

Thou ceaseless, unexhausted love, unmerited and free, delights our evil to remove and help our misery Thou waitest to be gracious still; thou dost with sinners bear, that, saved, we may Thy goodness feel and all Thy grace declare. Amen.

(Charles Wesley's Hymn: "Thy Ceaseless, Unexhausted Love")

BoD = The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 2008

BoR = The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church: 2008

Death Penalty

I. BoD: ¶ 164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

G) The Death Penalty—We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings. The United Methodist Church is deeply concerned about crime throughout the world and the value of any life taken by a murder or homicide. We believe all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable. When governments implement the death penalty (capital punishment), then the life of the convicted person is devalued and all possibility of change in that person's life ends. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that the possibility of reconciliation with Christ comes through repentance. This gift of reconciliation is offered to all individuals without exception and gives all life new dignity and sacredness. For this reason, we oppose the death penalty (capital punishment) and urge its elimination from all criminal codes.

H) Criminal and Restorative Justice—To protect all persons from encroachment upon their personal and property rights, governments have established mechanisms of law enforcement and courts. A wide array of sentencing options serves to express community outrage, incapacitate dangerous offenders, deter crime, and offer opportunities for rehabilitation. We support governmental measures designed to reduce and eliminate crime that are consistent with respect for the basic freedom of persons.

We reject all misuse of these mechanisms, including their use for the purpose of revenge or for persecuting or intimidating those whose race, appearance, lifestyle, economic condition, or beliefs differ from those in authority. We reject all careless, callous, or discriminatory enforcement of law that withholds justice from persons with disabilities and all those who do not speak the language of the country in which they are in contact with the law enforcement. We further support measures designed to remove the social conditions that lead to crime, and we encourage continued positive interaction between law enforcement officials and members of the community at large.

In the love of Christ, who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole. Restorative justice grows out of biblical authority, which emphasizes a right relationship with God, self, and community. When such relationships are violated or broken through crime, opportunities are created to make things right.

Most criminal justice systems around the world are retributive. These retributive justice systems profess to hold the offender accountable to the state and use punishment as the equalizing tool for accountability. In contrast, restorative justice seeks to hold the offender accountable to the victimized person, and to the disrupted community. Through God's transforming power, restorative justice seeks to repair the damage, right the wrong, and bring healing to all involved, including the victim, the offender, the families, and the community. The Church is transformed when it responds to the claims of discipleship by becoming an agent of healing and systemic change.

Abortion

II. BoD: ¶ 161.

II. THE NURTURING COMMUNITY

J) Abortion—The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.

We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection.

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption. (See ¶ 161.L.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.

K) Ministry to Those Who Have Experienced an Abortion—We urge local pastors to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with post-abortion stress. We further encourage local churches to make available contact information for counseling agencies that offer programs to address post-abortion stress for all seeking help.

L) Adoption—Children are a gift from God to be welcomed and received. We recognize that some circumstances of birth make the rearing of a child difficult. We affirm and support the birth parent(s) whose choice it is to allow the child to be adopted. We recognize the agony, strength, and courage of the birth parent(s) who choose(s) in hope, love, and prayer to offer the child for adoption. In addition, we also recognize the anxiety, strength, and courage of those who choose in hope, love, and prayer to be able to care for a child. We affirm and support the adoptive parent(s)' desire to rear an adopted child as they would a biological child. When circumstances warrant adoption, we support the use of proper legal procedures. When appropriate and possible, we encourage open adoption so that a child may know all information and people related to them, both medically and relationally. We support and encourage greater awareness and education to promote adoption of a wide variety of children through foster care, international adoption, and domestic adoption. We commend the birth parent(s),

the receiving parent(s), and the child to the care of the Church, that grief might be shared, joy might be celebrated, and the child might be nurtured in a community of Christian love.

