

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE  
 Mid-Atlantic District Resolutions Committee  
*Manual* 31-31.6, 903.19 (new paragraph)

RESOLVED that *Manual* section C. Sanctity of Human Life and *Manual* paragraphs 31-31.6 be deleted as follows:

[C. Sanctity of Human Life

31. The Church of the Nazarene believes in the sanctity of human life and strives to protect against abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, and the withholding of reasonable medical care to handicapped or elderly.

31.1. Induced Abortion. The Church of the Nazarene affirms the sanctity of human life as established by God the Creator and believes that such sanctity extends to the child not yet born. Life is a gift from God. All human life, including life developing in the womb, is created by God in His image and is, therefore, to be nurtured, supported, and protected. From the moment of conception, a child is a human being with all of the developing characteristics of human life, and this life is dependent on the mother for its continued development. Therefore, we believe that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception. We oppose induced abortion by any means, when used for either personal convenience or population control. We oppose laws that allow abortion. Realizing that there are rare, but real medical conditions wherein the mother or the unborn child, or both, could not survive the pregnancy, termination of the pregnancy should only be made after sound medical and Christian counseling.

Responsible opposition to abortion requires our commitment to the initiation and support of programs designed to provide care for mothers and children. The crisis of an unwanted pregnancy calls for the community of believers (represented only by those for whom knowledge of the crisis is appropriate) to provide a context of love, prayer, and counsel. In such instances, support can take the form of counseling centers, homes for expectant mothers, and the creation or utilization of Christian adoption services.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes that consideration of abortion as a means of ending an unwanted pregnancy often occurs because Christian standards of sexual responsibility have been ignored. Therefore the church calls for persons to practice the ethic of the New Testament as it bears upon human sexuality and to deal with the issue of abortion by placing it within the larger framework of biblical principles that provide guidance for moral decision making.

(Genesis 2:7, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; 21:12–16, 22–25; Leviticus 18:21; Job 31:15; Psalms 22:9; 139:3–16; Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15, 23–25, 36–45; Acts 17:25; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:16; 7:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6)

The Church of the Nazarene also recognizes that many have been affected by the tragedy of abortion. Each local congregation and individual believer is urged to offer the message of forgiveness by God for each person who has experienced abortion. Our local congregations are to be communities of redemption and hope to all who suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual pain as a result of the willful termination of a pregnancy.

(Romans 3:22–24; Galatians 6:1)

1           31.2. Genetic Engineering and Gene Therapy. The Church of the Nazarene  
2 supports the use of genetic engineering to achieve gene therapy. We recognize that  
3 gene therapy can lead to preventing and curing disease, and preventing and curing  
4 anatomical and mental disorders. We oppose any use of genetic engineering that  
5 promotes social injustice, disregards the dignity of persons, or that attempts to  
6 achieve racial, intellectual, or social superiority over others (Eugenics). We oppose  
7 initiation of DNA studies whose results might encourage or support human  
8 abortion as an alternative to term live birth. In all cases, humility, a respect for the  
9 inviolable dignity of human life, human equality before God, and a commitment to  
10 mercy and justice should govern genetic engineering and gene therapy.

11           (Micah 6:8)

12           31.3. Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Other Medical/Scientific  
13 Endeavors that Destroy Human Life after Conception. The Church of the Nazarene  
14 strongly encourages the scientific community to aggressively pursue advances in  
15 stem cell technology obtained from sources such as adult human tissues, placenta,  
16 umbilical cord blood, animal sources, and other non-human embryonic sources.  
17 This has the righteous end of attempting to bring healing to many, without  
18 violating the sanctity of human life. Our stand on human embryonic stem cell  
19 research flows from our affirmation that the human embryo is a person made in the  
20 image of God. Therefore, we oppose the use of stem cells produced from human  
21 embryos for research, therapeutic interventions, or any other purpose.

22           As future scientific advances make new technologies available, we  
23 strongly support this research when it does not violate the sanctity of human life or  
24 other moral, biblical laws. However, we oppose the destruction of human embryos  
25 for any purpose and any type of research that takes the life of a human after  
26 conception. Consistent with this view, we oppose the use, for any purpose, of  
27 tissue derived from aborted human fetuses.

28           31.4. Human Cloning. We oppose the cloning of an individual human  
29 being. Humankind is valued by God, who created us in His image, and the cloning  
30 of an individual human being treats that being as an object, thus denying the  
31 personal dignity and worth bestowed on us by our Creator.

32           (Genesis 1:27)

33           31.5. Euthanasia (Including Physician Assisted Suicide). We believe that  
34 euthanasia (intentionally ending the life of a terminally ill person, or one who has a  
35 debilitating and incurable disease that is not immediately life-threatening, for the  
36 purpose of ending suffering) is incompatible with the Christian faith. This applies  
37 when euthanasia is requested or consented to by the terminally ill person  
38 (voluntary euthanasia) and when the terminally ill person is not mentally  
39 competent to give consent (involuntary euthanasia). We believe that the historic  
40 rejection of euthanasia by the Christian church is confirmed by Christian  
41 convictions that derive from the Bible and that are central to the Church's  
42 confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. Euthanasia violates Christian  
43 confidence in God as the sovereign Lord of life by claiming sovereignty for  
44 oneself; it violates our role as stewards before God; it contributes to an erosion of  
45 the value the Bible places on human life and community; it attaches too much  
46 importance to the cessation of suffering; and it reflects a human arrogance before a  
47 graciously sovereign God. We urge our people to oppose all efforts to legalize  
48 euthanasia.

