OVERTURE 46 from Hills and Plains Presbytery (OC)

“Reaffirm PCA’s Commitment Regarding the Sanctity of Life and Our Stance Against Abortion in Particular”

Whereas, the Word of God indicates that all human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27) and therefore have great worth in God’s sight, and

Whereas, God’s Word also indicates that human life is therefore of such value that to destroy that life for any reason other than that which God has prescribed, which is murder, is of such seriousness as to merit capital punishment (Genesis 9:5, 6), and

Whereas, God has clearly indicated in his Word that murder is a sin against him, according to the moral law applicable to all times and circumstances, as codified in the tablets of stone known as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17), and

Whereas, the sin of abortion continues to be a common practice in our culture despite political and religious efforts to outlaw, restrict, and prevent it, and

Whereas, our Confession of Faith indicates that it is proper and necessary for synods, “…by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary…” (WCF 31:4) to address matters which pertain to the civil magistrate, and

Whereas, both the legalization of the murder of a helpless class, resulting in the loss of more than 51 million lives, and the forced subsidization of such by individuals opposed to it, constitute such an extraordinary case,

Therefore, be it resolved that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America officially, and on the basis of the inspired and authoritative Word of God, declare the following:

We reaffirm our denomination’s commitment on this pertinent, prevalent issue regarding the sanctity of life and our stance against abortion in particular. We commend our denominational overtures, particularly

1979 – Overture 7 - Revise Assembly’s statement on abortion
1980 – Overture 12 - Reaffirm original statement on abortion
1984 – Overture 14 - Adopt statement that a memorial service is Biblical and appropriate in cases of miscarriage
1989 – Overture 17 - Oppose research on transplantation of fetal tissue
1993 – Overture 25 - Protection of Life of the Unborn
1993 – Overture 41 - Exhort SBC to Continue Strong Stand Against Abortion
1999 – Overture 27 - Reaffirm the sanctity of life
2010 – Overture 28 - Sanctity of Life Resolution
2014 – Overture 43 - Expression of Support for Sanctity of Life and Marriage

The content of these preceding overtures, which span years, and can be difficult to find, are compiled here, so as to be easy to reference.

Adopted by Hills and Plains Presbytery at its stated meeting, May 4, 2019
Attested by /s/ RE Bill Boyd, stated clerk
Attachment
Overtures to Previous General Assemblies Regarding the Sanctity of Life

1979
15, North Georgia, to B&O, 7-8, B, p. 33; 7-37, III, 3, p. 97, Affirmative as amended, Revise Assembly's statement on abortion [M6GA, p. 72]

Overture 15. From the Presbytery of North Georgia
Whereas, the Sixth General Assembly was of one mind in its general consideration of the abortion issue, but was divided on the question whether abortion might be justified if deemed necessary to save a woman’s life,
Therefore, be it resolved that North Georgia Presbytery request the General Assembly to revise the Assembly’s statement on abortion (Minutes, p. 72) to read as follows:
1. That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth (abortion) is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment in all cases except possibly that in which it appears that no other remedy will save the life of the mother. The Assembly is divided as to whether this case would justify abortion.”
Adopted unanimously at the Stated Winter Meeting of North Georgia Presbytery, January 20, 1979.
Attest: R. G. Valentine, Stated Clerk of North Georgia Presbytery
Answered in the affirmative as amended. § 7-37, III, 3; p. 97.

1979
18, Eastern Carolina, to B&O, 7-8, B, p. 33; 7-37, III, 3, p. 97, Answered by statement; refer to Overture 15, Amend 1978 statement on abortion

1979
33, Mid-Atlantic, to B&O, 7-8, B, p. 34; 7-37, III, 3, p. 97, Answered as amended; refer to Overture 15.

1980
12, Evangel, to B&O, 8-7, B, p. 33; 8-69, III, 2, p. 97, Affirmative as amended, Reaffirm original statement [M6GA] on abortion

Overture 12: From Evangel Presbytery
Whereas, the General Assembly, as a Court of Jesus Christ, should speak with a united voice in affirming the sanctity of human life under the protection of the Sixth Commandment,
Therefore Be It Resolved, that Evangel Presbytery overture the Eighth General Assembly to reaffirm its original statement on abortion: "That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the
intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth, for any reason at any time, is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment."

