



The Executive Officers appointed Dr. David Sherbino, Director of the Tyndale Centre for Grief and Loss, to craft this paper. It includes appropriate edits and amendments and was approved by the General Executive on May 3, 2026. This paper addresses current social issues, specifically, Abortion, Suicide, Euthanasia and Medical Assistance in Dying, and replaces the Dignity of Human Life Paper published by the Social Concerns Committee on November 7, 2001.

THE DIGNITY AND SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE (2026)

Preamble

This statement is offered as a pastoral and theological guide for the church as it seeks to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ in complex and sensitive matters related to life, suffering, and human dignity. We recognize that issues such as abortion, suicide, euthanasia and Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) are not abstract debates but deeply personal realities that touch individuals, families and communities within and beyond the church.

We affirm that the church is called to speak truth with clarity and conviction, while also embodying the compassion and mercy of Christ. In addressing these issues, we seek to hold together biblical faithfulness and pastoral care - upholding the sanctity of human life while walking alongside those who suffer, grieve, or struggle with difficult decisions. This statement is intended to articulate the church's theological convictions and guide its pastoral response with a spirit of humility and hope.

The Dignity and Sanctity of Human Life

The dignity and sanctity of human life is a core belief of the Christian faith grounded in the conviction that people are created in the image of God. This foundational principle provides the theological basis for valuing human life and offers clear guidance for the church as it engages in a wide range of social and ethical issues.

The concept of the 'Image of God' is rooted in the creation narrative when God declared "Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26). This declaration signifies that

human beings are distinct from all other creatures, reflecting aspects of God's character in ways not found elsewhere.

Being created in the 'Image of God' implies several factors:

1. We are relational. God exists eternally in relationship and human beings are created for relationship with God and with one another. We are called to live in loving community, reflecting God's relational nature through mutual care, respect, and responsibility.
2. We have the capacity to reason. The ability to think, reflect and make decisions reflects God's wisdom and knowledge. Our capacity for thoughtful choice and discernment is an important aspect of our humanity.
3. We have the capacity to make moral decisions. Human beings are endowed with a conscience and can discern right from wrong. This moral awareness becomes the foundation for ethical living and accountability in the choices we make.
4. We have been given the responsibility to take care of the earth. "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that crawls upon the earth'" (Genesis 1:28). As God has given this task to humanity, in essence we represent God as we steward this responsibility.

The Fall, as described in Genesis 3, reveals that the "Image of God in humanity has been damaged but not destroyed. However, sin has affected every aspect of human life resulting in separation from God, broken relationships with one another, and fractured relationships with creation. Work becomes toilsome, the ground is cursed, and creation itself is described as groaning (Romans 8).

Though the 'Image of God' has been distorted, the good news is through Jesus Christ—who is the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15), the 'Image of God' in humanity is being restored. This restoration is an ongoing process, through which believers are continually being transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). While spiritual growth is progressive, the full restoration of the "Image of God" will be completed at the eschaton. "Beloved, we are now children of God and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

The doctrine of the 'Image of God' in people has profound implications for how we view ourselves and others. Every person possesses inherent worth and dignity that does not depend on health, ability, age or perceived quality of life. As Christians we are called to treat all people with love, respect, and compassion. This conviction informs our belief in the sanctity of life from conception to natural death and shapes our response to issues such as abortion, suicide, euthanasia, MAiD, and social engagement.

Abortion

Abortion is commonly defined as the spontaneous or induced termination of pregnancy. It may occur spontaneously, known as miscarriage, or be induced intentionally through medical or surgical procedures.

Scripture affirms that God values life in the womb and outside the womb. The Psalmist wrote “For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body”. Ps. 139:13-16. Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah records God’s word “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah 1:4-6.

We affirm that human life begins at conception and is sacred because we are created in the image of God. Therefore, the intentional termination of a pregnancy is understood as the taking of human life and is morally permissible only in circumstances where the life of the mother is directly endangered. We oppose abortion on demand as a form of population or birth control and affirm the unborn’s right to life.

Suicide:

Suicide is a deliberate act of ending one’s life. In contemporary society, suicide is a growing and deeply concerning reality that touches the lives of many people regardless of gender, culture, or economic status. It is important to acknowledge that suicide is a complicated and complex issue closely connected to mental health disorders, abuse, violence, or overwhelming loss, particularly when adequate support systems are absent.

