REPORT OF
THE RIGHT TO LIFE WORKING GROUP
OF THE DIOCESE OF WAIKATO AND TARANAKI 2011

2012.15.04

A Working Group was set up following consideration of a Motion by the 2009 Diocesan Synod. The motion was moved by The Reverend Joel Rowse and seconded by Shirley Anderson.

The Synod resolved to set up a working group to look into the Church's approach to abortion.

The Working Group members are:
Archbishop David Moxon
The Reverend Joel Rowse
The Reverend Amanda Bradley
The Reverend Audrey Butler
Mrs Elizabeth Bang

Each member researched the different aspects of the abortion/right to life issue.

The Tradition and Official Doctrine established by the Early Church concerning abortion

Introduction

In Matthew's gospel we see Jesus declaring to the apostle Peter; 'you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven…' The Early Church was built upon the apostles of Jesus Christ who set in perpetual motion the living Tradition of the Lord's kingdom, transforming everything that came into contact with it. As the apostolic ministry expanded and the Church grew, she increasingly came into contact with gentile culture and customs. It was very early on that the young Church now had to present to the Pagan, Roman and Hellenistic cultures the Good News of Jesus Christ. Abortion and infanticide were widely carried out in the world of the Early Church[1]. The apostolic ministry was charged to make disciples of whole nations and thus needed to address the practice of abortion. The Early Church developed a clear and consistent Tradition and doctrine about abortion which is well documented. The earliest documents of the Church have much to say about the practice of abortion and the Church Fathers continued to articulate the living Tradition of the Church on the topic.

Abortion in the Pagan, Roman and Hellenistic World

The Early Church under the apostolic ministry continued to grow both numerically and geographically. It was the non Jewish people who increasing were converting and becoming members in the young Church. The culture for which the Church now found herself carrying out the message of salvation was very different to the Jewish culture for which she had emerged. Abortion was common place in the pagan, Roman and Hellenistic contexts where the Church was growing[2].

In the Early Church gentile context Abortion was carried out for various reasons including concealing illicit sexual activity, limiting family size, avoiding the effects of pregnancy on the body and for therapeutic reasons. If a woman was wanting an abortion for any reason whatsoever there was a great variety of methods that were available to her. Most techniques can be categorized in two main ways; Chemical and Mechanical. The different abortion

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[1] Gorman M.J. *Abortion and the Early Church,* Inter Varsity Press Illinois, 1982, Pg 19
[2] Balsdon J.P.V.D *Roman Woman: their history and habits.* Toronto 1977 pg 190- 199

techniques used in the pagan world could procure an abortion from the 10th day to the seventh month of foetal development.[3] Fundamental to Roman law is the unborn is not a person thus Abortion and infanticide was common place especially among the rich.

Abortion in the Jewish World

The Christian faith came from the context of the Jewish world. In contrast to the common practice of abortions in the pagan world, Jews were known for their love and religious duty of having children. In the Hebrew bible and other writings there is no mention of a non-therapeutic abortion to 500 AD. Abortion in the Jewish world was approached slightly differently by the two Schools. The Palestinian and the Alexandrian school were interested in the foetus based in a legal framework not on an ethical one. The Alexandrian School granted legal protection for the foetus. The Palestinian School was interested in the cultic issue of cleanness or uncleanness due to the laws around child birth and accidental miscarriage. For example, if a miscarriage took place by accident caused by a person striking the mother, then was the mother unclean because of child birth or not? Was the attacker guilty of murder? The idea of ensoulment and foetal development was important in this school to determine their answers to these questions. Although there are differences in the two schools concerning accidental and therapeutic abortions, there were no discussions of deliberate abortion because it was a settled matter.[4] The Jewish world was one that children were seen as a blessing from God and hence valued. Abortion is therefore seen as an immoral act and was not practiced by the Jewish population in the Early Church context.

The Early Church Responds, Establishing the Christian Tradition

The Early Church found itself with ever larger numbers of non-Jewish people converting. The culture of the Greek and Roman world with its values and customs was to be transformed as the Church continued to grow numerically and in its moral witness. The new Christian converts would need to comply with the Tradition of the gospel message and the crystallizing doctrines of the Church. The Early Church wrote down her doctrines for its new and potential converts.