Added to this statement are the following affirmations: "Concerning crisis pregnancies in which it appears that the premature removal of the unborn child from the mother is a necessary consequence of medical procedures essential to preserving the mother's life, we affirm that: The Sixth Commandment not only forbids the taking of innocent life for whatever reason, but also requires the preserving of innocent life wherever possible. The life of the mother as well as her child comes under the full protection of the Sixth Commandment and all moral medical wisdom and skill must be used to preserve her life as well as the life of her child.

Attest: C. Gene Pjrks Stated Clerk

To say that we are ever placed in the position of choosing between two sins (killing the child or neglecting the preservation of the mother's life) is to surrender our belief in the Sovereign overruling providence of our All-wise and All-holy God (1 Cor. 10:13) and to allege that we must 'do evil that good may come' . . . a philosophy clearly condemned by Scripture.

An exception is not made even in the extremely rare case in which in the judgment of competent medical authorities, the unborn child’s continuing presence inside the mother's body will necessarily lead to the mother's death, the premature removal of the unborn child may be justified, provided that all medical wisdom, judgment, and skill are used to preserve the life of the child as well as the life of the mother. This premature removal of the unborn child shall be at that juncture of time where the greatest possibility for recovery is indicated for both mother and child. If life is lost in such a case, and the death occurs not out of criminal negligence, but merely out of the limitations of human knowledge and skill, all has been done morally that could be done. If we cannot save both lives, we are nevertheless morally bound to save the life we can."

Adopted this 22nd day of January, 1980, in meeting at the Oak Park Presbyterian Church, Montgomery, Alabama. Answered in the affirmative as amended. § 8-69, III, 2; p. 97.

1980
27, Ascension, to B&O, 8-7, B, p. 33; 8-69, III, 3, p. 98, Refer to Overture 12, Affirm action of Sixth GA re: abortion

1984
09, Central Florida, to CJB, 12-10, B, p. 48; 12-53, II, 32, p. 134, Refer to Overture 14, In re: Services for worship for infants who do not survive premature birth

1984
14, Westminster, to B&O, 12-10, B, p. 42; 12-31, III, 3, p. 102, Affirmative as amended, Adopt statement that a memorial service is Biblical and appropriate in cases of miscarriage
Overture 14: From the Presbytery of Westminster
Whereas, the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the teaching of Scripture, has affirmed that human life begins at conception and continues both before and after birth (Report of the Ad-Interim Committee on Abortion, adopted by the Sixth General Assembly); and
Whereas, miscarriage, as well as abortion, most often results in the death of a human being; and
Whereas, the loss of the life of an unborn child by miscarriage is often a definite source of grief and sorrow to the parents of the child; and
Whereas, funeral and memorial services are regularly conducted for the worship of God and the consolation of the living at the death of a loved one; and
Whereas, it has not generally been the practice in our churches to conduct memorial services at the time of miscarriages in which there are no physical remains of the child to be buried; and
Whereas, this issue which has long been neglected by the Church of Christ and which now, more than ever, should be addressed by the church in the light of Scripture;
Therefore, Westminster Presbytery respectfully overtures the Twelfth General Assembly to adopt the following statement: “In view of the Biblical teaching that life begins at conception, a memorial service, given to the glory of God and for the comfort of the bereaved, is Biblical and therefore appropriate in regard to miscarriage, and should be encouraged, regardless of the existence of physical remains available for burial.”

Attest: Larry E. Ball, Stated Clerk
Answered in the affirmative as amended, 12-31, III, 3, p. 102.

