



## Stem Cell Position Paper

### Scripture References

*"Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—'Let us do evil that good may result'? Their condemnation is deserved".* Romans 3:8

*"You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! My very self you knew; my bones were not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned as in the depths of the earth. Your eyes foresaw my actions; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be."* Psalm 139:13-16

*"Even all the hairs of your head are counted."* Mt. 10:30

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."* Jeremiah 1:5

*"Just as you know not how the breath of life fashions the human frame in the mother's womb, so you know not the work of God which he is accomplishing in the universe."* Eccl. 11:5

*Thus says the LORD who made you, your help, who formed you from the womb: fear not, O Jacob, my servant, the darling whom I have chosen."* Isaiah 44:2

*At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"* Luke 1:39-45

### Anglicans for Life Official Position

Christian moral norms (or guidelines for moral behavior) come from the nature of the human person as created by God and as destined for fellowship with God. The dignity of this life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of him. For that reason, respect for human dignity lies at the heart of our faith. In our relationships with one other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred.

Recent scientific research in the development of cures and therapies using embryonic stem cells is challenging accepted mores concerning the destruction of life for society's greater good. Medical advancement should continue but not through the taking of human life. No human being should be forced to be made the subject of research without their permission, especially if that research leads directly to their destruction. Even death row inmates cannot be experimented upon nor have their organs removed without their consent. Anglicans for Life believes that it is wrong for Christians to support Embryonic Stem Cell research.

As of October 2007, over 68 successful clinical applications have used non-embryonic stem cells – e.g. stem cells from adult tissue, placental tissue, and umbilical blood to treat a variety of diseases and ailments such as spinal cord injuries, diabetes, heart disease and leukemia. Anglicans for Life is in favor of this type of stem cell research that comes from sources that do not involve the intentional past or present destruction of a human life.

To make Embryonic Stem Cell therapies effective, millions of female eggs will be needed, which will require women to ingest large doses of egg production stimulation hormones that can be dangerous to their health. Because enough eggs cannot be procured with this method, researchers are also trying to use eggs from animals, mixing species.

Embryonic Stem Cell research leads to therapeutic cloning to produce a patient's individual stem cells for therapy and prevent the need for rejection drugs. Therapeutic cloning is the intentional development of an embryo that will be destroyed during the harvesting of its stem cells.

The utilitarian philosophy which accepts arguments such as, "The ends justify the means" (Machiavelli), and, "Good can come from evil", fail to appreciate the sanctity of life. The simple fact is that Christians are not to do evil that good might result (Romans 3:8).

### **Embryo Defined**

Some proponents of destructive embryo research try to deny moral status to *all* early human embryos. They have coined the term "pre-embryo" to describe human embryos in the first two weeks of development, seeking to justify destructive experimentation during this early stage. However, the term and concept of "pre-embryo" has never been accepted by Congress, the National Institutes of Health's Human Embryo Research Panel, or the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, and is rejected by contemporary textbooks on embryology.

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*"Embryo: The early developing fertilized egg that is growing into another individual of the species. In man the term 'embryo' is usually restricted to the period of development from fertilization until the end of the eighth week of pregnancy."* [Walters, William and Singer, Peter (Eds.). *Test-Tube Babies*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 160]

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*"Embryo: The developing individual between the union of the germ cells and the completion of the organs which characterize its body when it becomes a separate organism.... At the moment the sperm cell of the human male meets the ovum of the female and the union results in a fertilized ovum (zygote), a new life has begun.... The term embryo covers the several stages of early development from conception to the ninth or tenth week of life."* [Considine, Douglas (Ed.). *Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*. 5th edition. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976, p. 943]

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*"I would say that among most scientists, the word 'embryo' includes the time from after fertilization..."* [Dr. John Eppig, Senior Staff Scientist, Jackson Laboratory (Bar Harbor, Maine) and Member of the NIH Human Embryo Research Panel -- Panel Transcript, February 2, 1994, p. 31]

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*"Although life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed.... The combination of 23 chromosomes present in each pronucleus results in 46 chromosomes in the zygote. Thus the diploid number is restored and the embryonic genome is formed. The embryo now exists as a genetic unity."* [O'Rahilly, Ronan and Müller, Fabiola. *Human Embryology & Teratology*. 2nd edition. New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996, pp. 8, 29. This textbook lists "pre-embryo" among "discarded and replaced terms" in modern embryology, describing it as "ill-defined and inaccurate" (p. 12)]

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### **Stem Cell Defined**

A stem cell is a relatively unspecialized cell that, when it divides, can do two things: make another cell like itself, or make any of a number of cells with more specialized functions. For example, just one kind of stem cell in our blood can make new red blood cells, or white blood cells, or other kinds—depending on what the body needs. These cells are like the stem of a plant that spreads out in different directions as it grows.

### **Official Church Positions**

The Lambeth Conference has not spoken on this topic.

The Episcopal Church officially endorsed Embryonic Stem Cell Research at the 2003 General Convention. Anglicans for Life encourages the Church to reconsider its position and acknowledge their sin for supporting the destruction of God's creation.