The first catechism of the Christian Church apart from the writings of the New Testament is the Didache.[5] This document dates from the first century or early second and was used extensively to train candidates for baptism. The document uses the imagery of two ways, the way of life or the way of death. This the earliest catechism, (the Didache), had this to say about abortion

You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the new born to perish.[6]

A second very important document that the Church produced is the Epistle of Barnabas, which was also first or early second century. In regard to abortion it is included in a list of 'shall nots' and includes the command 'to love your neighbour…' thus abortion is rejected as contrary to Christ's endorsement of the command to love your neighbours.[7]

The document *Pedagogus* of Clement of Alexandria can be described as the first systematic moral theological work. It dates from the second century. Clement organises and integrates material of scripture and the living Tradition of the church.[8] Clement teaches,

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[3] Gorman M.J. *Abortion and the Early Church,* Inter Varsity Press Illinois, 1982 pg 17-18
[4] Gorman M.J. *Abortion and the Early Church,* Inter Varsity Press Illinois, pg 33- 45
[5] Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970 pg 139
[6] Didache 2 as translated in *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* Doubleday books, New York 1995 pg 606
[7] Gorman M.J. *Abortion and the Early Church,* Inter Varsity Press Illinois, pg 49
[8] Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970

For those woman who conceal sexual wantonness by taking stimulating drugs to bring on an abortion wholly lose their own humanity along with the foetus.[9]

For Clement and thus the Early Church, abortion is the killing of a human life which is under God's care, design and providence.[10]

The oldest list of the New Testament cannon included the *Apocalypse of Peter.* Although the *Apocalypse of Peter* was removed from the list in the forth century it was held in great esteem in the Early Church. It lists moral evils that will cause one to populate hell and it includes those who procure abortions[11].

We can see first hand from the very earliest writings of the Christian Church that abortion was considered a sin and that the Tradition of the 'gospel of life' was firmly established from day one.

As the church continued to advance in years and geographical witness we can see documentation and doctrines concerning abortion increase too. There is far too much to include in one small summary. A short list of names and statements will need to suffice as evidence that the Tradition of the Church continued in the following centuries.

Authoritative Statements, Doctrines and Decisions in Early Church

- **Athenagoras**: "We say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God. For the same person, would not regard the child in the womb as a living being and therefore an object of God's care and then kill it.... But we are altogether consistent in our conduct. We obey reason and do not override it. "Petition to Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE), circa 150 CE.

- **Clement of Alexandria:** (circa 150 - 215 CE) "Our whole life can go on in observation of the laws of nature, if we gain dominion over our desires from the beginning and if we do not kill, by various means of a perverse act, the human offspring, born according to the designs of divine providence; for these women who, if order to hid their immorality, use abortive drugs which expel the child completely dead, abort at the same time their own human feelings "Pedagogus 2

- **Tertullian** (circa 155 - 225 CE): "...we are not permitted, since murder has been prohibited to us once and for all, even to destroy ...the foetus in the womb. It makes no difference whether one destroys a life that has already been born or one that is in the process of birth."

- **St. Hippolytus** (circa 170-236 CE): "Reputed believers began to resort to drugs for producing Sterility and to gird themselves round, so as to expel what was conceived on account of their not wanting to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time." From "Refutation of all Heresies" 9:7

- **Minicius Felix** (a Christian lawyer; circa 180 - 225 CE): "Some women take medicines to destroy the germ of future life in their own bodies. They commit infanticide before they have given birth to the infant"**St. Basil the Great** (circa 330 - 379 CE): "She who has deliberately destroyed a foetus has to pay the penalty of murder...here it is not

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[9] Clement of Alexander, *Paedagogus* ii 10:96

[10] Gorman M.J. *Abortion and the Early Church,* Inter Varsity Press Illinois, pg 53

[11] *Apocalypse of Peter 26* the *Akhmin Fragment,* In Edga Hennecke *New Testament Apocrypha* Westminster Press 1963

only the child to be born that is vindicated, but also the woman herself who made an attempt against her own life, because usually the women die in such attempts. Furthermore, added to this is the destruction of the child, another murder... Moreover, those, too, who give drugs causing abortion are deliberate murderers themselves, as well as those receiving the poison which kills the foetus." Letter 188:2

- **St. Ambrose**: (339 to 397 CE) "The poor expose their children, the rich kill the fruit of their own bodies in the womb, lest their property be divided up, and they destroy their own children in the womb with murderous poisons. and before life has been passed on, it is annihilated."

