

Value Statement Writing Team: April 10, 2016 (Revised November 21, 2016)

At the First Presbyterian Church of Conroe, we Value the Biblical Witness of Life.

The Biblical Witness includes:

Psalm 82:4 “Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Luke uses the same word (brephos) to describe a child before and after birth.

Luke 1:41-42 “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, **the baby** leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (ESV)

Luke 2:12 “And this will be a sign for you: you will find **a baby** wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” (ESV)

Luke 18:15 “Now they were bringing even **infants** to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.” (ESV)

Witness of Life beginning before birth:

Luke 1:41-42 “And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, **the baby** leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (ESV)

Genesis 25:23 “And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” (ESV)

Psalm 139:13-16 “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” (ESV)

Isaiah 49:1 “Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. (ESV)

Jeremiah 1:5 “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.” (ESV)

Exodus 21:22-25 “When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.” (ESV)

While our Confessional Heritage is not over-run with statements on this matter, neither is our heritage silent:

The Larger Catechism, Q. 135 (BOC, 7.245)

Q. 135. What are the duties required in the Sixth Commandment?

A. The duties required in the Sixth Commandment are: all careful studies and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others, by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any;7 by just defense thereof against violence; patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit, a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreation; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behavior, forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Note: The Sixth Commandment states, “You shall not murder.” Exodus 20:13.

The Work of the Congregation and our Mission Partners support this value:

First Presbyterian Church of Conroe works with many missions, both local and worldwide, that are supportive of this value. Our support is both financial, and includes the volunteer activities of our congregation as well.

The Practical realities of our Values are found in the world around us. More than that, it can even be found in our lives. Our value of the Biblical Witness for Life is an important part of our work to help people through difficult situations.

What do we say to someone who says, “I Have a Friend....?” Or, even more poignant, to another person who says, “I have a problem?”

Our nation’s courts have ruled – clearly and consistently – that in many circumstances, a pregnant woman has a choice as to whether or not she will continue with the pregnancy. As a church, we are not making political statements on one side or another of this powerful debate. But, as a church, our faith has something important for us to say.

In reality, some women contemplate the voluntary termination of a pregnancy, but they do so without the sense that they really have much of a choice. The loss of a lifestyle, the threatened loss of a home, of financial provision or of a future long dreamed of, may be very real considerations for someone facing an unplanned pregnancy.

The work and witness of the First Presbyterian Church of Conroe is to support the Biblical witness for life. Working with Mission Partners, we work as a congregation and as individuals to provide the resources to support a choice to carry a child through a full-term pregnancy. Once the child has been born, we work with our Mission Partners to support options for foster care, adoption, and even the choice to raise a child.

If you, or a friend, is ever feeling alone and confronting a difficult decision about a pregnancy, remember that you are not alone.

What do we say to someone who says, “I Have a Past....?”

The statistical reality is what it is. In the decades since courts have ruled that women may choose to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy, many women have chosen to do so. Many of these women have made their way into this and other congregations. To us, the church is something like a hospital for broken and sinful people.

While it’s difficult to hear that a decision with such finality is inconsistent with the Biblical Witness – that it is sinful – there is much more to the Biblical witness. There is forgiveness – complete forgiveness – available through Jesus Christ. Jesus was talking to a group of people when he referred to himself as the Good Shepherd. Comparing himself to others, Jesus said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:9-10)