

## Report of the Abortion Statement Working Group

### Basic Information

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft Resolution</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To present to Conference this updated statement.</li> <li>2. To recommend that no further work on a Methodist Statement on Abortion is required at this time.</li> <li>3. To direct the Joint Public Issues Team to bring to the attention of Council any developments in Science or Law that may indicate amendments to the Statement are required.</li> </ol>
<b>Alternative Options</b>	To ask that a new Statement on Abortion is prepared under S0129

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	To allow the existing Methodist position on abortion to be communicated in a way that is appropriate to the modern context.
<b>Main Points</b>	A proposed updated statement is attached alongside the 1976 Abortion Statement to allow comparison. A recommendation to not initiate a SO129 process to write a new statement on abortion, with reasons.
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	<b>Methodist Council Sept 2009</b> 13. The Working Group shall: 1. Update the language and reference to the scientific and social/political context in the 1976 Conference Statement on Abortion, consulting with the Faith and Order Committee during the course of its work, and 2. Bring recommendations to Conference 2010 as to whether a further piece of work revising the position of the Methodist Church should be undertaken
<b>Consultations</b>	Members of the Ecumenical Working Party that produced Created in God's Image report.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	None
<b>Financial</b>	A SO129 Statement of Conference would require a large Working Party, and 2 year consultation process before the final Statement can be brought to Conference. This will have substantial resource implications for the Joint Public Issues Team.
<b>Personnel</b>	None
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>External</b>	Abortion is an issue closely monitored by a number of groups. Our position may provoke comment, praise or criticism from external secular and religious groups.
<b>Risk</b>	Abortion is a highly polarising issue. A substantial change in position will provoke potentially divisive debate inside and outside the Church, which requires pastorally sensitive handling.

# Report of the Abortion Statement Working Group

## 1.0 Background.

The Report to the 2008 Methodist Conference, Created in God's Image, included the following recommendation:

*That in the light of the changed social and political context and scientific and medical developments including the gestational age at which a premature infant may survive, there should be further work on the issues surrounding abortion, revision of the Methodist Statement on Abortion (1976), and a working group should be established for this purpose.*

- 1.1 The authors of "Created in God's Image" felt that language used in the 1976 Statement on abortion was no longer appropriate. There was no indication that the underlying theological position was felt to be no longer appropriate. It was therefore proposed that the statement should be updated.
- 1.2 September 2009 Council agreed that a working party be set up to assess the feasibility of updating the 1976 statement into modern language as well as to the review the need for a new statement on Abortion to be prepared under the processes set out in SO129.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 The remit of this paper, at the instigation of the Methodist Council, is to offer an updated Methodist Statement on Abortion and to make recommendations as to the need for a completely new statement.

## 2.0 Tasks undertaken by Working Party.

- 2.1 The working party met twice and was in regular electronic contact between meetings.
- 2.2 The initial work identified that the 1976 Statement contained outdated use of language around gender, disability and the medical professions. Relevant laws have been amended since 1976, and some of the scientific information given in the statement needed updating.
- 2.3 The approach used by the group was to identify the outdated parts of the statement and to replace them line by line, allowing the updated statement to have the same structure as the original.
- 2.4 In most cases it was possible to update words or phrases but in a number of cases rewrites of complete paragraphs were required. Efforts were made not to change the underlying ethical position of the statement during the update process.

## 3.0 Working party Recommendations.

- 3.1 Attached to this paper is the proposed updated statement. An introduction briefly explaining the context of the updated statement is included, as is an Appendix relating this work to the "Created in God's Image" Conference report. Neither of these additional

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<sup>1</sup> Methodist Council Paper MC0971, 21-22 September 2009

papers is intended to have the weight of a Statement of Conference but is included to assist individuals who wish to explore these issues in the context of Methodist belief.