49           31.6. Allowing to Die. When human death is imminent, we believe that  
50 either withdrawing or not originating artificial life-support systems is permissible  
51 within the range of Christian faith and practice. This position applies to persons

1 who are in a persistent vegetative state and to those for whom the application of  
2 extraordinary means for prolonging life provide no reasonable hope for a return to  
3 health. We believe that when death is imminent, nothing in the Christian faith  
4 requires that the process of dying be artificially postponed. As Christians we trust  
5 in God’s faithfulness and have the hope of eternal life. This makes it possible for  
6 Christians to accept death as an expression of faith in Christ who overcame death  
7 on our behalf and robbed it of its victory.]  
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10 FURTHER RESOLVED that a new paragraph be added to the *Manual* appendix  
11 section (Current Moral and Social Issues) as follows:  
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13 903.19. The Church of the Nazarene affirms God as creator of all life.  
14 Because of this divine creation, all life is imbued with incalculable meaning and  
15 purpose. We affirm the sanctity of human life in all its forms and stages, both born  
16 and unborn striving to protect against any action leading to death or the diminution  
17 of life. Following the words and example of Jesus Christ, we recognize such  
18 actions are never justified and should be avoided at all costs; we affirm the call and  
19 example of our Savior to sacrifice everything, even our own lives, to prevent the  
20 death of another.

21 However, understanding that we live in a sinful world, one that is still  
22 being transformed by the saving love and grace of God, and that we, even as  
23 sanctified followers of Jesus Christ, often see “as through a glass dimly,” lacking  
24 knowledge and creativity, we humbly recognize that there may be times when the  
25 taking of life seems a regrettable option. In such instances we urge caution,  
26 admonishing our members to act only after thorough contemplation of available  
27 scientific, medical, scriptural, and pastoral guidance.

28 We further urge understanding and grace when the decisions and opinions  
29 of our brothers and sisters differ from our own. Recognizing that each person and  
30 situation is genuinely unique, we seek to understand and support each other with  
31 the life-changing love of God that will one day see all life restored in the beauty of  
32 new creation.

33 Knowing that such issues of life and death are often political, including,  
34 but not limited to abortion, capital punishment, end of life care, war, medical  
35 research, family planning, and defense of self and others, and recognizing that  
36 members of the Church of the Nazarene will not always agree on how to proceed  
37 specifically in every case, we challenge each other to deeper understanding,  
38 respect, and sacrifice of and for the precious, God-given gift of life. We make no  
39 position on these issues determinative of salvation, faith, or good standing so long  
40 as they are arrived at through intense study of Scripture, the input of the Church,  
41 and sincere examination of one’s conscience and the will of God.

42 (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:7, 9:6; Exodus 20:13; 21:12-16, 22-25; Leviticus  
43 18:21; Job 31:15; Psalms 22:9; 139:3-16; Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:5;  
44 Micah 6:8; Luke 1:15, 23-25, 36-45; Acts 17:25; Romans 3:22-24, Romans 12:1-2;  
45 1 Corinthians 6:16, 7:1ff.; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6)  
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48 REASONS:

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50 1. Our *Manual* cannot possibly hope to address every instance and  
51 permutation when life is endangered or our consciences are troubled. By

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having a general statement on the value of life and seeking to support each other with grace, we can continue to live in the unity of the Spirit as has been a hallmark of our denomination from its very inception. It also helps to prevent our denomination from association with particular political issues, parties, or movements that could hinder the propagation of the gospel around the world.

2. Our desire is to take out “contract language” and replace with “covenant language.”
3. Our current *Manual* statement on abortion strongly affirms the wrongness of taking life, but also includes the gracious direction, “Realizing that there are rare, but real medical conditions wherein the mother or the unborn child, or both, could not survive the pregnancy, termination of the pregnancy should only be made after sound medical and Christian counseling” (*Manual* paragraph 31.1). This resolution seeks to extend that thoughtful pastoral guidance to all issues where the taking of life is involved.
4. Few Christians are truly opposed to all killing. Some may be opposed to abortion and in favor of capital punishment (others may believe the opposite). Some may recognize the right of an individual or police office to kill in defense of themselves or others. Our *Manual* allows for both support of and service in the military, while also recognizing conscientious objectors. The taking of life is not as simple practically as it is ideologically. A resolution like this one recognizes the wrongness of killing, while leaving space for those who find themselves in unenviable positions to be accepted by and ministered to in the Church of the Nazarene. It is more complete than the piecemeal approach currently occupying section “C. Sanctity of Human Life.”