

**ALLEGHENY REGION CONFERENCE
POSITION STATEMENTS
ON
SOCIAL CONCERNS**

1. ABORTION

The following position on Abortion was a Resolution adopted at the 1982 Allegheny Region Conference Session. (1982 Journal, page 74)

Whereas, we the members of the Allegheny Region Conference of the Churches of God, recognize that God Almighty, the creator of the heavens and earth and likewise creator and sustainer of all life; having created humankind in His image and placing same in an exalted position among all creation, is therefore the Supreme authority over all human life;

Whereas, we believe that all human life is ordained of God by virtue of the laws of creation, and that such life, regardless of any stage of development or level or existence, is meaningful, and therefore should receive equal protection and respect by all humankind;

Whereas, there exists among humankind a desire to look upon the "unborn" as something less than human and something that may be terminated at will;

Let it be known that we, the members of the Allegheny Region Conference of the Churches of God, oppose any efforts by humankind to provide for the willful termination of life as it exists from the moment of conception, except in cases where a mother's life is in danger, and further, that we approve and applaud any efforts by humankind to preserve, protect and respect such life.

**GENERAL CONFERENCE
POSITION STATEMENTS
ON
SOCIAL CONCERNS**

The following positions are the most recent Resolutions adopted at the 1986 and 1989 General Conference Sessions (1986 G.C. Journal, pages 36-40 and 1989 G.C. Journal, pages A42-A45):

RESOLUTION ON LONELINESS

Whereas the New Testament presents the Apostolic Church as a partnership of believers united in the person of Jesus Christ where fellowship was quick and intimate (I John 1:3), where the needs of people (physical, spiritual, communal, etc.) were met (Acts 2:42-47), where community prospered and loneliness was met with caring (I John 21);

Whereas loneliness oppresses many persons in contemporary society; latchkey children left to fend for themselves by negligent adults, teenagers suffering from poor self-esteem and difficult family or school situations, single adults feeling alone because they have no one, adults despairing because of job or marital problems, older folks lacking meaning and purpose;

Whereas loneliness fosters low self work, negating the abundant life promised by Jesus (John 10:10), and lures people into drugs, alcohol, immorality...or even suicide to escape the seeming pointlessness of life;

WE CONCLUDE

that the church must address this crying need of loneliness; for it is a sickness within the Christian community and a plague upon society. Our churches are filled with people who wear their "churchy" masks. They look so contented and at peace, but would never reveal how they really feel inside. Conversations remain surface pleasantries, rather than deep sharing of problems and feelings. If there were ever a body of people who should be able to deal with life's burdens, it would be the church (Galatians 6:1-10)! Our relationship with Jesus is what enables us to overcome the loneliness that can so easily engulf us. Christ alone can build self-esteem, but he often chooses to work through the Church.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, pattern ourselves upon the Apostolic example where the Christ like life is emulated, and the fellowship of believers reaches out to meet the needs of all its people, especially its lonely people.

FURTHERMORE,

We propose that we combat loneliness in our churches...

By establishing prayer chains and care cells in and among our churches to alleviate the burden of loneliness, and to create *koinonia*.

By nurturing an attitude of caring within and between our churches. We need to learn how to care for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and how best to reach out to their needs. An elective in the Celebration Series can be developed to meet this need.

RESOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Whereas God created each person in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), and cared for all people meeting the basic needs of both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45), and acts on behalf of the poor and weal who are overcome by the strong (Ezekiel 34:17-24, Luke 1:46-55), and in Christ breaks down every barrier that would separate and divide persons (Galatians 3:28); Whereas God provides peace and wholeness through his law and send his son as a witness of live as it is intended to be lived, who recognized the human rights of those whom society discarded;

Whereas Christ rendered all authority on earth to his church to minister and teach in his name (Matthew 28:18-20);