- 3.2 The original 1976 Statement is included for comparison. It is the working party's view that neither Council, nor the working party, has the authority to overturn a Statement of Conference, and that the two statements put the same ethical position but in language appropriate to their context.
- 3.3 The working party recommends that no new statement is needed for a number of reasons.
- The updated statement provides an accessible and accurate representation of the views Methodists have held for some time.
  - The group has not been able to discern any movement to alter the underlying theology or its application as presented in the 1976 Statement.
  - The debate on abortion elicits very strong and opposing views, both inside and outside the Church. Unless there is the realistic prospect of substantially changing the Church's theological and ethical position on abortion the bureaucratic four year process of writing and consulting on a new Methodist Statement would be an unhelpful and potentially divisive way of exploring this issue.
  - Scientific advances have transformed the practice of prenatal medicine and enabled a wide range of new techniques which are discussed in the 2008 report accepted by Conference "Created in God's Image." The 1976 Abortion Statement takes the position that abortion should not be permitted once life is likely to be viable. Scientific advances have altered the point at which viability occurs, and this may continue to change, however the underlying ethical position remains unaltered.
  - A Statement of Conference under SO129 would in practice require both a Working Party to draft the statement and a 2 year Connexion-wide consultation process. This will have significant resource implications for the Joint Public Issues Team and be unlikely to be completed before 2014.

#### **4.0 Proposed resolutions.**

- 4.1 To present to Conference the attached updated statement to be known as "1976 Abortion Statement (updated 2010)".  
*Should Council not accept the new statement it would be helpful to know if it is their view that a completely new statement is needed, or if further work on the existing statement is required.*
- 4.2 To recommend that no further work on a Methodist Statement on Abortion is required at this time.
- 4.3 To direct the Joint Public Issues Team to bring to the attention of Council any developments in science or law that may indicate amendments to the Statement are required.

## **Introduction to the updated Methodist Statement on Abortion**

In 1976 the Methodist Church of Great Britain approved a statement on Abortion, applying Methodist theology to this social issue in the context of British society and law at the time. In 2010 this updated statement was produced applying the same theology to the current context. In the intervening time the law has been amended in minor ways and technology has made both abortion and diagnosis of fetal abnormality technically much easier. Other changes in this update reflect our evolving use of language and understandings of gender and disability.

### **Common Principles within these Statements**

This updated statement reaffirms that human life is created at the moment of conception and is from that moment to be valued as a being made in God's image. It also recognises that as the fetus develops, its relationships with others, especially its mother, also develop. When that relationship ceases to be one of absolute dependence, currently at around 20 weeks gestation, abortion is unacceptable. The exception to this is when continuing the pregnancy will endanger the mother or when the fetus is found to be seriously impaired.

If an abortion is to happen, there are many reasons why it is preferable for this to occur as early as possible in the pregnancy; preferably before 12 weeks.

The statements wrestle with issues of human frailty and sin and the complexity of human behaviours that lead to a decision to abort a fetus. For some the circumstances in which they find themselves expecting a child are intolerable and it can be the least bad option to undergo an abortion. The Church's role is to stand beside people in these situations and to work both to understand and to reduce the incidence of such sets of circumstances.

The reasons for requesting abortion are many and complex and not always a result of human frailty. Whilst abortion may, in certain circumstances be seen as necessary, it is always regrettable and every effort should be made to reduce the need for recourse to it.

## **A METHODIST STATEMENT ON ABORTION**

**Adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1976 and updated in 2010**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The question of abortion continues to exercise the thought, conscience and compassion of men and women. The area of the debate at this stage is limited to the period between conception and birth.

2. Abortion has at once moral, medical, legal, sociological, philosophical, demographic and psychological aspects. In addition, Christians will seek to bring to the discussion insights and emphases which derive from their faith.

### **THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

3. The Christian believes that all humans are made in the image of God, and the fetus is undoubtedly part of this continuum of human existence. For that reason it is to be valued and revered and should be treated with loving care.

Humans are commanded to love their neighbours, and to share in God's love as an integral part of these relationships. The fetus's relationship with its mother is unique. This progresses

through complete dependence for life, to complete dependence for flourishing, and after birth to the dependence that a child has on loving adults, usually including its mother. During this gradual process other relationships, often with its father, but also with extended family and friends, also begin to grow. As the child's body, mind and independent presence develop so do the relationships of others with it as an individual human made in the image of God.

The matter of abortion must be considered within the context of these relationships. Primarily this will be the relationship with the mother and its level of dependence, but will also consider those others who will properly be affected.