While the bible does not explicitly offer moral judgment on suicide, it consistently affirms the sacredness of human life. Scripture records instances of individuals who despaired of life (Elijah, 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah, Jonah 4:3; the Apostle Paul 2 Corinthians 1:8). There are accounts of individuals who did take their life (Saul, 1 Samuel 31:3-5; Saul’s Armour Bearer, 1 Samuel 31:3-5 and Judas, Matthew 27:3-5). In these narratives their death is simply stated without moral commentary, but the surrounding context reveals profound despair and loss of hope.

Because human life is sacred and bears the image of God, suicide must be understood as a tragic loss of life and a failure to honour God’s intention for the preservation of life. At the same time, we recognize that those who die by suicide are often suffering deeply, and their action cannot be separated from their pain.

A common question asked is whether a person who dies by suicide can be saved. Scripture teaches that there is only one unpardonable sin and it is not suicide (Matthew 12:31-32) We therefore refrain from judging the eternal destiny of those who die by suicide. Salvation is not determined by the manner of death but by one’s relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ and his atoning work on the cross (Romans 8;1, 38-39).

In the light of the strong connection between suicide and mental illness, the church is called to respond with compassion, care, and support, particularly for those who grieve the death of a loved one.

Euthanasia and MAiD:

Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) has been legal in Canada since 2016 and was to be available to patients who had a grievous and irremediable medical condition, and the patient's natural death was reasonably foreseeable. Since that time MAiD has expanded beyond end-of-life care to include those whose death is not imminent. There are ongoing concerns that Canadian legislation may be expanded to include MAiD for people with disabilities, those experiencing mental illness, and individuals facing poverty or without adequate care.

Christians acknowledge that profound suffering may lead some to consider MAiD. Nevertheless, we affirm the conviction that to intentionally end one's own life is not compatible with Christian faith and practice. Life is a gift from God and being created in the image of God confers to each person intrinsic value and dignity which does not depend on health, cognitive ability, or perceived quality of life.

While some view euthanasia and MAiD as compassionate responses to suffering, a Christian understanding of compassion calls us to walk with those who suffer, to alleviate pain where possible, and never abandon people when life is difficult and fragile. Suffering is grievous and not something we seek, yet Scripture teaches that God can work in and through suffering to deepen faith, shape character, and bear witness to hope (2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 12:9-10, Philippians 1:12-14). In suffering we affirm God is present and no one suffers alone.

Although Canadian law legally permits MAiD, that does not determine moral righteousness. Intentionally ending life, even for the purpose of relieving suffering, violates the principle of the sanctity of life. Scripture affirms that God alone is sovereign over life and death (Job 1:21).

At the same time, we recognize an important distinction between actively causing death and allowing natural death to occur. This distinction includes refusing or discontinuing extraordinary medical treatment, providing adequate pain medication even if it may unintentionally shorten life, and choosing palliative or hospice care. Scripture reminds us there is a time to be born and a time to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Such decisions can honour life as a gift from God without intentionally causing death.

Social Engagement:

Commitment to human dignity also extends to social issues, including advocating for those who are vulnerable and marginalized by society. Scripture consistently calls God's people to act justly and to care for those who are easily overlooked. The Prophet Micah declares "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

The Bible presents care for the vulnerable and marginalized as a core mandate rooted in the *Imago Dei*. “Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God” (Prov. 14:31). God is revealed as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows ... who leads out the prisoners with singing” (Ps. 68:5–6).

Throughout Scripture, God’s people are consistently called to welcome, protect, and love foreigners, immigrants, and refugees—often referred to as “aliens” or “strangers.” This call is repeatedly grounded in Israel’s own history of oppression and exile in Egypt. Passages such as Leviticus 19:33–34 and Exodus 22:21 emphasize justice, care, and legal equality, urging God’s people to extend hospitality rather than harm. The reception of migrants and refugees must be administered justly and fairly, as the treatment of people in their distress matters deeply, because every person is created in the image of God.

The ministry of Jesus further reveals God’s concern for the marginalized. Jesus reached out to those excluded from society – the Samaritan woman (John 4), the woman caught in adultery (John 8), and Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19) – demonstrating love, dignity, and compassion without distinction. Jesus summarized the essence of the Christian faith as loving God and loving one’s neighbours (Matthew 22:37-40).