WE CONCLUDE

that the church, being sensitive to all persons' relationship to God and to one another's needs, must provide for those whose basic needs are not met and must speak on behalf of the poor, the downtrodden, and outcast. The church needs to be careful that it does not take its definition of human rights from the world, lest it have no transcendent center. The concept of individual human rights has its roots in Scripture, most appropriately, in the word *shalom*. *Shalom* is usually translated "peace", and comes from a root word meaning "to be healthy, complete, whole, balanced." It describes a life in which one's every need is met, in which a person experiences security, safety and fullness in life, in which one practices justice and is the recipient of justice. *Shalom* describes life as God intends it to be lived (Judges 19:20, I Chronicles 4:40, Isaiah 59:8, Zechariah 8:13, Malachi 2:6). In the Judeo-Christian perspective all persons are entitled to *shalom* - and the human rights that make for *shalom*.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, pray for and practice *shalom*, that those whose lives our people touch may be drawn into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ in order that they may care for one another in genuine brotherly love.

THEREFORE,

We propose that our churches stand forward in the cause of human rights...

By being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, affecting the political process in our communities, and where possible, in the nation and world, to change those systems which may create violations of human rights so that all persons may experience justice before God.

RESOLUTION ON ABORTION

Whereas God alone is the author and give of life, and all human beings are created in his image (Genesis 1:26);
Whereas human life is of God-given worth independent of the stage of development;
Whereas God's word specifically affirms the inestimable value of human life before birth (Psalms 139:13-16, Jeremiah 1:4-5, Matthew 1:20)

WE CONCLUDE

that there is no such thing as a human life that is not worthy to be lived, for all human life originates with the divine Creator. From the Christian perspective to terminate human life, including unborn life, is a breach of the sixth commandment in the decalogue. We as the church choose to affirm the right to life of each and every human being from conception to the time of natural death.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference deplore and oppose the concept, the practice, and legalization of abortion.

FURTHERMORE,

We propose that our churches take an active role in halting the blight of abortion in our society...

By responsibly interpreting and teaching God's word on this issue. Christians need to help others in and outside the church to understand the value placed on human life by God.

By offering the grace of God, the love of Christ, and the counsel of the Holy Spirit to all whose lives are affected by an abortion.

By assisting parents in finding a worthy home for an unwanted child and offering to all pregnant women considering abortion the alternatives of life. The church must address the problem of unwanted pregnancy, or it is being negligent.

RESOLUTION OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Whereas God created human sexuality (Genesis 1:27), and instituted marriage (Genesis 2:18, 24-25) for the mutual good of man and woman (I Corinthians 7:3-5);

Whereas God forbids sexual intercourse outside marriage, whether premarital or extramarital (Proverbs 6:27-29, I Corinthians 6:13-18, Ephesians 5:3);

Whereas God's word condemns all immoral distortions of human sexuality, including male and female homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:24-27), bestiality (Leviticus 20:15-16, etc.);

WE CONCLUDE

that God's intent in creating human sexuality is that when male and female are joined together, they are one flesh (See I Corinthians 6:16-18). Hence, other than celibacy, outside monogamous heterosexual marriage there can be no biblically moral expression of human sexuality. This is to say that all other so-called "Alternative lifestyles" and/or sexual expressions are immoral sin and in need of the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, affirm the biblical model for human sexuality to be the lifelong heterosexual union of one man and one woman, or celibacy in service to God.

FURTHERMORE,

We promise that our churches counter the concepts and practice of sexual immorality prevalent in our society...

By teaching forthrightly and efficiently the biblical view of human sexuality. The church must not allow secular institutions, nor humanistic culture to offer its depraved philosophy without challenge.

By offering the hope of cleansing and reconciliation with God for all those trapped in sexually immoral relationships. The role of the church must not be to cast the stone at the individual, but to help them find redemption and new life in Jesus.

By developing and supporting ministries which reinforce family life and biblical morality, and face the reality of sexual promiscuity in our society with love, not condemnation.

