

Island ECC Positional Paper

# Sanctity of Life

The issue of the **Sanctity of Life** touches us on many levels, from ethical philosophy, matters of law, medical science, spiritual conviction to personal and emotional involvement. This paper, while not taking a political or legal position, has the purpose of stating the Christian principles which guide Island ECC in its **affirmation of the dignity and value of every human life**.

Christians considering any issues regarding human life must be clear on foundational biblical truths.

The Bible affirms that **all creation belongs and matters to the Creator** (Psalm 104:31) and none more so than humans (Psalm 139:13-16). The term 'sanctity of life' literally means a 'life set aside' and was developed within the Christian Church to establish the value placed on human life. The term is derived from a biblical understanding of the special status afforded by God to humans who are made in His image (Genesis 1:26) and the intimate relationship humans were to have with Him (Genesis 2). It is the indwelling presence of God that makes something or someone sacred; and the Bible asserts that human life is set apart as God's special possession. The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus reaffirms the sanctity and intrinsic value of every human life unconditionally in its relationship with God and, that therefore, humans have a duty to preserve life.

In addition to this, as explicitly revealed from Genesis 4 onwards, humans, in their fallen condition, can be duplicitous and careless in their attitude to God's creation generally, feeling free to take both human and animal life when it suits them and abusing the planet they were created to care for. It is this careless and corrupt posture towards human life and creation that, as Christians, we seek to reverse in order to come into alignment with the value that God himself puts upon human life.

Multiple complex issues, that are raised in society, have led many Christians to define their position in light of the term Sanctity of Life. These issues are varied from euthanasia to special needs. As a church, we affirm that life, even in suffering and pain or when there are limited mental, physical or emotional abilities, is valuable and should be honored. On the latter, we believe that the church should visibly protect and nurture all special needs, and provide as much as possible ministries that accommodate these people.

Among all issues related to the sanctity of life, abortion is the most frequently discussed. Therefore, **this paper focuses on the issue of abortion and the right to life of the unborn**.

We believe that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. Although the specific beginning of human life is acknowledged to be medically complex, the bible affirms that the unborn have intrinsic value before God and attributes human personhood to the unborn child.

*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5*

*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*

*Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

From these statements, we can establish that abortion is not a viable option for the believer.

- We hold that if a pregnancy is unplanned or unwanted, every option should be explored to deliver the new life into the world. We recognise that there may be exceptions to this position, such as when the mother's health is at severe or terminal risk.



- We believe that unborn babies who have been identified with special needs should be carried through to full-term and delivered.
- We also recognise the responsibility of the church community to be supportive in the following practical and spiritual ways:
  1. Women facing problematic or unplanned pregnancies should receive loving acceptance and counsel from pastors, counsellors, physicians and Christian friends who, in providing compassionate biblical, practical and spiritual guidance, are able to support them during and following the decision-making process.
  2. Men who have been involved in causing unwanted pregnancy and who respond with indifference should be confronted with their responsibilities and role in such crises.
  3. The church community must support and nurture women who decide to carry an unwanted pregnancy to full term, providing such practical guidance and advice to ensure a secure and loving environment for the growth of the child.
  4. The church community must seek ways to support, value and care for all children who result from unwanted pregnancies.
  5. The church community must serve as an accepting therapeutic community to those who have experienced physical, emotional or spiritual wounds from abortion, or who have made a fostering and/or adoption plan for a child.
  6. The church community should declare to the world and teach about the sanctity and intrinsic value of human life as understood in this paper and that abortion must never be used as a convenience or a means of birth control.
  7. Individual Christians and the church community are encouraged to reject abortion as a valid option irrespective of its legal status and to do everything in their power to provide supportive communities and practical alternatives to abortion.

These propositions are most appropriately expressed and proclaimed by those who are profoundly aware of their continuous need for the mercy and forgiveness of God. The church community as a whole as well as its individual members must act with Christlike grace, love and compassion to all those facing difficult decisions regarding life.