

## SUNDAY EVENING

### 15. PROPOSAL FOR ACTION "CHURCH AND GENETIC ENGINEERING"

Continuing the report of Committee Five, Ms. Darling moved to adopt the recommended Proposal for Action "Church and Genetic Engineering" with the addition of the last sentence, "Subject to availability of funds." There was no discussion, and it was

89-GS-47 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Proposal for Action "Church and Genetic Engineering."

#### PROPOSAL FOR ACTION CHURCH AND GENETIC ENGINEERING

##### I. Summary

This Proposal for Action assumes that science and technology in general, and genetic engineering in particular, substantively affect human life and the quality of life. It further assumes that there exists an intricate interdependency among human, animal, and plant life as the natural order of God's creation.

The Proposal suggests ways of addressing issues of genetic engineering. A particular focus is on education that prepares persons for ethical decisions that result from genetic engineering technology. A second focus is on policy formation and advocacy that will guide churches, associations, conferences, councils, and instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ in encouraging genetic engineering that will contribute to the health and harmony of creation. A third focus is on pastoral responsibility in genetic screening and counseling.

##### II. Background

The Pronouncement on The Church and Genetic Engineering, proposed for adoption by the 17th General Synod, is based on a theological understanding of creation and of humankind's responsibility in relation to creation. We affirm that our relation with the Creator and creation encourages inquiry, and we accept responsibility for the moral use of knowledge.

Genetic engineering is important in expanding our understanding of human, animal, and plant life. Through genetic engineering have come new techniques and products to diagnose genetic problems, to treat diseases, and to protect and improve the quality of life. The value of these achievements is tempered by ethical questions concerning the proper and just use of this technology for the welfare of humanity and integrity of the whole of creation.

##### III. Directional Statement and Goals

WHEREAS, the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ has adopted the Pronouncement on The Church and Genetic Engineering, and

WHEREAS, this Pronouncement raises important issues to be addressed by the church;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 17th General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon:

1. Members and congregations of the United Church of Christ to study the developing field of genetic engineering, its implications for the lives of members of the church and the people of their communities and the world, and its implications for pastoral care. Particular concerns include genetic

screening, genetic counseling, new uses of genetic engineering, compliance with federal regulatory guidelines, and participation in public review of testing and using genetically-altered organisms.

2. Conferences and Associations of the United Church of Christ to

offer opportunities for pastors, chaplains, and counselors to develop competence in issues concerning genetic screening and counseling;

participate in public review of the testing of genetically-altered organisms, and

identify resources of people and material which are available to congregations and their communities.

3. The United Church Board for Homeland Ministries to

gather and make available information and resources which address the theological and ethical issues of genetic engineering, and

work in partnership with educational, commercial, and governmental agencies and institutions in discussing the moral consequences of genetic engineering, in developing research priorities, and in monitoring policies that govern the appropriate research, testing, and use of genetic engineering.

4. The United Church Board for World Ministries to

voice, within the United States and the United Nations, the concerns of the developing nations regarding the impact of the use of genetic engineering technology and products in their lands;

work with concerned persons in these nations in monitoring genetic engineering research, testing, and usage, in helping ensure access to products created from genetic engineering technology, in resisting increased dependency on corporations of the developed nations which results in exploitation and the loss of national self-reliance, and in addressing the theological, ethical, and economic issues raised by genetic engineering, and

assist in securing access to funding through foundations and Church World Service to support genetic engineering research suited to particular problems in the developing nations.

5. The Council for Health and Human Service Ministries to

advocate the continuing development of competence in genetic screening within its member institutions and to share the knowledge with the wider church; take leadership in the training of clergy, chaplains, counselors, and other health professionals in providing pastoral care within the context of genetic counseling, and

where appropriate, assist persons considering the options in treating genetic disease.

6. The Office for Church in Society to

monitor and participate in governmental, legislative, and public policy debates in order to assure public representa-

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tion and testimony regarding research priorities, testing, and use of genetic engineering technology.

### 7. The Office for Church Life and Leadership to

facilitate the development of continuing education about genetic engineering for laity and the development of training in genetic counseling for seminarians, clergy, chaplains, and counselors; and to develop and make available worship resources that celebrate creation and affirm the creative, caring ministry of the church.

