



## Statement on the proposed Abortion legislation - December 2012

1. The Methodist position on abortion, re-iterated at several Annual Conferences of our Church, can be summarised as follows:
    - a) We believe that abortion on demand is wrong. We believe that a foetus cannot be regarded as just an appendage of the mother's body, but that as it develops through the various stages of gestation, so it should progressively be accorded rights culminating with full respect as an individual on birth.
    - b) However, we also believe that abortion is a permissible choice in a small number of very specific cases, in particular: -
      - where the mother's life is at risk;
      - where there is risk of grave injury to the physical or mental health of the mother;
      - in cases of rape or incest;
      - in cases of gross abnormality of the fetus (e.g. anencephaly) or otherwise where it is incapable of survival.
    - c) We maintain that Constitutional clauses are not the way to deal with the abortion question. The best solution is the introduction of carefully drafted, sensitive but relatively restrictive legislation. Complex social issues require the comprehensive detailed approach which is possible with legislation, but impossible through the blunt instrument of a few words in a Constitutional amendment.
  2. The Methodist Church favours a pluralist democratic society where all shades of opinion are treated with respect. The role of law should not attempt to legislate for a specific form of morality, but rather to set minimum standards for the social good. In keeping with the general nature of such a society, the approach should be to give maximum individual freedom, and should only restrict such freedom where there is a clear and unmistakable social necessity. There are many aspects of social behaviour of which we might disapprove, but that is not in itself a ground for considering legislation.
  3. Given this consistent position, we argued as a minimum, the de facto legal situation following the X and C cases should be enshrined in legislation, in order to give clarity to everyone involved. We favoured, however, enacting legislation which went somewhat beyond the X case to include the range of circumstances outlined above – in particular to allow for abortion in controlled circumstances for
    - Risk to physical/mental health of the mother
      - with the caveat that we are talking about serious certified conditions
    - Pregnancy as a result of rape or incest
    - Congenital Malformations
- but NOT for either
- Economic or social reasons, nor
  - On request



4. We believe this is the best approach towards the sort of open caring society that is most in keeping with our understanding of the implication of the Christian Gospel based on love and respect for the dignity and worth of each individual.

***Council on Social Responsibility***