- **St. John Chrysostom** (circa 340 - 407 CE): "Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are many efforts at abortion? Where there is murder before the birth? For you do not even let the harlot remain a mere harlot, but make her a murderer also. You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather something even worse than murder. For I have no real name to give it, since it does not destroy the thing born but prevents its being born. Why then do you abuse the gift of God and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the place of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter?" Homily 24 on Romans

- **St. Jerome** (circa 342-420 CE): "They drink potions to ensure sterility and are guilty of murdering a human being not yet conceived. Some, when they learn that they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the rulers of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child." Letter 22:13

- **Tertullian** circa 160-240 CE:
    - "For us [Christians] we may not destroy even the foetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter when you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one: you have the fruit already in the seed." Apology 9:6"
    - They [John and Jesus] were both alive while still in the womb. Elizabeth rejoiced as the infant leaped in her womb; Mary glorifies the Lord because Christ within inspired her. Each mother recognizes her child and is known by her child who is alive, being not merely souls but also spirits." De A ninta 26:4

Statements by groups:

- The **Synod of Elvira**, held in Spain in 306 CE: "If a woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery, while her husband is absent, and after the act she destroys the child, it is proper to keep her from communion until death, because she has doubled her crime." Canon 63.The **Synod of Ancyra**, held in 314 CE, condemned abortion. The penalty was 10 years of penance[12]

Conclusion

We can see that the Early Church was indeed not silent on the matter of abortion. Neither did it simply take on the dominant view and practice of the pagan, Roman and Hellenistic world around it, which saw abortion as a convenience. The early church condemned abortion as a sin and enacted a penance the same as murder for those who carried out or obtained an abortion. The Early Church complete with her first catechism, and the Church Fathers instructed Christians to choose the way of life and to protect the developing foetus

[12] http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm,

because it is both created by God and is under his care and providence. The living Tradition of the church only ever continued to grow in its articulation of its condemnation of abortion through its teachings and its ecclesiastical laws. Christianity from its foundation on Jesus Christ to the apostles and the Early Church instructed Christian converts to choose the way of life and reject the way of death and thus abortion was to be absolutely rejected.
The Church Tradition on Abortion can be summarised as: Abortion is the taking of an innocent life (murder) and therefore is a grave sin.

The Anglican Communion Responses to Abortion

Introduction

The 'Anglican Church' is in practice a communion of churches, this makes it difficult to define with any authority what is 'Anglican doctrine'. The diffusion of reasonability in the Anglican Communion means that responses to abortion need to be investigated through the different levels and jurisdictions of Anglican ecclesia. Anglican responses to Abortion can be divided into different categories. The first category is that of the historical English Church following the reformation, its doctrine and practice. The next category is the resolutions made at the Lambeth Conference. Anglican Provinces and the official decisions made through their governance, make for another category. Dioceses through their synods often respond to different issues including abortion. The motions passed in diocesan synods reveal the policy, belief, doctrine and practice of local Anglican jurisdictions. At both the national and diocesan level task groups have been formed to look at issues pertaining to abortion and thus have made conclusions and recommendations. Large networks link Anglicans across national jurisdictions and include, Forward in Faith, The Global South and Gafcon. These networks put out statements, doctrinal standards and policy for the member churches. The churches of the Anglican Communion claim to be part of the historic Church founded by Jesus Christ and lead by the apostles. The Tradition of the Christian Church form earliest times sees abortion as a grave sin because it in involves the killing of an innocent human life. The various Anglican responses can be seen in relation to their fidelity to the Christian Tradition or their rejection of it.

Creation of an English Church and the Anglican Communion

When the reformation was happening in Europe new churches were created. These new churches saw themselves as maintaining in a more pure way the apostolic church and faith. Thus rejecting papal authority and reforming the theology and practice of medieval (European) Christianity was the focus. The religious and political upheavals in Europe during the reformation were played out in England. Under Elizabeth and later under Charles the 2nd the Christian church in England would reform and separate from Rome on political and religious grounds. As the Church of England was not a new religion and saw itself as part of the continuum of the Church from Christ and his Apostles, issues relating to morality and sin including abortion were not reworked but accepted as a given. As the British Empire grew so did the Anglican Church. With the great missionary expansion of the 1800's the Anglican Church grew larger still outside areas of the British Empire. For the first time the Church of England had large and growing numbers of non-European members. Thus the Church of England gave birth to the Anglican Communion world wide. Each nation could develop the church locally and no longer needed to be directly under the headship of the church in England. Consequently the separation of a central hierarchy that could give a monochrome expression of the Anglican faith and practice was not to be. This makes the dealing with the Anglican Communion problematic as there is a diffusion of responsibility and authority.