4. It is of the essence of the Christian Gospel to stand alongside and care for those who are facing crises and who find themselves unable to take decisions about their situation. It also respects the conscientious decisions of medical professionals to object or take part in carrying out abortions.

5. In considering the question of abortion, Christians must never overlook the reality of human sin within individuals, within relationships and within society. This impairs judgement with the result that the abortion decision may be made in a context of selfishness, carelessness or exploitation. Human sin is also seen in attitudes which foster any debasing of human sexuality or are complacent about social injustice and deprivation. In facing these dimensions of failure and frailty, Christians will work for spiritual renewal and a deeper understanding of the nature of human responsibility in considering abortion.

## **THE ISSUES INVOLVED**

6. There is a spectrum of views in the abortion debate. Some hold the view that the importance of all forms of human life means that the fetus has an inviolable right to life and that there must therefore be no external interference with the process which will lead to the birth of a living human being. Others hold the view that, as the fetus is totally dependent on the mother for at least the first twenty weeks of the pregnancy, she has an absolute right to decide whether or not to continue the pregnancy. For many these views are held in an uncomfortable tension. A further view is that a child has the right to be born healthy and wanted, although we have an evolving view of what the term healthy means.

7. These views all add points of real value. The significance of human life must not be diminished. In pregnancy the fetus is physically dependent on the mother and may pose a threat to her life, capacities or existing responsibilities. In abortion it is necessary to face stark conflicts of interests and to acknowledge that others are also involved – the father, the existing children of the family, the extended family and society generally.

8. From the time of fertilisation, the fetus is a separate organism, biologically and genetically identifiable as belonging to the human race. A few days after fertilisation, implantation takes place; it is significant that prior to that a very large number of fertilised ova perish. At some time after the third month, the movement of the fetus can be felt by the mother, an event which is a significant, perhaps crucial, moment for the mother. The stage of gestation at which the fetus is able to survive outside the womb has reduced as time has passed and medical technology improved.

9. There is never any moment from conception onwards when the fetus totally lacks human significance – a fact which may be overlooked in the pressure for abortion on demand. However this significance manifestly increases.

At the very least this suggests that no pregnancy should be terminated after the point when the aborted fetus would be viable. This stage has been reached by the 28<sup>th</sup> week, but babies have survived intact as early as 20 weeks. However, the earlier a baby is delivered the greater the chance of impairment, which increases significantly and progressively below 28 weeks.

It would be best to restrict all abortions to the first twenty weeks of pregnancy except where there is a direct physical threat to the life of the mother or when new information about serious impairment of the fetus becomes available after the twentieth week. There is a strong argument on physical, psychological and practical grounds that any abortions should be carried out in the first three months wherever possible.

10. Because every fetus has significance, the abortion decision must neither be taken lightly nor made under duress. It is for this reason, as well as in her own long-term interests, that the mother and her family where appropriate should receive adequate counselling. This should enable them to understand what is involved in abortion, what are the alternatives to it and what are the considerations they should weigh before asking for termination. The skills of medical professionals from counsellors to consultants must therefore be offered. The provision of this service should be a duty laid by regulations on those approving abortions whether in the NHS or private abortion clinics. Abortion on demand is to be rejected.

### **Abortion Act 1967<sup>2</sup> (as amended by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990<sup>3</sup>)**

11. The present form of the Law is of value as it preserves the awareness of the significance of the fetus. It retains the basic statement that abortion is unlawful, but indicates criteria which sufficiently alter the situation as to make abortion permissible. The intention behind the Act is therefore to be welcomed as it reflects a sensitivity to the value of human life and also enables serious personal and social factors to be considered.

12. Abortion is often sought as a response to the prospect of bearing a child in intolerable situations. These situations include, for example:

- a. When a pregnancy may pose a direct threat to the life or health of the mother.
- b. The probability of the birth of a severely impaired child (where this may be predicted or diagnosed with an appreciable degree of accuracy)
- c. When considering the whole environment within which the family is living or is likely to live, there will be occasions when another child will add intolerable stresses to a family. There are social conditions in our country which are offensive to the Christian conscience, including those connected with bad housing and family poverty. These conditions must be improved. In intolerable circumstances such as these, abortion can be morally justifiable.