1989
23, Tennessee Valley, to B&O, 17-91, II, 5, p. 178, , Oppose research on transplantation of fetal tissue

Overture 23 from Tennessee Valley Presbytery, "Oppose Research on Transplantation of Fetal Tissue"
Whereas National Institutes of Health (NIH), a federal agency under the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for supporting the majority of health sciences research, and
Whereas NIH is in the process of deciding whether to lift the moratorium on the funding of fetal tissue research, and
Whereas NIH has accepted the unanimous recommendation from the Advisory Council to the Director, which states, according to the January 1989 issue of the FASEB Newsletter (the official newsletter of the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology), "The federal government should resume funding research on the therapeutic transplantation of fetal tissues from elective abortions as treatment for diabetes and Parkinson's disease," and
Whereas we, as members of the evangelical, Bible-believing denomination, The Presbyterian Church in America, believe that elective abortions are against the teaching of the Bible, and
Whereas we believe that the arguments to use fetal tissue obtained from elective abortions would be a seductive, though perhaps unintended, way to convince the general public that elective abortions are in the public interest if the tissues so obtained may be used for transplantsations to relieve human suffering,

Now therefore be it resolved that the Tennessee Valley Presbytery respectfully overture the 17th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to express its moral conviction to the executive and legislative branches of the federal government that such research using fetal tissue from elective abortions should not be allowed, and

Be it further resolved that the General Assembly inform our congregations of these issues and encourage all members of the PCA to write their congressmen and senators informing them of their opposition.

Adopted at the Spring Stated Meeting of the Tennessee Valley Presbytery

Attest: J. Render Caines, Stated Clerk

1993

39, Rocky Mountain, to B&O, 21-56, III, 25, p. 160, , Protection of Life of the Unborn

25. That Overture 39 from Rocky Mountain Presbytery be answered in the affirmative as amended.

Adopted

OVERTURE 39 From Rocky Mountain Presbytery

"Protection of Life of the Unborn"

Whereas, Scripture teaches us the sacredness of human life (Genesis 9:6-7); and Whereas, Scripture teaches that human life begins at conception (Psalm 139:13-16) with God "having fashioned us in our mother's womb"; and Whereas, since 1973 a monstrous blight of abortion on demand has come upon our nation through the Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade-, and

Whereas, the Christian Church has had a long history of opposition to abortion (e.g., Didache, 2.2); and

Whereas, the PCA has taken a consistent Christian position in opposition to abortion on demand (see e.g., M6GA, Appendix O, pp. 270-285, as well as subsequent GAs to the 6th GA, that passed resolutions in opposition to abortion); and

Whereas, the Christian Church in this land is free to lawfully appeal and plead to her rulers for godly laws and precepts to be enacted, and contrariwise, to urge the repeal of ungodly laws; and

Whereas, President Clinton has enacted executive orders to further endanger the safety and sanctity of the unborn; and

Whereas, President Clinton has taken a public stand approving abortion on demand, despite the Christian Church's (including President Clinton's own Church) long and honorable support of the unborn;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that the 21st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America prayerfully and respectfully urge President Clinton to do all in his power as Chief Executive of the United States of America (having been placed in that position...
by God, Rom. 13:1-7) to protect the life of the unborn, for ultimately he must answer
to Almighty God for the responsibilities to which he has been entrusted (2 Corinthians
5:10) and that the Stated Clerk of the PCA communicate this to the President by means
of this overture and the PCA’s position paper on abortion."

Adopted at the Spring Stated Meeting of Rocky Mountain Presbytery on April 22, 1993.
Attested by: /s/ Lyle E. Lagasse Stated Clerk

1993

41, South Texas, to B&O, 21-56, III, 27, p. 161, Exhort SBC to continue strong stand against abortion

27. That Overture 41, from South Texas Presbytery be answered in the affirmative as amended: Adopted

OVERTURE 41 from the Presbytery of South Texas
"Exhort SBC to Continue Strong Stand Against Abortion" Adopted

Whereas, the Bible declares that life begins at conception and therefore, that abortion is murder,
Whereas, the present administration of the federal government supports pro-abortion positions and practices;
Whereas, the Southern Baptist Convention has on numerous prior occasions taken a stance in opposition to abortion;
Therefore Let it Be Resolved that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America exhorts our brothers in the Southern Baptist Convention to continue to take a Scriptural position concerning the value of human life and the atrocity of abortion and the responsibility of all Christian leaders to support human life issues.