The Christian Tradition on abortion transmitted into the Church of England

The Christian position on abortion that came from the Early Church onwards can briefly be defined as; Abortion is the taking of a life and is therefore a grave sin. We can see the

authentic Christian position on abortion in England after the reformation. John Doanne preaching in 1625 referred to Augustine, who mentions the sin of procured abortion.[13]
Richard Baxter in his *Christian Directory* regards the act as simply murder.[1.] An important person in this period of the Church of England's development is John Weemse. John was born in 1579 and his work *An Exposition of the Moral Law or Ten Commandments of the Almighty God,* was published in 1632. John's work follows, that killing a man is abusing the image of God and states '*It is a great cruelty to kill the child in the mothers belly, to kill this innocent in his first mansion, which should have been a place of refuge..'*[14]
John's work found great influence and was frequently cited.

Anglican Communion; The Lambeth Conference Resolutions

As the Church of England over the coming centuries gave birth to the Anglican Communion a new way of organizing and keeping together the different national branches of the church needed to be created. Hence the Lambeth Conferences came in to being in the middle of the 1800's. These were organized and called by the Archbishop of Canterbury and was to all the Anglican bishops of the world. The conference looked at various issues that the communion faced together and to hear of the young growing churches in other countries and their unique contexts. At the ten year conferences resolutions are made that show clearly the mind of the Anglican Communion. However, there is no way of enforcing them (the resolutions) on the different national Anglican provinces. Never the less the resolutions can bring to light what the majority of the Anglican world holds as doctrine. The resolutions are descriptive of the majority, a consensus of the communion, but in practice they don't appear to be prescriptive.

There are only two resolutions that deal with abortion since the conference began in 1867. The two resolutions show that the Christian Tradition of the Early Church has been transmitted into the Life of the Communion as a whole. The resolutions are;

1930 Resolution 16 *The Conference further records its abhorrence of the sinful practice of abortion.*
1978 Resolution 10 2b c) *to emphasise the sacredness of all human life, the moral issues inherent in clinical abortion, and the possible implications of genetic engineering.*

Along with these two resolutions a very full statement came out following the 1958 Lambeth Conference as an Encyclical letter it is perhaps the most comprehensive statement from Lambeth so far; it states

In the strongest terms, Christians reject the practice of induced abortion, or infanticide, which involves the killing of a life already conceived (as well as a violation of the personality of the mother), save at the dictate of strict and undeniable necessity…. The sacredness of life is, in Christian eyes, an absolute which should not be violated.[15]

If the resolutions form the Lambeth conference complete with Encyclical letter were 'Anglican doctrine' then the Anglican position would be described as nothing less than the Christian Tradition that was established form the earliest days of the Christian Church.

Yet in the life of the Anglican Communion it is the national churches and their governance that Christian doctrine is either accepted or rejected. We will look at two responses from influential Anglican provinces in the English speaking world.

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[13] Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970 pg 158

[14] John Weemse *An Exposition of the Moral Law or Ten Commandments of Almighty God* London 1632 pg 84-87 as in Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970 pg 159

[15] "committee Report: The Family in Contemporary Society," The Lambeth Conference, 1958, *The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops together with the resolutions and Reports* London 1958

Current Church of England Teaching

The Church of England through its general synod has made resolutions which indicate that she has remained in fidelity to the established Christian Tradition concerning abortion. In 2005 a briefing paper put out by the General Synods Mission and Public Affairs Division states

"There is a consistent Church of England position. All human life, including life developing in the womb, is created by God in his own image and is therefore, to be nurtured, supported and protected. The report goes on to say *The position of the Church of England is often compared to that of The Roman Catholic Church… Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.* Furthermore the report says *In light of our conviction that the foetus has the right to live and develop as a member of the human family we see abortion … as a great moral evil.*[16]

The Church of England has been faithful to the Lambeth Conference and in turn to the Christian Tradition at its highest level of governance. There have often been calls from the English Church to the government to look at the abortion issue in the life of the nation.

The Episcopal Church of the United States of America

The other influential English-speaking Anglican Church is the Episcopal Church of the USA. It has a very large governing system which is called The General Convention. The acts and resolutions that are passed in convention then become the official views, doctrines and laws of the American Church. Abortion in the Episcopal Church seen through the decisions of General Convention indicates that the American church has changed from that of the Christian Tradition. In 1967 the house of bishops declared themselves in favour of relaxation of the existing laws against abortion. The sanctity of life, rather than been an absolute, is now only a paramount concern in Christian theology and teaching. [17] It goes on to say, *we do believe there are considerations that may indicate that a pregnancy should be terminated for the sake of the mother or the child or both.*[18] The resolutions from the General Convention indicate a growing rejection of the Christian Tradition and the Lambeth Conference. In 1976 the General convention resolved; *The Episcopal Church expresses its unequivocal opposition to any legislation on the part of the national or state governments which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter (termination of pregnancy) and to act upon them.*[19] The Episcopal Church joined the Religious Coalition for the Reproductive Choice, making it the only Church to do so on the national level. The mission of the Religious Coalition is to bring *moral power of religious communities to ensure reproductive* (abortion) *choice.* [20]
In recent years a resolution at General Convention to disaffiliate the Episcopal Church with the Religious Coalition for the Reproductive Choice was firstly defeated then withdrawn. The Episcopal Church still has some residual signs of the Christian Tradition intact on human life such as the resolution; *all human life is sacred from conception until death...*[21] which was

