

XV — EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

The intent of this position paper is to address euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is not intended to address every issue of human suffering related to death.

We believe that human life is a gift from God and has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition that everyone faces. Suffering that may precede death can be very grievous. It also affords the opportunity for personal reflection and reconciliation.

The ultimate test of our life's priorities may well be how we deal with suffering in the face of death. Such was the case for our Savior in the garden of Gethsemane. He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34) and zealously prayed to be spared from suffering that would only intensify. At the same time, he affirmed his commitment to the larger purpose of the Father, whatever suffering that might involve. The absence of suffering is good, which is why Jesus prayed for it. At the same time, it is not the highest good, which is why he was willing to endure substantial suffering.

The Missionary Church opposes any intervention with the intent to produce death for relief of pain, suffering or economic consideration, or for the convenience of the patient, family or society. We believe that secular arguments for physician-assisted suicide are superseded by a biblical view of a sovereign God who places a limit on human autonomy. We further believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and taking of a life on the other (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17).

In order to affirm the dignity of human life, the Missionary Church advocates the development and use of adequate pain management to relieve suffering, provide human companionship and encourage spiritual support and intercessory prayer.

While for the believer to die is gain (Phil 1:21), it is wrong to impose upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us until we meet him face to face (1 John 3:2).

"Physician-Assisted Suicide": a position paper of the National Association of Evangelicals, 1997.

"Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Theological Perspectives": a position paper of Trinity Seminary: The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, n.d.

"Euthanasia": a position paper of the Christian Medical and Dental Society, approved by the CMDS House of Delegates, May 1, 1992.

— Adopted by the 1999 General Conference