I. BoD: ¶ 162.

III. THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

K)Population—Since the growing worldwide population is increasingly straining the world’s supply of food, minerals, and water and sharpening international tensions, the reduction of the rate of consumption of resources by the affluent and the reduction of current world population growth rates have become imperative. People have the duty to consider the impact on the total world community of their decisions regarding childbearing and should have access to information and appropriate means to limit their fertility, including voluntary sterilization. We affirm that programs to achieve a stabilized population should be placed in a context of total economic and social development, including an equitable use and control of resources; improvement in the status of women in all cultures; a human level of economic security, health care, and literacy for all. We oppose any policy of forced abortion or forced sterilization.

Fertility / Infertility

II. BoR: GENETICS

¶ 3181. New Developments in Genetic Science

VI. Affirmations/Recommendations/Conclusions

B. Medical recommendations

1. Testing and Treatment

e. We call for a ban on medical and research procedures that intentionally generate “waste embryos” that will knowingly be destroyed when the medical procedure or the research is completed. The exception to this is when ova (eggs) are being collected for use in in vitro fertilization. A woman is at risk for complications each time drugs are given to stimulate ovulation and ova are removed. Obtaining and fertilizing multiple ova may be justified to avoid the necessity of multiple attempts to obtain ova. The first attempt at IVF results in a living child less than 30% of the time thus making multiple attempts necessary.

III. BoR: 8003. Ethics of Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Preamble

The following statement addresses the ethical implications of using human embryos as a source of stem cells for research. It also examines in vitro fertilization procedures, as they are the source of most of the embryos that are presently used for research. This statement does not explore in detail other kinds of stem cell research, but finds no moral objections to research involving stem cells derived from adult cells or umbilical cord blood. The United Methodist Church has made a commitment to consider all issues in light of concerns for the welfare of all people and the just distribution of resources. In light of that, we wish to state at the outset our conviction that Christians are called to use their resources to meet the basic health care needs of all people. We reaffirm our theological grounding on these issues as found in Section II of the 2004 Book of Resolutions, Resolution #102 —“New Developments in Genetic Science.”

Description of In vitro fertilization

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a clinical practice in which a woman’s ovaries are hyper-stimulated to release several eggs, which are extracted and subsequently fertilized in a laboratory dish. This is for the purpose of creating embryos to be introduced into the uterus in the hope of implantation, gestation, and eventual birth. Current practice usually involves the extraction of up to 15-16 eggs for fertilization. The resulting embryos that are judged most viable are either introduced into the womb in the initial attempt or frozen and stored for possible later use. Some of the embryos are judged to be less viable than others and are discarded. (Those stored embryos that are not later used become the “excess embryos” whose use as a source of embryonic stem cells is currently under discussion.)

Concerns Regarding the Status of Human Embryos

A human embryo, even at its earliest stages, commands our reverence and makes a serious moral claim on us, although not a claim identical to that of a more developed human life. For this reason we should not create embryos with the intention of destroying them, as in the creation of embryos for research purposes. Neither should we, even for reproductive purposes, produce more embryos than we can expect to introduce into the womb in the hope of implantation.

We recommend the following guidelines to minimize the overproduction of embryos:

- We urge clinicians and couples to make the determination of how many eggs to fertilize and implant on a case-by-case basis.
- Only enough embryos should be produced to achieve one pregnancy at a time.
- We insist that rigorous standards of informed consent regarding the procedures, the physical and emotional risks, and the associated ethical issues be applied to all reproductive technologies. This is especially important regarding the disposition of “excess” embryos and should be the norm of practice around the world.

IV. Scriptures:

A. Death Penalty

- i. Romans 12:9-21
- ii. Matthew 5:38-42 (see also 43-48)
- iii. 2 Corinthians 5:18
- iv. Maybe Exodus 20:13 or Deuteronomy 5:17
- v. Others?

B. Abortion

- i. Maybe Exodus 20:13 or Deuteronomy 5:17
- ii. Others?

C. Fertility / Infertility

- i. Ideas?