13. The Abortion Act continues to require clarification and refinement either by legislation or regulation. Abortions should be limited to the first twenty weeks of pregnancy save in the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/content.aspx?activeTextDocId=1181037>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1990/Ukpga\\_19900037\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts1990/Ukpga_19900037_en_1.htm)

exceptional cases to which reference has been made in paragraph 9. Counselling must be offered in all cases. Profit must never be the motivation for offering abortion; compassion for the fetus, mother and family must be the overriding concern. The criteria of the risk to the physical and mental health of the mother can be misused to allow abortion on demand. To assist in preventing this every effort should be made to ensure that those involved in taking decisions under this clause do so with integrity.

There is little doubt that the responsible interpretation of the Act and the proper provision of abortion is more likely to be secured if a high proportion of abortions are carried out by the public sector. The Methodist Church has urged this since 1966.

### **Concluding Statements**

14. Abortion must not be regarded as an alternative to contraception, nor is it to be justified merely as a method of birth control. The termination of any form of human life can never be regarded superficially and abortion should not be available on demand, but should remain subject to a legal framework, to responsible counselling and to medical judgement. Society must also be sensitive to the burden it places on professionals caring for women and their families by permitting abortion. It must fully respect the conscience of those in the medical profession who feel unable to carry out terminations; though, on their part, they have a responsibility to put women who approach them in touch with alternative sources of advice.

15. Human sexual relationships which are joyous, sensitive and responsible and which do not exploit others are to be celebrated and affirmed. The identity- in-mutuality which is inherent in the Christian understanding of marriage may be affirmed and expressed in sexual relationships. When such sexual relationships lead to conception there is a sense in which the parents participate in the creativity of God. However for some pregnancy is not perceived as joyful and creative but as disruptive and destructive and as a consequence abortion may be sought. Human beings are subject to sin and frailty, in this imperfect world individual and social relationships may be unhealthy and life-sapping rather than affirming and life-giving. All are in need of redemption.

The reasons for requesting abortion are many and complex and not always a result of human frailty. Whilst abortion may, in certain circumstances be seen as necessary, it is always regrettable and every effort should be made to reduce the need for recourse to it.

### **Appendix A. Provenance of this statement and its updated wording.**

In 2008 the Methodist Conference received the report 'Created in God's Image' which addressed the theological, ethical and social principles by which decision-making on technological and medical developments in issues concerning early human life is properly to be exercised.

Conference approved the recommendation that, in the light of the changed social and political context and scientific and medical developments including reduction in the gestational age at which a premature infant may survive, there should be further work on the issues surrounding abortion, revision of the Methodist Statement on Abortion (1976), and a working group should be established for this purpose (2008 Conference Daily Record 7/20).

The Working Group which produced the report brought this resolution as it was concerned that the language of the 1976 Statement on Abortion was inappropriate for current pastoral needs and the legislation, statistics and science to which it referred were thirty years out of date. It did not consider that it was necessary to reopen the Methodist Church's position on abortion which is at the heart of the Statement.

A formal process of revision would require the process as described in SO 129. This is a complex task unlikely to take less than four years. Such work would clearly impact on the rest of the work which can be undertaken by the Joint Public Issues Team.

The Working Group on Human Embryology and Early Human Life which wrote *Created in God's Image* did not intend to recommend that the Methodist position on abortion should be completely revisited, and it is unclear from the Conference debate that this is what was what Conference understood the resolution to mean.

All of this suggests that the Statement on Abortion should be updated rather than revised, and the Methodist Council (Paper MC/09/71) approved the following terms of reference at its meeting in September 2009:

The Working Group shall:

1. Update the language and reference to the scientific and social/political context in the 1976 Conference Statement on Abortion, consulting with the Faith and Order Committee during the course of its work, and
2. Bring recommendations to Conference 2010 as to whether a further piece of work revising the position of the Methodist Church should be undertaken.

In updating the text of the 1976 report the working group has identified and sought to remain true to the underlying theological and ethical convictions and to the official position of the Methodist Church that abortion should not occur after the life is viable outside of the womb.

The working group was also mindful of Paragraphs 23-35 of *Created in God's Image* and offers some of the words from that report to set the context for the updating of 'A Methodist Statement on Abortion'.

