



Oral Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Hearing on Abortion - January 2013

Chairman, members of this Joint Committee on Health and Children, I would first like to thank you for this opportunity on behalf of the Methodist Church in Ireland to share with you the Methodist position on abortion and our hopes for the forthcoming legislation.

As you will see from our submission, the Methodist Church, strongly states that abortion on demand is wrong. However, after considerable time spent in consultation with experienced members in the church, we take the view that termination should be available to a mother in 4 circumstances:

1. Where the mother's life is at risk
2. Where there is risk of grave injury to the physical or mental health of the other
3. In cases of rape or incest
4. In cases of gross abnormality of the foetus (e.g. anencephaly) or otherwise where it is incapable of survival

The Methodist Church recognises however, that it is unlikely at the moment, that any legislation coming forward would include all 4 circumstances. It appears the key question is will this government will legislate for terminations where the mother's life is at risk? We strongly urge the government to do so.

In this urging, we recognise that we go against very strong feelings and beliefs of many in this country. Our desire is not to offend nor do we wish anyone to think that we have come to this position lightly. We recognise that the foetus is not just an appendage of the mother's body. It is a developing being as it goes through the various stages of gestation and so should progressively be accorded rights culminating with full respect as an individual on birth. But the mother is also an individual, accorded with all the rights that her fellow men and women have and has the right to life. Thus she has the right to life-saving procedures that we all have and that includes allowing a termination when necessary to preserve her life.

Amongst the varied physical medical reasons which may cause grave complications for a mother and necessitate a termination, the Methodist Church believes that the mental welfare of the mother must also be included. If her medical team deem that suicide is a real concern and possibility we believe they should be allowed to consider termination as part of her treatment.

The Methodist Church believes that no law should attempt to legislate for a specific form of morality but rather to set the minimum standards for the social good. We believe the rule of law should allow maximum individual freedom and should only restrict such freedom where there is a clear and unmistakable social necessity. In essence, we believe the legislature should legislate for the public good and not to suit us or any other church/faith explicitly. Whether we agree or disagree with the final legislation is our concern. But we do strongly



urge this Oireachtas to legislate on this issue, to allow for the medical profession to make those difficult but life-saving decisions when a mother's life is in danger without fear of repercussions and to give peace of mind to women in Ireland that they can be assured that their doctor can take all necessary action to save her life.

In closing, I would like to say, we believe the Christian Gospel promotes a just, loving and caring society with emphasis on the dignity and worth of each individual. And so we believe this is the best approach.

Approved by Council on Social Responsibility