

Knights of Saint Columba

Accrington Council 188

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Source Christian Institute

The Church of England has restated its opposition to abortion, saying it is almost always morally unacceptable.

The House of Bishops' statement came at a meeting of the General Synod, in response to a question by Synod member Andrea Williams, who is also Chief Executive of Christian Concern.

She highlighted that the CofE has previously said there are 'strictly limited' circumstances in which an abortion should only be permitted, and asked for clarification on what those circumstances are.

Disability

The Bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, said the Church's policy was that "in situations where the continuance of a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother a termination of pregnancy may be justified".

The law in Great Britain permits abortion after 24 weeks if there is believed to be a 'serious foetal handicap'. But this is often used to justify abortions for conditions such as Down's syndrome or spina bifida.

It has even sometimes been used to justify abortion for easily treatable conditions such as cleft palate.

But Bishop Newcome said 'serious foetal handicap' should be interpreted "strictly as applying to those conditions where survival is possible only for a very short period".

Morally unacceptable

On these grounds, Williams estimated that the Church of England considered just 1.7 per cent of abortions to be justifiable.

She said: "The House of Bishops have today made clear that 98% of abortions that take place in the UK are morally wrong. This is a huge statement and one which the new government needs to address urgently."

Bernard Holden MBE JP

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