

HUMAN LIFE

Adopted by the General Board in 2014

Humanity was created in and exists as the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Humans were created to live eternally, though death entered the race as a result of the sin condition, which resulted from the Fall. (See Genesis 2:17; 3:3; Romans 5:12.) Accordingly, death is the ultimate and common foe of humanity. The redemptive work of Christ conquered death and brings hope of eternal life. The ultimate victory over sin will be the final abolishment of death. (See II Timothy 1:10; I Corinthians 15:26, 54-55; Revelation 21:4.) Since God is the giver of life, and since Jesus Christ came to redeem life, Christians are to be champions of life. (See Matthew 16:18; John 1:4; 10:10; I John 1:1-2; Genesis 2:7.) As Christians our highest allegiance is to God and to His kingdom. We are called to live a life that adheres to Kingdom principles, and these sometimes transcend the morality of our society and restrain us from fully engaging in things allowed by the laws of our secular governments.

We condemn the elective taking of human life whether by murder, abortion, infanticide, or euthanasia. Although there are circumstances that may require difficult choices in order to save the life of a pregnant woman, we wholeheartedly condemn elective abortions. (See Position Paper on Abortion.) And while there is no obligation to use artificial means to prolong the life of one who is terminally ill, we do not object to such measures so long as they are aiding in natural processes and are compassionate measures that minimize suffering. However, we wholeheartedly disapprove of assisted suicide, euthanasia, or any elective procedures intended to terminate a life prematurely.

In situations of self-defense and defense of the innocent and helpless, we urge restraint. The goal should be to use the minimal force necessary to stop the aggressor without the intention of causing death.

While many view capital punishment as divinely ordained justice, we recognize that a diversity of opinions exists in our movement. We urge that opinions be rooted in justice, not revenge.

We recognize a state's right and obligation to maintain law and order, to mete out justice, and to protect its citizen from aggression. Human government is ultimately derived from God (Romans 13:1-4), and God requires justice. We urge those who serve as officers of the peace to carry out their duties on behalf of society with respect for life and to exercise restraint when the use of force is required.

We further recognize that due to sin and the hardness of people's hearts, war may be necessary, and circumstances may lead Christians to conclude that a particular war is just. The world community must band together to defend against unprovoked acts of aggression, genocide, and slaughter of innocents. However, due to the complexity of the political process and countless details that are unavailable to the public, the true motivations and reasons for war are often concealed from soldiers on all sides. Accordingly, military personnel are often placed in a position to take human life based on reasons unknowable to them or even reasons that do not promote justice. This potentially places Christians in the armed services in the precarious

predicament of following an order for which there may not be moral justification to take human life on the behalf of a human government. With the spread of Christianity around the world, Christian soldiers on all sides could be in the tragic position of taking the lives of other Christians. We recognize there are diverse opinions on these matters among our constituents, and we also recognize a strong tradition of conscientious objection that has been part of the Oneness Pentecostal movement. While we support this tradition, we urge those who believe it is consistent with their Christian conviction to serve in the armed services to do so only after thoughtful and prayerful reflection, to carry out their duties with respect for life, to exercise restraint when the use of force is required, and to comply with all pertinent laws, at the same time recognizing that the laws of God transcend the laws of secular governments.