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[16] Briefing paper *General Synod's Mission and Public Affairs Division,* February 2005
[17] Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970 pg 165
[18] Quoted in N.C. News (Domestic), September 23, 1967 as seen in Grisez G. *Abortion; the Myths the Realities and the Arguments* Corpus Books New York 1970 pg 165
[19] General Convention *Journal of General Convention of.. The Episcopal Church, New Orleans, 1982 (*New York: General Convention 1983) p c-156 as seen in www.episopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution
[20] www.rc.rc.org/about/index.cfm
[21] General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of … The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995) pp 323-25 as seen in Episcopalarchives.org

passed at the General Convention in 1994. It shows that although human life is sacred it is a personal choice of the mother should she want this life to be terminated. We can see that in contrast to the Church of England and Lambeth Conference this branch of the Anglican Church has not maintained or defended the Christian Tradition on abortion.

Inter-Provincial Networks and Groupings of Anglicans

Other Groups working across more than one national province unite larger groups of Anglicans. The largest Anglo-Catholic group is Forward in Faith. This group seeks to be faithful to catholic faith, doctrine and practice in the Anglican Communion. Forward in Faith member churches maintain the Christian Tradition on Abortion and have stated it as part of their Fundamental Declarations *The moral commands… in upholding the sanctity of life from conception until death*[22]. GAFCON (The Global Anglican Future Conference) and The Global South networks link Anglicans and Anglican Leaders together. GAFCON and The Global South numerically represent the vast majority of the Anglican Communion. Both groups are interrelated as the Global South members are also part of GAFCON. GAFCON has reiterated its commitment to the faith to the Early Church *the doctrine of the Church is grounded in Holy Scripture and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church.* [23] Although this does not mention abortion by name it commits the network to the upholding the teaching of the ancient Fathers and ecumenical councils which have already dealt with abortion. Nigeria's primate serves the largest province of active Anglicans in the world and is involved in GAFCON and Global South. He signed the Manhattan Declaration with the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Churches and Evangelical Churches. The Documented stated;

> *We will be united and untiring in our efforts to roll back the license to kill that began with the abandonment of the unborn to abortion. We will work, as we have always worked, to bring assistance, comfort, and care to pregnant women in need and to those who have been victimized by abortion, even as we stand resolutely against the corrupt and degrading notion that it can somehow be in the best interests of women to submit to the deliberate killing of their unborn children. Our message is, and ever shall be, that the just, humane, and truly Christian answer to problem pregnancies is for all of us to love and care for mother and child alike.*[24]

The Manhattan declaration maintains the Christian Tradition on morality including abortion and brings together Christians faithful to the apostolic faith. Noticeably the Episcopal Church was not included.

Recent response from The Diocese of Melbourne

In the Anglican Church of Australia we have two major dioceses responding in two very different ways at the official level with regard abortion. The Diocese of Melbourne put a submission to the Victorian Government for the 2008 potential law reform on abortion. The submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission was made at the request of the Most Revd Dr Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne. The group speaking on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne concludes*;*

> *Our consensus view is the gradualist position which argues that while the embryo/foetus is fully human from the time of conception, it accrues moral significance and value as it develops. As a pregnancy advances, more powerful moral reasons are required to allow the destruction of the embryo/foetus. It is more serious to consider destroying a foetus at 28 weeks than at 10 weeks. We would*

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[22] http://www.forwardinfaith.com/artman/publish/printer_485.shtml
[23] http://www.fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration1/
[24] http://www.manhattandeclaration.org/the-declaration/read.aspx

want to see this distinction noted in any legislative provisions, though we would counsel against a legislated absolutist end-point after which an abortion could not proceed. The group went on to say, The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, even within the diversity of members' views, supports the provision of safe and affordable abortions with appropriate safeguards for women who, for whatever reasons, request them.[25]

The submission which was prepared by a woman only 'think tank' of eight members of the clergy and laity of the Diocese, regards human life, as beginning at conception, and yet wants the legal rights to be able to destroy that 'human life' for what ever reasons possible. The Victorian law was changed to reflect this submission, *allowing abortion for any reason up to 24 weeks of pregnancy. After that time a woman can obtain an abortion if two doctors agree. The reasons that can be used not only cover life and health issues they include "social circumstances" as well.*[26] It should be noted that there was an outcry from Anglicans disgusted at the immorality of the submission and other Anglican groups in the diocese openly petitioned to change the submission to show the Christian Tradition and not the conclusions of the Diocesan Working Group.