Adopted by the Presbytery of South Texas on April 24, 1993.
Attested by: /s/ Irvin M. May Jr., Stated Clerk

1999

27, Philadelphia, to B&O, 27-44, III, 14, p. 175, Affirmative as amended, Reaffirm the sanctity of life

That OVERTURE 27 from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, “Reaffirm the Sanctity of Life,” be answered with this substitute: Adopted as amended

The 27th General Assembly of the PCA reaffirms with united voice the sanctity of human life under the protection of the Sixth Commandment. And to that end,
1. The Stated Clerk is requested to do the following:
   a. Remind all the churches and presbyteries of the continuing availability of its
      published report on the sanctity of Human Life adopted by the Sixth General
      Assembly.
   b. That his letter to the churches regarding the actions of the 27th General
      Assembly repeat recommendations 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 urging our churches and
      presbyteries to seek God’s enablement and grace to implement them in light of
      the continued tragedy of abortion on demand in America.
   c. Appoint someone to lead the Assembly in prayer for this issue at this time.
   d. Appoint a national PCA day of prayer and fasting for the ending of abortion to
      be held at an appropriate day in the year AD 2000, inviting NAE churches, our
      sister NAPARC churches and other approved PCA ministries and agencies to
      join with us.
2. That each of the PCA Presbyteries be urged to establish a pro-life committee to
   address the recommendations of the Sixth General Assembly Report on the
   Sanctity of Human Life among its constituent particular churches.

RE Robert Brown led the Assembly in prayer regarding the sanctity of life issue

NOTE: The following commissioners registered their negative note on Recommendation 14,
especially item 6 - TE David F. Coffin Jr ; TE J. Paul Pynor, and TE Scott R. Wright

2010
28, South Florida, to OC, 38-54, III, 4, p. 352, Affirmative as amended, Sanctity of Life
Resolution

4. That **Overture 28** from South Florida Presbytery (“Sanctity of Life Resolution”) be
    answered in the affirmative as amended as follows (strike-through for deletions; underscore
    and bold for additions):

    Therefore be it resolved by the Presbyterian Church in America, that we will encourage all our
    members to immediately begin to approach professing Christians in all denominations:

    To join with the entire Body of Christ for the protection of the unborn, acting in
    solidarity with other denominations in prayer and obedience to God, by whose
    sovereign might alone the scourge of legalized abortion will be broken;

    To offer pastoral and practical care for those individuals affected by unplanned
    pregnancies or victimized by abortion;

    To speak prophetically against the culture of death, confronting it in the power of
    God’s truth;
To *proclaim* hold our culture accountable before the binding and unchallengeable authority of God’s Holy Word over every man, woman, institution, and nation, in every area of life;

To lovingly call offending parties to repentance in Jesus Christ, and restoration by the Holy Spirit to new obedience;

To *declare* *proclaim* the authoritative truth of God, both to our own members and in the public square, concerning God’s righteous demands upon the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of our government at every level.

The General Assembly instructs the Stated Clerk to communicate the substance of this overture to each presbytery, session and teaching elder of the PCA to further communicate to their congregations.

so that as amended, the resolution reads:

Therefore be it resolved by the Presbyterian Church in America, that we will encourage all our members to immediately begin to approach professing Christians in all denominations:

To join with the entire Body of Christ for the protection of the unborn, acting in solidarity with other denominations in prayer and obedience to God, by whose sovereign might alone the scourge of legalized abortion will be broken;

To offer pastoral and practical care for those individuals affected by unplanned pregnancies or victimized by abortion;

To speak prophetically against the culture of death, confronting it in the power of God’s truth;

To proclaim the binding and unchallengeable authority of God’s Holy Word over every man, woman, institution, and nation, in every area of life;

To lovingly call offending parties to repentance in Jesus Christ, and restoration by the Holy Spirit to new obedience;

To declare the authoritative truth of God, both to our own members and in the public square, concerning God’s righteous demands upon the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of our government at every level.

The General Assembly instructs the Stated Clerk to communicate the substance of this overture to each presbytery, session and teaching elder of the PCA to further communicate to their congregations.”

