

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MEMPHIS TN

POSITION STATEMENT

Proposed Amendment No. 1 Tennessee Constitution

Our denomination, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, has published a Position Statement on Abortion that sets forth the EPC's position on the issue which we, the Session of Second Presbyterian Church, endorse.

As made clear in our denomination's position statement, there are many ways in which Christians may seek to protect unborn life and serve the needs of women, families and children in various circumstances. Political action is one of many methods of action.

The Session of Second Presbyterian Church wholeheartedly endorses our members' engagement in community, governmental and political issues - as citizens, as voters, as public servants, as candidates, and as office holders. We also affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures, and God's redemptive grace touch and inform every area of life, every issue of government and every political choice. However, we believe it is rarely appropriate or possible for Second Presbyterian Church to declare or endorse a single position in a contemporary election.

Despite the relevance of God's word to every area of life, there are some issues that resonate particularly with the mission of the church - defense of the vulnerable, promotion of justice, and protection of life are among them. The abortion issue involves great passion and conviction.

On November 4, 2014, the below proposed amendment to the Tennessee Constitution regarding regulation of abortion will be up for public vote. As with other political issues, we heartily encourage gospel-informed and gospel-motivated public engagement by our members on the amendment.

Our prayer for this and all elections is for God to work his mighty grace in all things through wise voters, good leaders, and a just government.

Approved, September 15, 2014

Shall Article I, of the Constitution of Tennessee be amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

Nothing in this Constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of an abortion. The people retain the right through their elected state representatives and state senators to enact, amend, or repeal statutes regarding abortion, including, but not limited to, circumstances of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest or when necessary to save the life of the mother.

POSITION PAPER ON ABORTION Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is convinced that the Bible strongly affirms the dignity and value of every human life based on what the Scriptures clearly teach:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:15 NIV)

“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.” (Psalm 139:15 NIV)

“Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name.” (Isaiah 49:1 NIV)

“for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.” (Luke 1:15 NIV)

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 1:41 NIV)

To further differentiate mankind from any other living creature, we read: *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* (Genesis 1:27 NIV)

Unlike any other created being, Scripture also teaches: *“Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”* (Genesis 2:7 NIV).

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, a confessional statement shared by most Reformed churches, forbids the taking of innocent life while demanding the preservation of life from the moment of conception through to natural death: *“The Sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.”* (Question 68)¹

“The Sixth Commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly... ” (Question 69)

Scripture teaches that we are not merely to avoid involvement in injustice. God’s people are called upon to speak for the oppressed and defenseless. The Scripture passages cited above are evidence that God accords human value and dignity to the unborn child.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church affirms that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. It attributes human personhood to the unborn child. This extends to the unborn child *ex utero* as no less a human being than the child in the mother’s womb.

Because we hold these convictions concerning the unborn child, we urge the promotion of legislation that brings our judicial and legal systems into line with the scriptural view on protecting the poor, the weak, and the defenseless.

Christians are called upon to be good citizens by impacting the State in positive ways. All citizens, both Christians and non-Christians, must have freedom of conscience on all private moral and ethical issues,

since God alone is Lord of the conscience. However, the issue of equal protection of life under the laws of the State is not a private but a public matter.

The Bible teaches that all persons and nations are responsible before God for their moral and ethical decisions, including those which relate to the preservation of human life.

In addition to prayers and general assistance, the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church urges that the following steps be implemented by the individuals, congregations, and judicatories in a concerted effort to provide substantial support for those impacted by problematic and/or unexpected pregnancies:

1. A woman facing a problematic pregnancy or an unexpected pregnancy should expect to receive support, love, acceptance and wise counsel from her pastor(s), counselor(s), physician(s) and fellow Christians. Regardless of the woman's decision, the Church should always provide compassionate biblical and spiritual guidance to that individual.
2. The Church must serve as a loving and supportive community to any man involved to inform and direct him in his personal responsibilities and obligations as the child's father.
3. The Church must be supportive of the woman who chooses life for the child of an unexpected pregnancy and must seek ways to support and care for those children carried to term through unexpected pregnancy.
4. The Church must serve as a loving and supportive community to those who have experienced physical, emotional, or spiritual wounds as a result of undergoing an abortion or placing a child for adoption.
5. Christians should individually and corporately oppose abortion (except under the most extreme of circumstances that endanger the physical life of the mother), and do everything in their power to provide support groups, para-church ministries and sponsoring agencies which offer viable alternatives to abortion.
6. The Church should declare to the world and teach its members that abortion should never be used as a convenience or a means of birth control.
7. The Church should actively oppose the killing of human embryos through the extraction of stem cells for medical research or treatment.
8. The Church should oppose the practice of producing more embryos by *in vitro* fertilization than would be implanted *in utero*, which would either be destroyed immediately or stored frozen with the strong practical likelihood of later destruction.

*Adopted by the 6th General Assembly, 1986
Amended by the 32nd General Assembly, 2012
Amended by the 33rd General Assembly, 2013*