

The position of Central Christian Church regarding the issue of abortion is that human life begins at the point of conception, and that voluntary abortion is therefore the murdering of an innocent person. All sin, even murder, can be forgiven because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ, so our message to those who have had abortions is one that emphasizes the seriousness of sin and the availability of God's grace to all.

We have come to the conviction that life begins at conception because of our understanding of God's Word. The Old Testament legislated that if two fighting men hit a pregnant woman and cause a miscarriage the punishment was "life for life" (Exodus 21:22-25). David said in Psalm 139, "for you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:13-16). The baby in Elizabeth's womb (John the Baptist) "leaped for joy" when Elizabeth saw Mary and heard the good news that Mary would bear the Christ child (Luke 1:44). The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that we are human and have a human soul even before we are born.

Scientific discoveries in the modern era have confirmed the truth of God's Word. We now know that there is no organizational change needed for an embryo to become a fully formed human being. At the point of conception, something inexplicable - almost miraculous- occurs. The egg and sperm die and completely new organism is born - an organism which only needs the right environment to become a fully formed human being. Now more than ever we can be confident that life truly begins at conception and that abortion is taking the life of a human being.

Meanwhile, the practice of abortion has become increasingly prevalent in our society. Twenty-seven to thirty-three percent of all pregnancies end in abortion. Abortion is no longer a last resort in a dire situation, but is often a preferred method of birth control. The most common reasons people give for choosing abortion are the high cost of raising children, the interference children cause in one's lifestyle, the burden of single parenting, and pressure from sexual partners to terminate the pregnancy. There have been innumerable consequences of this devaluing of human life. For example, since the legalization of abortion, child abuse has increased 400-500 percent in the United States.

The Bible says that sex is to be reserved for marriage because of the intimacy of the sexual relationship and the prospect that a child will result. Scripture and experience both teach that the healthiest environment for child rearing is

a loving, two-parent home. Seventy percent of abortions take place in the wombs of unmarried women. The relationship between sexual promiscuity and abortion is clearly correlative. A person should not engage in sexual relations unless he or she is willing and able to support the life of a child. Children are intended to be a blessing from God to a loving husband and wife. The only birth control method with 100 percent surety is abstinence.

Even so, when an unmarried person becomes pregnant, God's grace can still cover that sin and bring good out of evil. The unmarried parents may decide they are mature enough to care for the child, get married, and raise the child together. Grandparents may step into help. And adoption is often a difficult but loving option for the parents of these children. There are hundreds of thousands of married couples on adoption waiting lists who would love to adopt and love a baby that someone else was unable to care for.

Central Christian Church is attempting to respond to the abortion issue with both truth and love. It is our conviction that the church should serve as a conscience in the community, speaking out about moral issues from a biblical perspective. We are convinced that abortion on demand should not have been legalized in 1973 and that our communities have suffered because of that poor judicial decision. However, we also acknowledge that repairing the damage that has been done may require many complex political maneuvers that could sap our energies and take us away from our primary mission. The best and perhaps fastest way to stop abortions is not through legislation but by winning people to Jesus Christ and changing one heart at a time.

In addition to speaking out about legislative issues, we at Central feel a strong call to minister to those who find themselves dealing with a crisis pregnancy. We do our best to connect those in need to local crisis pregnancy centers in the St. Petersburg area which offer ultrasounds, pregnancy tests, maternity clothing and pre-abortion counseling for expectant parents. These centers not only offer alternatives to abortion, but also lend ongoing support and encouragement to those in need. We also support and encourage the members of our church who are involved in adoption efforts both at home and abroad.