Recent response from The Diocese of Sydney

The Diocese of Sydney in 2008 passed a motion at Synod which clearly spoke of the Sanctity of Human life and equally maintained the theological aspect of the sinfulness of abortion. The last sentence Encourages, *all Christians equally to make known Jesus' love for all unborn human life and judgment of those who end it, and his offer of forgiveness for those who have done so*.[27] If this motion speaks with authority for the Diocese of Sydney it therefore has maintained the apostolic faith complete with the theological implications of the sinfulness of killing innocent human life and also has included the gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation which was not included in the Lambeth Resolutions.

Anglican response in New Zealand

The church in New Zealand has at different times had a chance to reaffirm the Christian Tradition on abortion, especially when it comes to national legislation been debated on abortion. The law concerning abortion in New Zealand prior to 1978 was

Crimes Act 1961 Section 182: Killing unborn Child

1) *Everyone is liable to imprisonment for a term… who causes death of any child that has not become a human being in such a manner that he would have been guilty of murder if the child had become a human being.*

And section 183: Procuring Abortion by Drug or Instrument

1) *Everyone is liable to imprisonment … with the intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman or girl, whether she is with child or not*

The law in New Zealand protected the unborn life and punished those whom were intent on destroying it. In this regard the law was consistent with the Christian Tradition. In the late 1960's and 70's there was increased pressure for this law to change which would allow for abortions to be carried out.

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[25] http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/main.php?pg=download&id=10497&m=1197955412
[26] http://www.saltshakers.org.au/issues/abortion/124-the-law-in-australia
[27]http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/news/stories/synods_life_affirming_finale/

In 1975 the Anglican Church's Provincial Public and Social Affairs Committee (which was made up of both Christians and non-Christians) looked at the possible law change and made some conclusions. Its report says about the life of the foetus,

> *While we agree readily that a high value should be placed on life (*foetus) *it is not usually accorded an absolute value... Moreover while a request for abortion may, of course, arise from merely selfish motives and express a callous disregard for life, it may arise out of concern for the quality of life of the pregnant woman, existing children and the family generally. These seem to us to be legitimate concerns.*

They suggest a law change that would mean

> *The termination of a pregnancy shall not be a criminal offence if it is preformed by a registered medical practitioner (*and the)*... continuance of the pregnancy... (*will cause) *injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children*[28]

This document suggested that the then current law of New Zealand which protect 'unborn children' should be replace with a new law which allows for abortion if it effects the mother physically, mentally or effects the would be siblings. If this spoke officially for the Anglican Church in New Zealand then it indicates a departure from the Christian Tradition on Abortion and morality. The Law in NZ changed to reflect some of the suggestions made in this report.

Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki

The Diocese of Waikato (and Taranaki) in 1990 passed a motion at Synod with the intention of upholding the Sanctity of Human life. The motion contained a clause to support those who are working to protect the unborn population and encourages those affected by abortion with the healing love of Christ. If this speaks the mind and intentions of the Diocese then it is clear the Diocese has maintained the Christian Tradition on abortion and equally has endorsed the consensus of the Anglican Communion resolutions from Lambeth Conference.

Conclusion

The Anglican Communion with its various levels of authority and jurisdictions has responded to abortion both with fidelity to the Christian Tradition and a rejection of it. If the Lambeth Conference speaks with authority for all Anglicans then one could say the Anglican response is consistent with the Christian Tradition which regards abortion as a serous sin as it destroys an innocent life. However different Provinces and Dioceses have rejected the Lambeth Conference Resolutions, some even supporting abortion on demand amongst its members through local Synods. In New Zealand the Anglican response in 1975 departed from the apostolic faith and encouraged legislators to lift the legal protection of the unborn. The Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki affirmed its commitment to the Christian Tradition on abortion by passing the 1990 motion on the Sanctity of Human Life.

Responses from NZ mainline churches on the issue of abortion -

Roman Catholic
The Roman Catholic church's response to the issue of abortion is based on 2 documents each of 80 foolscap pages in length.

1. Evangelium Vitae 1995, Pope John Paul 11.
2. Caritas in Veritate 2005 Pope Benedict XV1

The words mortal and venial sin are no longer used and the current language is grave and minor sins. Abortion is a grave sin and as such requires repentance and reconciliation with God, the self, the unborn child and any significant other.

