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Human Cloning

Cloning has sparked enormous and sustained concern in the general public, including the church. For the purposes of this document, human cloning means the intentional production of genetically identical or essentially identical human beings and human embryos. Cloning touches on many crucial questions about human nature, raises hopes and expectations, and brings to the fore uncertainties and fears. While we do not see obvious benefits of human cloning and while we recognize potential dangers of cloning, we also acknowledge the excitement that this new research generates for advances in medicine, agriculture, and other scientific endeavors.

As United Methodists, our reflections on these issues emerge from our faith. We remember that creation has its origin, value, and destiny in God, that human beings are stewards of creation, that technology has brought forth both great benefit and great harm to creation. As people of faith, we believe that our identity as human beings is more than our genetic inheritance, our social environment, or the sum of the two. We are created by God and have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. We recognize that our present human knowledge on this issue is incomplete and finite. We do not know all of the consequences of cloning (psychological, social, or genetic). It is important that the limits of human knowledge be considered as policy is made.

Therefore, we submit the following policy positions:

1. We call for a ban on all human cloning, including the cloning of human embryos. This would include all projects, privately or governmentally funded, that are intended to advance human cloning. Transcending our concerns with embryo wastage are a number of other unresolved and barely explored concerns with substantial social and theological ramifications: use or abuse of people, exploitation of women, tearing of the fabric of the family, the compromising of human distinctiveness, the lessening of genetic diversity, the direction of research and development being controlled by corporate profit and/or personal gain, and the invasion of privacy. These unresolved concerns generate significant distrust and fear in the general public.
2. We call for a ban on therapeutic, medical, research, and commercial procedures which generate unused embryos for the purpose of cloning. The methods of concurrent research protocols in cloning necessitate the production of excess or "unused embryos," which are ultimately destroyed.
3. We commit to the widespread discussion of issues related to cloning in public forums, including United Methodist schools, seminaries, hospitals, and churches. Given the profound theological and moral implications, the imperfection of human knowledge, and the tremendous risks and social benefits, we urge that there be a moratorium on cloning-related research until these issues can be discussed fully by both the general public including significant participation from communities of faith, as well as by experts in agricultural and biological science, public policy, ethics, theology, law, and medicine, including genetics and genetic counseling. The psychological and social effects of cloning on individuals, families, parental relationships, and the larger society should be fully discussed. Those presently affected by in

vitro fertilization, surrogacy, artificial insemination, and other reproduction technologies should be consulted to provide insight into some related psychological and social issues.

4. We call on all nations to ban human cloning and to identify appropriate government agencies to enforce the ban. Appropriate social and governmental bodies must monitor and guide research and developments in the field. Concern for profit and commercial advantage should be balanced by consideration for individual rights, the interest of wide constituencies, and the common good of future generations.

ADOPTED 2000