

01-GS-41 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-Third General Synod adopts the resolution "Support for Federally Funded Research on Embryonic Stem Cells."

SUPPORT FOR FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH ON EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

WHEREAS, Jesus set an example, by his ministry of healing and caring for the sick and disabled, challenging us to follow his example by supporting the healing and caring ministry in our own day;

WHEREAS, human embryonic stem cells can form virtually any type of human cell and thus have the potential to form tissues for any part of the body;

WHEREAS, many scientists agree that research on embryonic stem cells is more promising than that of adult stem cells that have only a limited capability to form certain cell types;

WHEREAS, many scientists believe that embryonic stem cell research could relieve suffering and possibly cure patients with a variety of disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, juvenile diabetes, spinal cord injury, Huntington's disease, and muscular dystrophy;

WHEREAS, there are currently over 25,000 frozen embryos in in vitro fertilization clinics that probably will eventually be discarded;

WHEREAS, the National Institutes of Health developed guidelines regulating federally funded research on stem cells, provided they were taken from frozen human embryos derived from in vitro fertilization and which would be discarded after the treatment of infertile couples;

WHEREAS, in Spring 2001 the present administration canceled the inaugural meeting of a National Institutes of Health committee that was to review the applications for federal grants to study human embryonic stem cells;

WHEREAS, there is bipartisan support for research using human embryos, including many Democratic and Republican legislators;

WHEREAS, research on embryonic stem cells is already underway in privately funded laboratories where regulations and guidelines do not apply;

WHEREAS, the support for federally funded research will impose ethical guidelines and oversight; and

WHEREAS, by banning the research, we foreclose the possibility of doing all we can to improve the lot of the living, and in many cases giving them new life;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ supports federally funded embryonic stem cell research within ethically

sound guidelines (including concern for justice, privacy, access to the benefits of the research for all) and the limitations set forth by the National Institute of Health;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod requests the General Minister and President of United Church of Christ to send a letter to the President of the United States urging approval of federal funding for embryonic stem cell research within National Institute of Health guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod requests Justice and Witness Ministries to advocate for allocation for stem cell research before the appropriate Congressional committees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod requests Conferences, Association, and local churches to work diligently in support of the legislation allowing stem cell research, providing appropriate guidelines for such research, and allocating funds to support the research; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the Covenanted Ministries to provide leadership and study materials for education, discussion, and theological reflection about the ethical issues of developments in the field of stem cell research.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.