

REFERRED

No. 8951

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF HANDICAPPED INFANTS

REFERRED by the General Assembly to the General Board with the request that a resolution be brought to the 1991 General Assembly.

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Background Information:

Resolution No. 8524, "Resolution Concerning the Rights of Handicapped Infants," was "Committed to the General Board for further consideration" by the Des Moines General Assembly. That action was overlooked in the processes following the General Assembly until the summer of 1987. Called to attention at that time, it was assigned to the Task Force on Health Care for consideration and recommendation to the General Board.

Resolution No. 8524 was as follows:

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF HANDICAPPED INFANTS

WHEREAS, thousands of infants are born each year in the United States with some birth defect, condition of mental retardation, or other handicap; and

WHEREAS, these handicapped infants have the same God-given right to life as all other persons; and

WHEREAS, the right to life is the most fundamental right of a person; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Regional Assembly meeting at Lewisburg, June 22-23, 1984, approved a resolution affirming the rights of handicapped infants;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, August 2-7, 1985, declare that a handicapped infant's right to life should not be abridged or denied on account of health, defect, or condition of dependency.

The Task Force on Health Care recommended a substitute resolution for consideration by the General Board and the General Assembly.

The General Board RECEIVED the resolution and forwards the following resolution to the General Assembly.

WHEREAS, thousands of infants are born each year in the United States and Canada with some birth defect, condition of mental retardation or other handicaps; and

WHEREAS, these handicapped infants are due appropriate access to medically indicated treatment as are all other persons; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is committed to the cause of justice and equality of treatment for all persons especially those who are least able to claim that right for themselves; and

WHEREAS, our common faith teaches that both life and death are set within the structure of a good creation and loving God, and that after reasonable and responsible attempts to restore and save life have run their course, that death be allowed to complete its course, and we not confuse acknowledgement of death with the taking of life or a failing to provide appropriate care;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that no handicapped infant shall be denied medically indicated health care either solely or primarily on account of the handicapping conditions. However, let it also be resolved that should the handicapping condition be so severe as to render all treatment and medical intervention futile and serve only to prolong the dying process or maintain biological function rather than offer serious hope for recovery and survival, only those measures necessary for comfort should be provided.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana call upon its congregations, regions, and general units to (1) re-examine its ministry to families of handicapped infants, and, where necessary, educate, sensitize, and reaffirm such a ministry to the end that mothers and fathers (as well as other family members) who are experiencing life with a handicapped infant may do so in the context of a loving, caring, and understanding faith community, (2) work for changes where necessary in legislation that will protect the rights of handicapped infants, (3) work with governmental and social agencies to ensure that families with handicapped infants have the broadest possible access to services essential to the care, raising, and education of a handicapped child.

Task Force on Health Care  
General Board

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly ADOPT  
Resolution 8951. (Debate time 12 minutes)