RESOLUTION ON CHILD ABUSE

Whereas God created mankind in his own image (Genesis 1:26) giving all humanity worth and dignity;

Whereas Jesus instructed his followers that they needed childlike receptiveness and trust to enter the kingdom of heaven, and that is would be better to be drowned in the sea than to offend "one of these little ones which believe in me" (Matthew 18:1-14);

Whereas Jesus himself was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, and did not bypass childhood, but rather "Increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52);

WE CONCLUDE

that to abuse a child verbally, physically, sexually, or in any manner destroy the child's self-worth and dignity, offends the Master who claimed all children as his own. In addition, to neglect a child physically, emotionally, etc., is child abuse by omission.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference oppose any and all forms of child abuse.

FURTHERMORE,

We propose that our churches go on the initiative to prevent and stop child abuse...

By alerting our people to the signs of child abuse and encouraging them to intervene. Child abuse must be reported. Not reporting it is child abuse!

By stopping the tragedy of abused children. The church must learn the causes and treatments of child abuse. We must help abused victims and families with time, resources, and understanding. We must support legal and social efforts to combat child abuse.

By assisting parents in the care and nurture of their children. This can be accomplished in the local church through an emphasis on family life, parenting, marriage enrichment, etc. Local conferences and/or the General Conference need specific programs to counter child abuse with positive teaching on Christian family life.

RESOLUTION ON APARTHEID

Whereas God created all mankind in his express image (Genesis 1:26) making all persons of equal and inestimable worth, and in Christ Jesus there can be no basis for discrimination whether by race, economic class, sex, or whatever (Galatians 3:28);

Whereas the Churches of God, General Conference in 1845 found black servitude to be a "flagrant violation of the natural, unalienable and most precious rights of man, and utterly inconsistent with the spirit, laws and profession of the Christian religion";

Whereas the tragedy in South Africa is rooted in the policy of apartheid and the systematic violation of human rights and justice by the ruling minority;

WE CONCLUDE

that the system of apartheid, as it exists in South Africa, is a flagrant violation of the rights of man as stated by our forbearers of faith in 1845, and is inconsistent with teachings and exercise of the Christian faith.

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, oppose this system of apartheid, and pray for its abolition.

FURTHERMORE

We propose that all the churches, church institutions and/or agencies give study to this concern and take action in accord with Christian conscience.

RESOLUTION ON MINISTRY TO SINGLE PARENTS

Whereas the New Testament presents the church as a group of believers acting out their faith through good deeds (James 2:14-17), where the needs of the people were met (Acts 2:42-47), where people responded to others out of love for their Lord (John 21:15);

Whereas single parents may experience financial difficulties, social emptiness, depression, anxiety, a lowering of self-esteem through feelings of guilt and anger;

Whereas their children may have difficulties in social relationships and a greater tendency toward problems in school;

Whereas these people are often overcome by frustration and failure and are unable to grasp the promise of God for them (John 4:4) and experience less than the abundant life;

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, intentionally encourage and enhance our ministries to single parents, patterning these ministries after the New Testament example of the fellowship of believers reaching out to those who are in need;

THAT WE, promote love and caring in our congregations:

By learning to be effective listeners,

By sponsoring single parent support groups,

By intentionally including single parents and their children in the larger church family,

By developing self-esteem through positive reinforcements,

By providing day care programs where possible,

By allocating and securing funds for these ministries.

RESOLUTION OF MINISTRY TO ALCOHOLICS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Whereas alcoholism is a spreading epidemic which can affect anyone who drinks, bringing suffering and embarrassment not only to alcoholics, but to their families as well;

Whereas alcoholics and their families need the ministry, love, acceptance and fellowship of the Christian community;

Whereas the Bible teaches that we are to hate sin, but love the sinner,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference, while reaffirming our stand against the use of beverage alcohol, encourage compassion and ministry to those whose lives it affects;

By warning and educating children and young people concerning the dangers of chemical dependency,

By educating ourselves that we may better understand alcoholics and their families' problems and needs,

By seeking out ways to reach those affected by alcoholism, which because of guilt and embarrassment may not turn to the church for the help they need,

By seeking our persons who have a special concern for an outreach and ministry to alcoholics and their families.