### 8. The Coordinating Center for Women to

gather and make available information and resources which address the theological and moral issues of genetic engineering that apply specifically to women, e.g., new reproductive technologies.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the 17th General Synod, in light of the rapid development and increasing significance of new science and technology on human life, urgently recommends that the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, in conjunction with the United Church Board for World Ministries, the Office for Church in Society, the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries, and other bodies as appropriate, accept responsibility for the continuing study of issues of science and technology in general and genetic engineering in particular, recommending appropriate initiatives and policy formation for the United Church of Christ.

Financial Implications: Subject to the availability of funds.

## 16. RESOLUTION "THE CHURCH AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES"

The appropriate papers were identified for the delegates by Ms. Darling, Chairperson of Committee Five. In her introduction of the Resolution "The Church and Reproductive Technologies," Ms. Darling noted the change of "new birth" language to "reproductive" and the addition of a list of implementors. Ms. Darling then moved the adoption of the Resolution.

The Rev. Barron Barley (PC) spoke in opposition to the motion noting its flaw of asking for study at the same time as encouraging the use of the technologies under study. The question was called and it was

89-GS-48 VOTED: The 17th General Synod adopts the Resolution "The Church and Reproductive Technologies."

### THE CHURCH AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

#### Summary

This Resolution recognizes that reproductive technologies enable many infertile couples the opportunity to have children, and that these technologies are to be commended for their contribution to reproduction. We affirm the contribution of science to be a gift of God. We see these contributions extending the gift of parenthood, the context for human nurture, the opportunities for joy and love and thereby helping humanity's celebration of the Divine Image. It is important that the church attempt to gain a better understanding of the theological and ethical issues involved in order to better assist

the church's pastoral responsibility in counseling in family related matters, as well as to more effectively influence appropriate legislation concerning these issues.

#### Background

The sequence of natural human reproduction involves sexual intercourse, tubal fertilization, implantation in the uterus followed by gestation in the uterus. The expression "reproductive technologies" applies to a number of procedures that would supplant all or part of the stages in the natural process of reproduction. The technologies which we seek to address here are artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, cryopreservation and surrogacy.

Artificial insemination, a procedure that replaces sexual intercourse as a means of achieving tubal fertilization, has been available for many years. Infertility may be overcome by AIH, artificial insemination with the sperm of the husband, or AID, artificial insemination with the sperm of a donor.

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a reproductive method whereby sperm of a husband (or a donor) is united, in a laboratory, with the ovum of a wife (or a donor). This procedure involves several technically sophisticated procedures, (1) laparoscopy (a surgical method for obtaining mature eggs from a woman's ovaries), (2) fertilization of eggs in the laboratory, (3) growth in the laboratory to the eight cell stage, and (4) transfer of a developing embryo to the uterus for implantation (embryo transfer). This technology not only replaces sexual intercourse but also tubal fertilization as the natural process of reproduction. IVF increases the array of reproductive options which could be employed for those women whose infertility is due to fallopian-tube obstruction due to disease.

Another less costly and hopefully more successful procedure is known as GIFT (Gamete Intra-Fallopian Transfer). In this technique the egg is surgically retrieved and placed within the fallopian tube along with the sperm. Fertilization is then achieved within the body.

One of the new techniques that promises to increase the success rate of fertilization is cryopreservation (the freezing of sperm, ova or embryos). Cryopreservation can increase the efficiency of the technology, reducing the number of times a woman must submit to ovum retrieval and providing for safer sperm banking in the face of today's AIDS crisis.

Surrogacy, simply put, is one woman bearing a child for another who wishes to have a child but is unable to do so. Today this form of childbearing is often arranged by a contract whereby the child is given to the adoptive mother, with the surrogate receiving a fee for her service. The pregnancy is usually achieved through artificial insemination with the sperm of the husband of the adoptive mother. In vitro fertilization can also be employed, using the ovum of the adoptive mother and the sperm of her husband or donor sperm if he is infertile. In this final situation a gestational host is still required.

#### Theological and Ethical Issues

As we assess the various reproductive technologies presently available, we underscore and affirm science as it acts as a channel for God's creativity and the yearning for life. Science, when used appropriately, can be an instrument to initiate God's creative process — the gift of a child. As Christians, we recognize our responsibility to offer pastoral guidance and evaluate the ramifications of technology in the life-giving proc-