It has been argued elsewhere that it is not possible to determine the moment when personhood begins in the developmental continuum of the embryo and fetus<sup>4</sup>. It has also been argued in *Status of the Unborn Human* and elsewhere that the embryo is, from the moment of fertilisation, to be afforded human status. As such the embryo exists, grows and develops in the context of a complex network of relationships. If we recognize the human status of the embryo and fetus, then the general guiding principle has to be established that abortion constitutes the ending of human life. In adults there are occasions when the ending of human life is seen as the lesser of two (or more) evils, and a blanket statement against abortion is difficult to maintain. Certainly, abortion should never be undertaken lightly or without proper consideration. (paragraph 23)

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Status of the Unborn Human* 5.2.1

## **A METHODIST STATEMENT ON**

# **ABORTION**

**Adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1976**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The question of abortion continues to exercise the thought, conscience and compassion of men and women. The area of the debate at this stage is limited to the period between conception and birth.
2. Abortion has at once moral, medical, legal, sociological, philosophical, demographic and psychological aspects. In addition, the Christian will seek to bring to the discussion insights and emphases which derive from his faith.

### **THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

3. The Christian believes that man is a creature of God, made in the divine image, and that human life, though marred, has eternal as well as physical and material dimensions. All human life should therefore be revered. The fetus is undoubtedly part of the continuum of human existence, but the Christian will wish to study further the extent to which a fetus is a person. Man is made for relationships, being called to respond to God and to enter into a living relationship with him. Commanded to love their neighbours, Christians must reflect in human relationships their response to God's love. Although the fetus possesses a degree of individual identity, it lacks independence and the ability to respond to relationships. All *persons* are always our 'neighbours'; other beings may call forth our loving care. In considering the matter of abortion, therefore, the Christian asks what persons, or beings who are properly to be treated wholly or in part as persons, are involved and how they will be affected by a decision to permit or forbid abortion.
4. It is of the essence of the Christian Gospel to stand by and care for those who are facing crises and to help them to make responsible decisions of doctors and nurses who find themselves unable to take decisions about their situation. It also respects the conscientious part in carrying out abortions.
5. In considering the question of abortion, Christians must never overlook the reality of human sin. This impairs judgement with the result that the abortion decision may be made in a context of selfishness, carelessness or exploitation. Human sin is also seen in attitudes and institutions which foster any debasing of human sexuality or are complacent to social injustice and deprivation. In facing these dimensions of failure and sin, Christians will work for an experience of spiritual renewal and a deeper understanding of the nature of human responsibility in the response made to abortion.

### **THE ISSUES INVOLVED**

6. On one side of the abortion debate is the view which seeks to uphold the value and importance of all forms of human life by asserting that the fetus has an inviolable right to life and that there must be no external interference with the process which will

lead to the birth of a living human being. The other side of the debate emphasises the interests of the mother. The fetus is totally dependent on her for at least the first twenty weeks of the pregnancy and, it is therefore argued, she has a total right to decide whether or not to continue the pregnancy. It is further argued that a child has the right to be born healthy and wanted.

7. Both views make points of real value. On the one hand, the significance of human life must not be diminished; on the other hand, abortion is unique because of the total physical dependence of the fetus on the mother, to whose life, capacities or existing responsibilities the fetus may pose a threat of which she is acutely aware. It is necessary both to face this stark conflict of interests and to acknowledge that others are also involved – the father, the existing children of the family, the extended family and society generally.

8. From the time of fertilisation, the fetus is a separate organism, biologically identifiable as belonging to the human race and containing all the genetic information. It will naturally develop into a new living human individual. A few days after fertilisation, implantation (or nidation) has taken place; it is significant that in the period before nidation a very large number of fertilised ova perish. At some time after the third month, the 'quickening' occurs – an event which is of significant, perhaps crucial, moment for the mother. Not earlier than the 20<sup>th</sup> week, the fetus becomes viable, i.e. able to survive outside the womb if brought to birth.

