:

For the 15 reporting areas of the NCHS data system, most women (approximately 88%) who obtained abortions lived in metropolitan areas. For these women, the abortion ratio was approximately 2.2 times greater than that of women, who lived in nonmetropolitan areas (373 versus 168 abortions/1,000 live births). . . . The difference by place of residence was greater for black women and women of other minority races than for white women. The abortion ratio for white women living in a metropolitan area was 1.9 times that of white women living in a nonmetropolitan area (302 versus 162 abortions/1,000).

* The following symbols are used: <(less than); ≤(less than or equal to); >(greater than); ≥(greater than or equal to).

Analysis

When the proportion of women undergoing legal abortions was analyzed by age group, few differences were found between white women and minority women. . . . However, the proportion of minority women <15 years old who had abortions was over twice that of white women in this age group. In addition, a slightly higher proportion of minority women who had abortions were unmarried.

Most women obtained abortions during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. However, women <15 years of age obtained abortions later in pregnancy than did older women. . . . Minority women tended to obtain abortions later in pregnancy than did white women. However, age was a more dominant influence than race, particularly for women who obtained abortions at ≥16 weeks of gestation. . . . For all races, the proportion of women obtaining an early abortion (≤8 weeks) increased with age, and the proportion obtaining a late abortion (≥16 weeks) decreased with age.

When analyzed by gestational age, approximately 99% of abortions at ≤12 weeks of gestation were performed by curettage (primarily suction procedures). . . . Beyond 12 weeks of gestation, the most common procedure was curettage, which was usually reported as a dilation and evacuation (D&E). Most intrauterine instillations involved the use of saline and were performed at ≥16 weeks of gestation.

For all racial groups, educational level (years of school completed) strongly influenced when an abortion was performed. . . . For example, for white women who obtained an abortion, 60% of the college-educated women (≥16 years of school completed) had an early abortion (≤8 weeks), compared with 46% of the women who completed high school (12 years) only. For minority women who obtained an abortion, approximately 53% of college-educated women had an early abortion, compared with 42% of women who completed high school only.

Abortion ratios were calculated by race, age, and educational level. . . . Patterns were different between whites and minorities. Among white women ≥25 years, the abortion ratio rose with increasing levels of education for women with less than a high school education, was highest for high school graduates, and declined for women with higher educational levels. . . . For minority women ≥25 years, the abortion ratio was also highest for high school graduates; it declined for women with some college (13–15 years completed), and then rose for college graduates (≥16 years).

Preliminary Analysis of 1989 Data

In 1989, 1,396,658 legal abortions were reported to CDC from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and New York City, . . . an increase of 1.9% over the number reported for 1988. In 1989, the national abortion ratio was 346 legal abortions per 1000 live births, a decrease from 352 legal abortions per 1000 live births in 1988. The national abortion rate (number of legal abortions per 1000 women aged 15–44 years) for 1989 was 24, the same as for 1988. As in previous years, approximately 91% of women who had a legal abortion were residents of the state in which the procedure was performed. . . .

Women who obtained legal abortions in 1989 were predominately <25 years of age, white, and unmarried and had not had any live-born children. Curettage (suction and sharp) remained the primary abortion procedure (approximately 99% of all such procedures). As in previous years, approximately half of legal abortions were performed in the first 8 weeks of gestation and 88% in the first 12 weeks.

Table III: Fetal Survival by Duration of Pregnancy and by fetal weight

(This data obtained from the Premature Nursery at the John Hopkins Hospital and the Francis Scott Key Medical Center of Baltimore, Maryland, and is not material excerpted from *MMWR*.)

Fetal Age	% Survival	Fetal Weight grams	% Survival
20	0	300	0
22	0	450	17
23	18	500	25
24	50	600	55
26	77	800	78
28	92	1000	87
30	97	1200	92
32	97	1400	95
34	99	1600	98
36	99	1800	99

The weight on the same line as age is the generally accepted average weight, but there is a normal variation of around 400 grams. A pregnancy of 22 weeks duration may weigh from 250 grams to 650 grams and be normal. The apparent better survival based upon weight is related to error in estimating the age of the fetus prior to delivery when 20 to 26 weeks pregnant.

Appendix C

Related Biblical References

A. *Jesus Lord*

Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 1:32–33; John 8:58; John 12:12–16; John 14:21, 23; John 21:12–14; Acts 2:36; Rom. 3:21; Rom. 10:9; Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 2:6–16; Gal. 5:4–6; Eph. 1:22–23; Eph. 4:7–10; Phil. 2:9–11; Phil. 3:12–14; Col. 1:16–19; Rev. 1:8; Rev. 1:17–18.

