

## MODEL RESOLUTIONS FOR YOUR 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Please consider writing a resolution (or two) for life for your 2015 Annual Conference. Pray to the Lord of Life for guidance. And pray for the Holy Spirit to give you trust and obedience. If you do not step forward and assume this task, who from your Annual Conference will?*

*If you indeed decide to write a resolution (or two) for life, you are invited to use one or both of the model resolutions that follow. These model resolutions are only that -- models. Edit them. Add to them. Subtract from them. Make them your own. Shape them especially for your particular Annual Conference. And feel free to contact Lifewatch for any additional assistance that you might need.*

*Thank you for taking on this task in the courage the Spirit provides and for offering witness to the Gospel of Life in your Annual Conference. (Paul T. Stallsworth thanks John Lomperis for his strong assistance in writing these resolutions.)*

### **2015 MODEL RESOLUTION I:**

#### **RESOLUTION: AMEND THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE'S PARAGRAPH ON ABORTION (161J)**

WHEREAS, Scripture teaches that each and every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27); WHEREAS, Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you [Father] would save your people." ("A Service of Word and Table I," The United Methodist Hymnal [1989], p. 9);

WHEREAS, the Church universal through the ages has consistently witnessed and ministered, within the Church and to society, to protect all innocent people from death -- including the unborn child, and mother, from abortion -- and to offer forgiveness and healing, that are available through Jesus Christ, to those who have been involved in morally unjustifiable killing (including abortion);

WHEREAS, the universal Church's consistent witness on life and abortion is represented by The United Methodist Church's stated belief in "the sanctity of unborn human life" and "the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child" (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

WHEREAS, Paragraph 161J, as presently written, has allowed some in The United Methodist Church to support, in a one-sided way, a broad range of pro-choice politics, policies, and laws -- to the point that most of our denomination's public witness on life and abortion clearly contradicts the universal Church's, and The United Methodist Church's, recognition of "the sanctity of unborn human life" and "the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child" (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

WHEREAS, Paragraph 161J is morally inconsistent because it speaks of "the unborn child" and yet supports laws that permit abortion, which takes the life of the unborn child (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]); and

WHEREAS, the 2012 Book of Discipline's Social Principles' Paragraph 161J on abortion, as amended below, can lead The United Methodist Church to rejoin historic Christianity's teaching on life and abortion that aspires to protect the unborn child and mother.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary, using the rationale stated above, to petition, in a timely and appropriate manner, the 2016 General Conference to amend Paragraph 161J of The Book of Discipline to read:

J) Abortion -- The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.

We recognize tragic conflicts of **physical** life with **physical** life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection or eugenics (see Resolution 3184).

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. This procedure shall be performed only by certified medical providers.

**Whenever the unborn child may be capable of surviving outside his or her mother's womb, every reasonable effort should be made to preserve both lives.** Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion. We entrust God to provide guidance, wisdom, and discernment to those facing an unintended pregnancy.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We mourn, and are committed to ~~promoting the diminishment of~~ **diminishing**, high abortion rates. The Church shall encourage ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies such as comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education **grounded in Christian teaching**, advocacy in regard to contraception, and support of initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls around the globe.

Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. ~~They should also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy.~~ We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption **as a generally preferable alternative to abortion.** (See Paragraph 161L.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel. (The Book of Discipline [2012])

THEREFORE, BE IF FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary, because of the fifty-word limit that has been imposed on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: "The current wording of Paragraph 161J has been treated by some United Methodists as a means for one-sidedly advocating for public policies advancing elective abortion. These amendments to Paragraph 161J would more clearly align our church with biblical, historic Christian teaching that defends unborn children and their mothers from abortion."

**2015 MODEL RESOLUTION II:  
RESOLUTION: WITHDRAW THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FROM  
THE RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE**

WHEREAS, "The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) was originally founded in 1973 as the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) to safeguard the newly-won constitutional right to privacy in decisions about abortion." ("History," <http://rcrc.org/homepage/about/history>, accessed on 01/15/15);

WHEREAS, RCRC works to defend and expand the absolute right to abortion -- that is, the right to all abortions, whatever the circumstances, without exception -- in American law;

WHEREAS, one RCRC publication describes aborting unborn children as "God's work" or "holy work, service provided by God's people on behalf of God's people," and encourages religious leaders to bless the work of providing elective abortions (Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship, RCRC, <http://www.readbag.com/rcrc-pdf-prayerfully>, pp. 73-74, 101-102, accessed on 02/02/15);