Presbyterian Church via the Moderator
The Presbyterian Church honours the sanctity of human life but does not have any policy on this issue. They leave this matter to the individual to use their conscience and make decisions for themselves. Their policy is one of inclusiveness at all times to all people.

Methodist Church via Superintendent and President
They are an inclusive church and neither Faith and Order nor Public Statement have any policy on this issue. They do not get involved in any individual's decision making within their congregations. They leave this issue to individual conscience and are compassionate to all.

Church of Christ via T. Hooper, B. Millar, N Whittaker
Do not have a policy on this issue as each church in individual and autonomous.

Baptist General Assembly via R McCann, I Brown, K Fairhall
Their governance statement was that they hold to the dignity of human life but have no policy on abortion. This issue was last debated in the late 1980's with Dame Vivian Boyd in the chair. They do not get involved in the private decision making of the members of their church.

How these policies are put into action -

Roman Catholic
They ensure that all members know what the church teaches and understand this as far as they are able. All being made in the image of God everyone has a right to life. Sacramentality of all life as God is in all. This grave sin needs forgiveness and reconciliation thus Project Rachel is provided by the church as are priests. A general counselling service is also available.

Project Rachel is set up by the Catholic Church but Anglican representation on it is also recognised. Women (and others) have the facility of a 24 hour telephone service and are seen either at rooms set aside, not on church premises or homes can be visited if requested. The women are assured that God never excludes them from His love and they can be forgiven for any sin they repent of until the very moment they die. Although these women often feel that God does not want them in fact they only people outside God's grace are those who deliberately state that they do not want God in their lives at all. They therefore reject God. He never rejects them.

The church takes into account the mitigating circumstances of each woman and family who felt that they had no other choice due to coercion or undue pressure. Total alienation of the fullness of God, self and others is called hell the opposite is called heaven. Deliberate exclusion from God's love is the opposite of the church's teaching.

(The Catechism of the Catholic Church in the World is formulated by the Bishops.)

Presbyterian
Offer counselling services for all in need of such. Nothing special for abortion.

Methodist
Offer counselling services for all in need of such. Nothing special for abortion.

Baptist Church
Offers counselling services for all in need of such but nothing special for those involved in abortion.

Salvation Army
Offers general counselling services, however, nothing specific for pre or post abortion. Their policy is to guide the mother towards continuing the pregnancy even though medically they are eligible for a termination. This is done to preserve the human life of the unborn child.

In the case of abnormality of the foetus, whereby the child's life will be incompatible with human life, they have found that continuing with the pregnancy with the child dying in the mothers arms, has less long term adverse effects on the mother. (This is also what Project Rachel has found).

Pre and post termination counselling usually occurs when the woman is there for counselling for a different problem. The termination issue raises its head when often least expected and is dealt with in a caring loving manner. The Salvation Army values all human life and this means the life of both child and mother. They are compassionate to all who make mistakes in life and try not to be judgmental towards anyone.

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT ASPECTS OF THE REPORT "STANDARDS OF CARE FOR WOMEN REQUESTING INDUCED ABORTION IN NEW ZEALAND" OCTOBER, 2009

This comprehensive report was written by a Standards Committee which was set up by and for the Abortion Supervisory Committee. It covers, among other things, the Legal and Ethical aspects of abortion; the organisation of services; information for women; pre-abortion assessment; abortion procedure, aftercare and follow up, and standards for Audit and Service accreditation.

Legal and Ethical aspects of abortion

1. "Under the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act 1977, there must be an Abortion Supervisory Committee whose role is to keep under review all provisions of the abortion law and the operation and effect of those provisions in practice." (p.5)

2. a) Abortions cannot be performed unless authorised by two certifying consultants (p.5)
   b) It is also the role of the Abortion Supervisory Committee to ensure licensed institutions provide access to counselling services that meet professional standards
   c) Section 35 also states that certifying consultants shall advise a woman seeking abortion of her right to seek counselling from any appropriate person or agency.

3. The legal situation regarding age of access to abortion services is set out in the Care of Children Act 2004 (Section 38) which states that:-

   If given by a female child (of whatever age) the following have the same effect as if she were of full age:
   a) a consent to carry out any medical or surgical procedure for the purpose of terminating her pregnancy by a person professionally qualified to carry it out;

and
b) a refusal to consent to the carrying out of any procedures of that kind.

4. The grounds for abortion are set out in the Crimes Act 1961. They include
   a) serious danger to the life, physical or mental health of the woman
   b) any form of incest or sexual relationship with a guardian
   c) mental subnormality
   d) foetal abnormality when the pregnancy is less than twenty weeks gestation (since 1978).