RESOLUTION ON MATERIALISM

Whereas the church recognizes God's Lordship over all "things" and that He is the Lord of yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8);

Whereas people who want to get rich fall into temptations and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction (I Timothy 6:9-10);

Whereas Jesus calls His followers to a joyful life of carefree unconcern for possessions (Luke 12:22-31);

Whereas we recognize the truth of Jesus' statement, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:34);

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT WE, the Churches of God, General Conference encourage our churches and members to allow God to transform their minds from within and strive to be controlled by Him in their dealing with all "things" by seeking first His kingdom and righteousness;

THAT WE encourage our Churches of God publications to deal with the issue of materialism through the development of curriculum and emphasis in periodicals.

THAT WE encourage our churches and members to make wise and generous use of the "things" God has entrusted to us so that we might minister to the needs of those around us.

RESOLUTION ON PORNOGRAPHY

Whereas the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography has concluded that pornography is harmful to society in that:

1. Depictions of violence against women and related to violence against women in real life,
2. Pornography is degrading and humiliating to women,
3. For a certain percentage of men, the use of pornography is progressive and addictive in nature,
4. Organized crime controls more than 85 percent of all commercially produced pornography in America,
5. Pedophiles, who abuse an average 366 boys and girls in a lifetime, typically use pornography to soften children's defenses against sexual exploitation,
6. Outlets for obscenity are magnets for sex-related crimes,
7. So-called "adult bookstores" are often centers of disease and homosexual activity;

Whereas the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography has issued 92 specific recommendations designed to encourage enforcement and to close loopholes in existing laws;

Whereas there is a special concern with regard to pornography falling into the hands of children and adolescents;

Whereas Christians are responsible to take a stand against evil (Proverbs 11:11);

Whereas the enforcement of obscenity laws is dependent upon community standards;

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT WE the Churches of God, General Conference, oppose the production, distribution and consumption of pornographic material;

THAT WE encourage prosecutors on the federal, state, and local levels to enforce existing pornography statutes;

THAT WE encourage our legislators to implement the recommendations of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography in order to tighten up loopholes in the laws;
THAT WE encourage our churches:
To educate their people about the problems that pornography causes in their community,
To take creative steps to stop the distribution of pornography in their communities,
To press their prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and legislators to implement the recommendations of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

RESOLUTION ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Whereas we are commanded by scripture to cause our minds to dwell on those things which are "true, honest, just, pure, and lovely" (Philippians 4:8), to respect God's name (Exodus 20:7), and to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) to a world that desperately needs the seasoning and illumination of Christianity;
Whereas broadcast television is increasingly using the name of God in ways showing a lack of reverence, using vile and offensive language, and is presenting, as the norm, sexual and ethical mores clearly out of step with scriptural mandates;
Whereas we find this type of programming especially disturbing and offensive when aired at a time period in which it can readily be viewed by impressionable children;

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT WE the Churches of God, General Conference, do not approve of the light, flippant, irreverent use of God's name that is becoming increasingly common; the almost constant barrage of sexual innuendos, the use of vulgarisms and other offensive language, the presentation of homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle, and the portrayal of sexual activity between partners not married to each other,
THAT WE find this type of programming especially disturbing and offensive when aired at a time period in which it can readily be viewed by impressionable children;
THAT WE encourage our members to practice responsible television viewing;
THAT WE call upon the broadcasting industry to censor itself, to initiate reforms riding itself of its present unsavoriness, and to offer a more wholesome refined type of entertainment;
THAT WE call upon the Federal Communications Commission vigorously to enforce existing standards for decency in the broadcast media;
THAT WE call upon our churches and members to be diligent in seeking to initiate reforms within the broadcast industry through the industry, its sponsors, and its regulatory agencies;
THAT WE direct the Journalizing Secretary to send copies of this resolution to the Chief Executive Officers of:
The Federal Communications Commission,
The American Broadcasting Corporation,
The Columbia Broadcasting System,
The National Broadcasting Corporation,
The Fox Broadcasting Network;
THAT WE encourage our churches and members to communicate their concern to the previously mentioned organizations and their local television stations.