WHEREAS, RCRC, in its "Words of Choice: Countering Anti-Choice Rhetoric" ([https://web.archive.org/web/20110320103739/http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Words\\_of\\_Choice.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20110320103739/http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Words_of_Choice.pdf), accessed 02/02/15), explicitly argues against using the following words, phrases, and moral claims that are found in The United Methodist Church's central teaching on abortion (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline [2012]): "abortion as...birth control," "[abortion] as...gender selection," "adoption," "crisis pregnancy centers," "mother," "notification and consent," "partial-birth abortion" opposition, "sacredness of...life," "sanctity of...life," and "unborn child;"

WHEREAS, RCRC works for abortion rights in any and all circumstances, while The United Methodist Church teaches that moral discernment, on matters related to abortion, is essential, because the Church "[is] equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child," "cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control," and "unconditionally reject[s] [abortion] as a means of gender selection or eugenics" (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

WHEREAS, RCRC has consistently lobbied government against any attempt to limit the practice of partial-birth abortions, while The United Methodist Church has since 2000 "oppose[d] the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call[s] for the end of this practice" with rare exceptions (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

WHEREAS, RCRC has consistently favored the availability of partial-birth abortion, while the 2012 General Conference decided that the Church's General Council on Finance and Administration "shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall expend United Methodist funds in a manner that violates the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church to 'oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice [with rare exceptions]' (Paragraph 161J). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures." (Paragraph 806.10, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

WHEREAS, RCRC supported the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), which if adopted would have overturned all federal, state, and local laws even mildly restricting abortion, while The United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society withdrew its support of FOCA in 2008, because this RCRC-supported bill was in conflict with The United Methodist Church's position on abortion ("Living in the Truth: Church and Society, Obama, and Abortion," Lifewatch [03/01/09], p. 6, [www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch\\_newsletter\\_03-09.pdf](http://www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-09.pdf), accessed 02/02/15; and Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2008]);

WHEREAS, Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker, retired bishop of The United Methodist Church, has declared: "At the 2004 General Conference, the church endorsed our [United Methodist] agencies' continued participation in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice without much of a debate about how participation in this coalition compromises our public witness against abortion" ("Do No Harm!," Lifewatch [03/01/05], p. 3, [www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch\\_newsletter\\_03-05.pdf](http://www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-05.pdf), accessed 02/02/15);

WHEREAS, the 2008 General Conference narrowly voted, when many African delegates were not present, to continue participation in RCRC;

WHEREAS, during the 2012 General Conference, although a legislative subcommittee and committee had both voted to withdraw The United Methodist Church from RCRC, a regular plenary vote on this matter never took place, so that this petition had no opportunity to be adopted;

WHEREAS, "the members of our denomination are not of one mind over the precise conditions in which abortion can be supported" (#2026, The Book of Resolutions [2012], p. 124), and therefore agencies of the entire United Methodist Church should not be permitted to join a political lobby such as RCRC;

WHEREAS, other mainline denominations, with positions on abortion similar to that of The United Methodist Church, have either chosen not to become members of RCRC (e.g., the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Disciples of Christ) or severed ties with RCRC (American Baptist Churches USA and the Northern Province of the Moravian Church);

WHEREAS, "Reverends like us should never oppose access to abortion or sex ed" (*sic*, [www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/29/reverends-like-us-should-never-oppose-access-to-abortion-or-sex-ed/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/29/reverends-like-us-should-never-oppose-access-to-abortion-or-sex-ed/), accessed on 02/02/15) -- written by RCRC's President and CEO Rev. Harry Knox, and by RCRC's Board of Directors Chair Dr. Alethea R. Smith-Withers -- advocates for "abortion care" and thereby demonstrates that RCRC's work continues to be divisive in The United Methodist Church because of its lack of care for the unborn child; and

WHEREAS, individual United Methodists can dialogue with RCRC without leading The United Methodist Church to legitimate RCRC's educational and political agenda, which conflicts with our Social Principles' teaching on life and abortion (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary to forward this resolution, in a timely and appropriate manner, to the 2016 General Conference to withdraw immediately the General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women from membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the 2015 session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary because of the fifty-word limit that has been imposed on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: "RCRC is a one-sided political lobby that opposes all disapproval or limitation of abortion. RCRC's advocacy often directly contradicts our Social Principles on abortion, but it still uses our Church's name. Several Annual Conferences and many United Methodist leaders have urged the Church to end all association with RCRC."