9. There is never any moment from conception onwards when the fetus totally lacks human significance – a fact which may be overlooked in the pressure for abortion on demand. However the degree of this significance manifestly increases. At the very least this suggests that no pregnancy should be terminated after the point when the aborted fetus would be viable. This stage has been reached by the 28<sup>th</sup> week and possibly by the 24<sup>th</sup> or even earlier. It would, in fact, be best to restrict all abortions to the first twenty weeks of pregnancy except where there is a direct physical threat to the life of the mother or when new information about serious abnormality in the fetus becomes available after the twentieth week. There is indeed also a strong argument on physical, psychological and practical grounds to carry out abortions in the first three months wherever possible.

10. Because every fetus has significance, the abortion decision must neither be taken lightly nor made under duress. It is for this reason, as well as in her own long term interests, that the mother should receive adequate counselling. This should enable her to understand what is involved in abortion, what are the alternatives to it and what are the considerations she should weigh before asking for termination. The skills of social workers and the particular technique of counselling, as well as the responsible medical judgement of doctor and consultant, must therefore be engaged. The provision of this service should be a duty laid by administrative regulations on those approving abortions whether in the NHS or the private abortion clinics. This is another reason why abortion on demand is to be rejected.

## **THE ABORTION ACT 1967**

11. It is again to preserve the awareness of the significance of the fetus that the present form of the Abortion Act 1967 is of value. It retained the basic statement that abortion is unlawful, but indicated criteria which sufficiently altered the situation as to make abortion permissible. The intention behind the Act is therefore to be welcomed as

it reflects a sensitivity to the value of human life and also enables serious personal and social factors to be considered.

12. These factors include, for example, the occasion when a pregnancy may pose a direct threat to the life or health of the mother. The probability of the birth of a severely abnormal child (where this may be predicted or diagnosed with an appreciable degree of accuracy) also provides a situation in which parents should be allowed to seek an abortion. It is right to consider the whole environment within which the mother is living or likely to live. This will include the children for whom she is already responsible and there will be occasions when she is unable to add to heavy responsibilities she is already carrying. Again, there are social conditions in our country which are offensive to the Christian conscience, particularly those connected with bad housing and family poverty. These conditions must be improved; meanwhile it is clear that abortion is often sought as a response to the prospect of bearing a child in these and similarly intolerable situations. In the particular circumstances indicated in this paragraph, abortion is often morally justifiable.

13. The Abortion Act is nevertheless imperfect and requires clarification and amendment either by legislation or administrative regulations. Abortions should be limited to the first twenty weeks of pregnancy save in the exceptional cases to which reference has been made. Counselling must be offered in all cases. The profit motive must be reduced. There must be further consideration of the clause which allows abortion when the risks of continuing the pregnancy are greater than the risks in terminating it. This clause can be interpreted to justify abortion on demand. Unless the medical profession or suitable administrative regulations can ensure that this clause is not used alone to authorise abortion on demand, the difficult task of amending the Act at this point must be attempted. There is little doubt that the responsible interpretation of the Act and the proper provision of abortion is more likely to be secured if a high proportion of terminations are carried out in NHS hospitals and not in private abortion clinics. The Methodist Church urged this in 1966. It again emphasises its concern.

14. Abortion must not be regarded as an alternative to contraception, nor is it to be justified merely as a method of birth control. The termination of any form of human life can never be regarded superficially and abortion should not be available on demand, but should remain subject to a legal framework, to responsible counselling and to medical judgement. The Church, with others, must help to provide more adequate counselling opportunities. Society must also be sensitive to the burden it places on medical personnel, and not least upon nurses, by permitting abortion very freely. It must fully respect the conscience of those in the medical profession who feel unable to carry out terminations; though, on their part, they have a responsibility to put women who approach them in touch with alternative sources of advice.

15. The problems raised by abortion can be finally resolved only by a new and sustained effort to understand the nature of human sexuality and to encourage expressions of sexual relationships which are joyous, sensitive and responsible, and which do not tend to exploit others. Christians believe that in conception and birth, parents are pro-creators with God of new human life. They also affirm in the whole of their sexual relationships that identity-in-mutuality which is inherent in marriage and which argues so strongly for the permanence of the marriage commitment. In an imperfect world, where both individuals and society will often fail, abortion may be seen as a necessary way of mitigating the results of these failures. It does not remove the urgent need to seek remedies for the causes of these failures.