

# ACSWP study paper: Human Life

**Item(s):** 11-07 On Living a Human Life Before God

**GA Committee Assignment:** 11- Social Justice Issues B: the Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World

## **Summary of the business and what it wants the Assembly to do:**

This study paper comes from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy and asks the General Assembly to approve “On Living a Human Life Before God,” post it online, distribute it to congregations on CD and print a limited quantity. It also directs ACSWP, in consultation with Theology and Worship, to develop resources on “practices of ethical reflection” to aid congregations in “seeking to hear the voice of God” in the context of complex issues. It authorizes ACSWP to converse with seminary and college faculty to develop papers on “major ethical questions” that appear as themes in this study paper and its 1981 predecessor.

## **Background:**

The original assignment for this paper was a referral from the 2000 General Assembly in response to Ovt 00-95 on gun control. The assignment (originally to National Ministries Division) was to “update and re-issue” a 1981 PCUS paper, “On the Nature and Value of Human Life”.

## **Analysis of the business and how it would affect the Church:**

Several questions are raised about the process of this paper: Why did it take ten years? How much did it cost the church? Did it meet the assignment given by G.A. in the original referral? Does the paper provide an adequate theological foundation from which to develop additional resources and materials for ethical reflection?

This paper does nothing to bring moral clarity to the church on the nature and value of human life. It does not provide a compelling theological foundation for decision-making on issues involving the taking of human life. The 1981 paper, although not perfect, did at least attempt to provide an ethical framework from Scripture. The assignment given to ACSWP was to update and re-issue the original paper, not to write a completely separate study paper. The clear implication of the referral was for ACSWP to address new issues that threaten human life that have arisen since 1981. Instead, it chooses to raise issues of care for the earth, but does not address care for human life. This paper would do nothing to heal divisions in the church on such issues as gun violence, abortion, euthanasia, war, or hunger. If the recommendations are approved, more money will be spent to provide resources that have no Biblical foundation and which offer no moral compass.

## **Pertinent Resources:**

Overture 00-95. On Gun Violence—from the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, *Minutes of the General Assembly, 2000*, pages 482-484  
*On the Nature and Value of Human Life*, 1981

## **Action by GA that will help the Church:**

***Disapprove, or Offer Substitute motion for Recommendation 1 and Disapprove Recommendations 2 & 3***

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**An Advisory on Business to the 219<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2010)**

*From the Joint Renewal GA Team*