B. *Jesus Servant*

Matt. 10:24–25; Matt. 12:46–50; Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:34; Luke 8:19–21; Luke 22:27; John 13:3–5; John 13:12–16; Phil 2:7.

C. *Authority of Scripture*

Isa. 40:8; Isa. 55:11; Jer. 30:2; Dan. 10:21; Rom. 15:4; Rom. 16:25–27; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20.

D. *God Creator of All Life*

Gen. 1:26–27; Gen. 2:7; Gen 9:6; Ex. 4:11; Job 10:8–12; Job 12:10; Job 14:15; Job 33:4, 6; Job 34:14–15; Ps. 8:3–8; Ps. 95:6; Ps. 100:3; Ps. 138:8; Ps. 139:13–16; Prov. 22:2; Eccles. 11:5; Isa. 29:16; Isa. 44:24; Isa. 46:9–12; Isa. 57:16; Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10–15; Matt. 6:25–34; John 1:1–3; Acts 17:24–25; Col. 1:16–17; Rev. 4:11.

E. *God Preserver and Protector of Life*

Gen. 9:1–6; Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; Deut. 32:39; Job 10:8–12; Job 12:10; Job 31:15; Job 33:4–6; Ps. 22:9–11; Ps. 127:3–5; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 29:11; Amos 1:13–14; Matt. 5:21–22; Matt. 6:25–34; Luke 1:13–15; Luke 1:30–31, 36; Luke 1:44–45; Gal. 1:15–16.

F. *Fallenness of the World*

Gen. 3:1–19; Gen. 9:1–3; Job 31:33; Eccles. 7:29; Isa. 43:27; Hos. 6:7; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21–22; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14.

G. *God's Redemption*

Ps. 111:9; Ps. 130:7; Isa. 40:1–2; Isa. 53:1–6; Matt. 20:28; Acts 20:24; Rom. 3:24–26; Rom. 8:18–27; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Cor. 7:23; 2 Cor. 5:16–21; Gal. 1:4; Gal 2:20; Gal. 4:4–5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14, 20–22; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:12, 15; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 5:9–10.

H. *Church's Pastoral Ministry*

Matt. 14:13–21; Matt. 15:29–39; Matt. 19:27–30; Matt. 22:36–40; Mark 10:13–21; Mark 11:25–26; Luke 6:37–38; Luke 9:2; John 4:1–38; John 8:3–11; John 15:13; Acts 2:40–47; James 5:13–16.

I. *Affirmation of Women's Role by Scripture*

Gen. 1:26–28; Gen. 3:8–19; Joel 2:28–29; Matt. 28:1–10; Luke 1:46–55; Luke 8:1–3; Luke 10:38–42; John 4:7–42; Acts 2:17; Rom. 16:1–2, 7; Gal. 3:25–28.

J. Responsibility of Human Dominion and Choice

Gen. 1:28-30; Deut. 30:19-20; Josh. 24:15; Ps. 8:3-8; Isa. 7:15-16; Isa. 65:12; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:22; Heb. 2:5-9.

K. New Covenant

Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:19; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25-26; Heb. 8:10; Heb. 9:15; Heb. 12:24.

L. New Life in Christ

Matt. 5:1-7, 29; Luke 15:24; Rom. 6:2-23; Rom. 8:11; Rom. 8:21; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:16; 2 Cor. 5:16-17, 20; Gal. 4:7;

Gal. 5:16-26; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:1; Eph. 2:6; Eph. 2:15; Eph. 4:17-24; Eph. 6:13-18; Col. 3:1; Col. 3:10; Tit. 3:5; Rev. 3:12.

M. Image of the New Creation

Isa. 11:6-9; Isa. 65:17-25; Ezek. 37:11-14; Joel 2:28-29; Micah 4:1-4; Rom. 8:19-23a; Rev. 21:1-4; Rev. 22:1-5.

N. Justice and Righteousness

Isa. 1:16-17; Isa. 11:1-9; Isa. 58:5-14; Isa. 61:1-2; Jer. 22:13-17; Hos. 10:12; Amos 2:6-8; Amos 5:11-15, 21-24; Micah 3:1ff; Micah 4:1-4; Micah 6:6-8; Hab. 2; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:18-19; Luke 6:20-38.

The following recommendation from the Minority Report was adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992).

That every member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) resolve to look first, not to the government or

to national church headquarters to help those with problem pregnancies, but first of all to himself or herself, in the effort to discover what faithful Christians, mobilized by the love of Christ and working together in the local church, can do to solve the problems involved.