THE LOCAL CHURCH

Position Paper: Sanctity of Life

The Local Church Grand Rapids

A PASTORAL NOTE IN A CRITICAL CULTURAL MOMENT

We come to this subject not as political partisans, nor as speech-writers for a culture war, but as pastors and shepherds entrusted with God's people—real men and women living among real joys and real suffering. In the wake of Roe v. Wade being overturned in June 2022 — returning the question of abortion law to the states — we recognize that cultural and legal shifts do not eliminate the deep moral, spiritual, and human questions involved in the sanctity of life. What remains is our call to faithful witness and compassionate care in the midst of complexity.

GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND IN EVERY LIFE

Scripture reveals God as the Creator, Sustainer, and Lover of every human life — born and unborn:

A. "You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb… Your works are wonderful…" — Psalm 139:13-14

B. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you…" — Jeremiah 1:5

C. God's Word affirms that every human life is known and valued by Him from its earliest beginnings. For this reason, we affirm that human life begins at conception and that all life is sacred because it bears the image of God.

HISTORIC CHRISTIAN WITNESS

This conviction is consistent with the historic Christian tradition. From the earliest days of the Church, believers spoke clearly about the value of unborn life:

A. "You shall not procure an abortion…" — Didache (c. AD 70) (early Christian teaching condemning abortion as murder).

B. The Letter of Barnabas (c. AD 74) similarly instructed believers not to "slay the child by procuring abortion." Historical accounts of early Christian ethics reinforce that the Church opposed abortion and infant exposure in the ancient world.

C. Early church fathers such as Athenagoras and Tertullian described the fetus as a created being under God's care.

This continuity confirms Scripture's teaching: human life is a gift from God and therefore deserving of protection and dignity.

WHAT "PRO-LIFE" MEANS FOR US

At The Local Church, pro-life is far more than pro-birth. It means affirming the dignity and worth of every human life—from conception to natural death—within a consistent Christian ethic rooted in Scripture

and expressed through love of neighbor. A genuinely pro-life posture calls us to embodied faith, not abstract conviction.

Specifically, this means we are committed to:

- **Protecting and advocating for human life wherever it is most vulnerable** — from the unborn child to the poor, the disabled, the elderly, immigrants and refugees, and all those whose lives are easily overlooked, dismissed, or devalued. Every person bears the image of God and deserves dignity, protection, and care (Genesis 1:27; Proverbs 31:8–9).
- **Walking with women and families facing unplanned, complex, or traumatic pregnancies**, offering compassion, pastoral care, and tangible support rather than judgment. This includes those carrying grief, regret, anger, fear, confusion, or deep wounds caused by coercion, abuse, or sexual violence. We seek to be a community of refuge, truth, and healing—bearing burdens together and honoring the dignity of those who have been harmed (Galatians 6:2; Psalm 34:18).
- **Supporting and participating in life-giving pathways such as adoption and foster care**, reflecting the historic Christian commitment to care for vulnerable children and the biblical call to defend the fatherless (James 1:27). Research consistently shows that practicing Christians are significantly more likely than the general population to adopt or foster children, demonstrating care for life beyond birth (Barna Group; Christian Alliance for Orphans).

We also acknowledge that some circumstances—such as pregnancies that pose serious risks to a mother's life—are profoundly complex and painful. In these moments, a pro-life ethic requires prayerful discernment, humility, and deep pastoral care rather than simplistic answers. Faithfulness to Christ calls us to hold moral clarity together with compassion, recognizing the real human suffering involved.

THE GOSPEL POSTURE: GRACE AND TRUTH

We know this topic touches deeply personal experiences. Some reading this may carry grief, confusion, or unresolved pain connected to past decisions. Others may be walking through unplanned or challenging pregnancies right now. To all, we extend the good news of Jesus Christ: **God's grace is greater than our regrets, and His mercy meets us in our need. The gospel calls us not to condemnation but to hope, healing, and restoration in Christ.**

A pro-life position compels us toward love in action — not anger in argument.

THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IN ACTION

Despite cultural caricatures that Christians only care about life before birth, the broader story shows a robust tradition of Christian care for children and families. Research affirms that **practicing Christians are more than twice as likely to adopt children than the general population** — a tangible expression of caring for life beyond birth.

Christians also engage deeply with the realities of foster care and adoption. While engagement varies by context, significant proportions of churchgoers report involvement or encouragement by church leaders in adoption and foster care initiatives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH GR

At The Local Church GR we seek to live out our convictions not just in doctrinal affirmations but through **action and community partnership**. We believe the Church's calling is to love our city as Christ loved us — spending our strength on others with mercy and wisdom.

One concrete expression of this commitment is **The Belong Project**, one of our local ministries dedicated to supporting foster, refugee and adoptive families. One way the Belong Project does this is by providing immediate encouragement to foster families — such as care bags, meals, and practical support —shortly after placement, demonstrating that every child and family deserves care and belonging.

This work reflects our belief that **every child belongs in a loving family and that the local church has a unique role in serving vulnerable children and families in our community** — a calling rooted in Scripture and expressed through compassionate care. In addition to The Belong Project, we continue to partner with local ministries addressing housing needs, education support, and holistic care for those on the margins of our community.

OUR DESIRE: CONVICTION, COMPASSION & THE CHURCH'S MISSION

In a deeply divided cultural moment, we seek to be a church marked by **conviction without cruelty, mercy without compromise, and truth expressed in love**. We hold firmly to the sanctity of human life while opening our arms wide to all who are hurting and in need of the hope found in Christ.

We pray for wisdom, humility, courage, and grace as we follow Jesus faithfully in this city we love, proclaiming that **every life matters because every life bears the image of God.**