*Adopted*
Grounds:
a) The Holy Spirit, speaking infallibly in Scripture, declares that human life is sacred, and
that it begins at conception.
b) This authoritative declaration by Almighty God makes the protection of all human life
from the moment of conception to the moment of birth an inescapable moral duty for all
men.
c) The taking of the life of an unborn person is a violation of the sixth commandment, “Thou
shall not murder,” and is in fact premeditated murder.
d) A considerable number of our elected and appointed government leaders want to make
and keep legal the killing of the unborn for any and every reason.
e) This assault on the unborn calls for a unified effort by Christians of all denominations to
protect the unborn child from the moment of conception to the moment of birth and
afterwards.
f) Each and every person will one day stand before our sovereign God to give an account for
his or her life, and whether or not that life was lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ,
the Lord of life.

OVERTURE 28 from the South Florida Presbytery “Sanctity of Life Resolution”

Whereas the Holy Spirit, speaking infallibly in Scripture, declares that human life is sacred,
and that it begins at conception; and
Whereas this authoritative declaration by Almighty God makes the protection of all human
life from the moment of conception to the moment of birth an inescapable moral duty
for all men; and
Whereas the taking of the life of an unborn person is a violation of the sixth commandment,
“Thou shall not murder,” and is in fact premeditated murder; and
Whereas a considerable number of our elected and appointed government leaders want to
make and keep legal the killing of the unborn for any and every reason; and
Whereas this assault on the unborn calls for a unified effort by Christians of all dominations
to protect the unborn child from the moment of conception to the moment of birth and
afterwards; and
Whereas each and every person will one day stand before our sovereign God to give an
account for his or her life, and whether or not that life was lived under the Lordship of
Jesus Christ, the Lord of life;
Therefore be it resolved by the Presbyterian Church in America, that we will encourage all our
members to immediately begin to approach professing Christians in all denominations:
To join with the entire Body of Christ for the protection of the unborn, acting in
solidarity with other denominations in prayer and obedience to God, by whose
sovereign might alone the scourge of legalized abortion will be broken;
To speak prophetically against the culture of death, confronting it in the power of
God’s truth;
To hold our culture accountable before the binding and unchallengeable authority of God’s Holy Word over every man, woman, institution, and nation, in every area of life;

To lovingly call offending parties to repentance in Jesus Christ, and restoration by the Holy Spirit to new obedience;

To proclaim the authoritative truth of God, both to our own members and in the public square, concerning God’s righteous demands upon the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of our government at every level.

Adopted by the South Florida Presbytery at its stated meeting, April 20, 2010
Attested by /s/ TE William N. Sofield, stated clerk

2014
43, Savannah River, to OC, 57, 66, 850, Negative, Expression of Support for Sanctity of Life and Marriage

OVERTURE 43 from Savannah River Presbytery (to OC) “Expression of Support for Sanctity of Life and Marriage”

Whereas the Bible states that when there is a conflict between God’s Law and human law, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29), and Whereas the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution specifically prohibits Congress from establishing any law "prohibiting the free exercise of religion," and Whereas the environment for religious freedom worsens day by day in the United States, and Whereas some Christians today – including employers, chaplains, and others, must choose between being faithful to their Biblical convictions regarding the sanctity of human life and the sanctity of marriage, or face punitive federal government penalties, and Whereas God calls His Church to bear prophetic witness to His Truth in human society, and Whereas the Presbyterian Church in America, of which the Savannah River Presbytery is a member, is on record regarding the sanctity of human life and of marriage in accordance with that Truth; therefore

Be it resolved that Savannah River Presbytery hereby go on record expressing its gratitude to and prayers for corporations, public and private for-profit and non-profit entities, chaplains and others who have taken a stand for the sanctity of human life, and to the Christian men and women in private businesses facing fines, penalties, and ostracism for declining out of religious conviction to provide their services for same-sex marriage ceremonies, and

Be it further resolved that Savannah River Presbytery call upon the 42nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America to adopt this resolution.

Adopted by Savannah River Presbytery at its Stated Meeting, April 15, 2014
Attested by /s/ RE William L Hatcher, stated clerk