RESOLUTION ON ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)

Whereas the disease, Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has become an increasing concern in recent years;
Whereas the breakdown of the body's natural immune system caused by AIDS leaves the infected person vulnerable to all sorts of life-threatening diseases;
Whereas there is no known cure for AIDS;
Whereas the primary ways of spreading AIDS are non-monogamous heterosexual contact, homosexual contact, and the shared use of needles for the injection of illegal intravenous drugs;
Whereas we are called to love the sinner, but hate sin;
Whereas we are called to minister selflessly to those in need without regard to how they became needy;

BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT WE the Churches of God, General Conference, encourage a ministry of commission and concern for those infected with the AIDS virus and that we affirm the scriptural teachings regarding human sexuality and the use of drugs;

THAT WE encourage our congregations take an active role in AIDS ministry;
By reaching out in love and concern to AIDS patients and their families;
By teaching both children and adults that sexual intimacy is scripturally acceptable only is a monogamous heterosexual marital relationship,
By warning and educating children and adults concerning the dangers of chemical dependency, including the danger of contaminated needles,
By helping our people to recognize that the role of a servant often calls us to place ourselves in situations we fear in order to minister effectively to those infected with disease.

RESOLUTION ON SAME GENDER UNIONS AND MARRIAGES

Whereas, Scripture teaches that "in the beginning" God created humankind as male and female (Genesis 1:26-28; 5:1, 2) and brought them into relationship with one another (Matthew 19:4-6), and

Whereas, Scripture teaches that relationship between male and female is God's ordained order for all creation (Genesis 6:19, 7:2, 3; Proverbs 18:22; Jeremiah 29:6), and

Whereas, the relationship between male and female genders is God's plan for propagating the species (Genesis 8:17; 9:1), and

Whereas, the uniting of male and female genders is the method God chose for humanity, (Genesis 2:18-24) and that He ordained marriage as the deepest relationship between male and female to provide for and establish stable homes (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 127:3-5; 128:1-6; Proverbs 17:6; Mark 10:6-9; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; I Timothy 5:8,14; Titus 2:1-7; Hebrews 13:4), and

Whereas, the Bible clearly and consistently condemns all homosexual behavior among males and females (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11), and clearly identifies this as sin subject to judgment from God (Genesis 19:1-20, 23-25; Leviticus 18:24-25), therefore

We conclude that all sexual relationships, civil unions and/or marriages of the same gender persons are in opposition to God's plan for humanity; and, as a result, is spiritual sin subject to the judgment of God; and, in addition, will lead to destructive social values in that it violates even the basic laws of nature.

BE IT RESOLVED

That we, the Allegheny Region Conference, Churches of God General Conference, clearly and consistently recognize marriage only as a unique relationship, ordained of God in the Holy Scriptures, and existing exclusively between a man and a woman.

That we shall oppose social tolerance and/or legal sanction of same gender civil unions, marriages and other recognized same gender sexual relationships.

That while we encourage the ministry of reconciliation to God through Christ (II Corinthians 5:18, 19) for deliverance from same gender sexual lifestyles, we shall also adhere to explicit standards for the integrity of the ministries and churches of the Allegheny Region Conference, Churches of God General Conference.

That we shall not approve ministerial credentials for any person involved in a same gender sexual relationship. Should any minister be involved in a same gender sexual relationship, their credentials shall be recalled.

That no minister of this conference shall approve, conduct, or solemnize same gender unions or marriages. Any minister who does so will have their credentials recalled.

That no minister or lay person shall teach, support, or promote same gender sexual relationships as an acceptable lifestyle. Any person who does shall have their respective credentials recalled and be removed from ministry assignment and/or conference leadership position.

Furthermore, we instruct our churches to adopt the principles of this resolution, applying them consequentially for principles within their particular local church policy.

(This resolution adopted by Conference Delegates in Session, May 2004)