   Extremes of maternal age or sexual violation may be taken into account but are not of themselves grounds for abortion.
5. Conscientious Objection and Ethics
   Under Section 4b of the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act, no person shall be under any obligation to perform or assist in the performance of an abortion.

Guidelines to Ethics and Decision-making

The report contains a "useful" guideline to Ethics and Ethics Decision-making in Appendix 4 (p.18). It covers Ethics and Abortion, ethical issues arising in the counselling context, self-determination versus paternalism: confidentiality and privacy, including the unravelling of ethical assumptions, and a problem-solving model for ethical decision-making. (p.22)

Abortion in New Zealand:

Spontaneous abortion, is as it states, without any intervention.

Abortion is a medical intervention and in terms of medicine is performed for therapeutic reasons. These reasons may be physical or for mental well-being of the patient. New Zealand Legislation attempts to provide a formula for this intervention.

It is the perception in today's society that many women use this surgical approach as a means of contraception as they cite physical or mental dysfunction as the reason they are eligible to access an abortion. Self abortion is an offence under the law in New Zealand.

The Abortion Supervisory Committee sets up and maintains the list of certifying consultants who may approve abortions and they also check on the availability and quality of these services. Each service must have counselling services available.

There are two approaches to gaining an abortion in New Zealand. One for women who have a pregnancy under twelve weeks and the other is a little more onerous for women over the twelve week gestation. In the first instance the woman may be referred to a licensed clinic either by her General Practitioner or a Family Planning doctor. For a woman who is over the twelve week gestation an operating Surgeon must be willing to perform such an operation and if so the women then must have two certifying consultants' approval prior to surgery. A certificate must be issued prior to an abortion being done.

The grounds for abortion are clearly stated in the Crimes Act 1961 with two amendments passed in 1978. These are:

- serious danger to life;
- serious danger to physical health;
- serious danger to mental health;
- incest or sexual relations with a guardian;
- mental sub-normality and foetal abnormality.

Other factors taken into account are extremes of age and sexual violation.

Another important Act to consider is the amendment to the Guardianship Act which gives any female of any age the ability to consent to or refuse an abortion. This section was transferred to the Care of Children Act in 2004.

Past history confirms that having a non-medical abortion can cause either death of the mother or lasting damage which will prevent women from conceiving in the future. They receive no counselling either prior to taking action nor following such a procedure.

All staff working in the health services of today have a right to not take part in any of the legal avenues provided for women having a legal abortion.

To the certifying consultants who are often General Practitioners who have trained to be part of this service are in many cases hard to find. It is accepted that by doing this work they often expose themselves to taunting and even having their names published by the radical anti-abortion group. It is, therefore, important to have a roster of medical staff and very clear expectations plus support for them as they do this work.

As stated in the Guardianship Act, a female of any age may consent or refuse an abortion. This then means that a girl of less than 16 years is able to make this decision to have an abortion without parental consent.

Case Study
In the case of a school girl who had gone through the system requiring a surgeon to perform the abortion it was known that her parents would not allow or support her to make this decision. The surgeon and counsellor felt it necessary to put a careful plan in place for the ward staff as they were very aware, should the parents gain some knowledge of impending surgery, this young girl would be taken home immediately. This in fact, did transpire, and the parents arrived on the ward just as she had had her pre-medication and the whole ward heard the screaming of the young woman and her parents. She was pulled out of bed and in spite of the surgeon and counsellor trying to talk to the parents she was dragged home.

This was a young girl who had an extremely good future ahead of her, excellent school grades, in fact a good all-rounder. As explained by the consulting surgeon, she had certainly been brought up to respect life, it had taken her and her boyfriend many hours of anxious and careful consideration to come to this conclusion as they could see no way out for them.

The outcome for this young girl and her future is not known but one can only hope that she continued, with support and her young child to do well.

Conclusion
What can the Anglican Doctrine do to inform the Church and have an opinion as each case is so different. It would be impossible to legislate for individuals and the law covers these aspects with those well-qualified to help women.

- The Church should consider that abortion for therapeutic reasons and under the legal requirements be used as a contraceptive.
- The Church should pursue a leadership role and educate women and families to support and speak out about abortion more openly.
- Above all, the Church must respect the many aspects and views of families in an open and supportive manner.

Steve Chadwick, M.P. for Rotorua is advocating that abortion be taken from the Crimes Act and cited within the Health Act as he feels we must move away from considering abortion a crime.

Support for this theory is by no means across party and if proceeded with would likely to be an individual conscience vote.

April 2011