

Nation & World



News throughout our nation and world relating to United Methodists of the Holston Conference

United Methodist joins other leaders to protest human cloning

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – Immediately following the announcement by a New England firm that it has cloned human life, a United Methodist national board joined a coalition of strange political bedfellows to call for a ban on human cloning.



James Winkler

Jaydee R. Hanson, a staff executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, supported the ban during a Capitol Hill press conference with representatives of seven other groups, ranging from progressive environmental and pro-choice organizations to the religious right and right-to-life councils.

The press conference was sponsored by Sen.

Sam Brownback, R-Kan., also a United Methodist, who said he will push for legislation to ban cloning before the Senate's Christmas recess.

"It may be a surprise to some of the press that a denomination that supports a woman's right to choose is here," Hanson told 75 reporters and a dozen TV cameras gathered in the Russell Senate Office Building for the Nov. 26 press conference.

Other religious groups participating were the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Christian Coalition.

Hanson said that the 2000 General Conference, the United Methodist Church's top legislative assembly, adopted a resolution calling for "a complete and total ban" of the kind of activities being conducted by Advanced Cell Technologies, the Massachusetts firm that announced on Nov. 25 that it has begun to make cloned human embryos.

"The church called for a ban on all human cloning, including the cloning of human embryos," Hanson told reporters. "It also called for a ban on therapeutic, medical, research and commercial procedures which generate waste embryos."

Cloning and abortion are "very different" ethical issues, Hanson said during an interview following the press conference. "It is one thing

for a woman and her family to make a really hard decision in a tragic situation," he said. "It is another thing for scientists in a lab to patent human embryos, to make a bank of human embryos, and the only way you can get to it is by paying them money."

The church saw what was happening in the industry and didn't want to support it, he said. "Do we really want an industry that depends on paying poor women for their eggs to do research?"

The resolution opposing human cloning passed by General Conference in 2000 was the result of a study done by the Board of Church and Society's Genetic Science Task Force formed in 1988. "United Methodists were in the forefront of policy development on this," Hanson said. "Our genetic science task force looked at the research that was being done and looked at what was likely to be done and said 'no.'"

Church & Society

During the press conference, Hanson expressed concern that discussions about the work being done by Advanced Cell Technologies might result in confusion about the difference between cloning and stem cell research.

"The creation of human embryos by cloning or other procedures is not necessary to pursue adult, placental or even embryonic stem cell research," he said. "And it is stem cell research that may hold the promise for treatments – not the creation of human embryos."

James Winkler, top staff executive of the Board of Church and Society, urged Congress to pass a ban on human cloning in a Nov. 27 statement. "The United Methodist Church has long understood that not everything that is currently legal is moral," he said. "The General Conference of the United Methodist Church called for a ban on all forms of human cloning. Congress should promptly enact such a ban."

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Reform Jewish leaders support cloning to cure diseases but oppose it for reproductive purposes, according to the Associated Press.

The religious leaders' opposition to cloning agrees with that of President Bush, who called on Congress Nov. 26 to ban the cloning of human embryos. Bush is a United Methodist. ■

news briefs:

Gambling industry seeks to exploit September 11, clergyman says

WASHINGTON (UMNS) – A spokesman for an anti-gambling coalition is challenging the U.S. Senate to reject efforts by the gaming industry to obtain special tax breaks being developed in the wake of the Sept. 11 tragedies.

The gambling industry is trying to exploit the events of Sept. 11 for its own gain, said the Rev. Tom Grey, a United Methodist clergyman and director of the National Coalition Against Gambling Expansion.

New York's state legislature passed a bill Oct. 25 that had been stalled for years due to lack of support, Grey said in a Nov. 12 statement. Decisive for the bill's passage was the projection of income for an economy badly hurt by the World Trade Center tragedy, he said.

Gambling proponents are using similar arguments of economic need to push legislation in other states, including Rhode Island, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Indiana, Ohio and Kansas, according to Grey. He called upon citizens to urge members of Congress, particularly their senators, to reject the proposed gambling subsidy. ■

NCC adopts balanced budget

(UMNS) The adoption of a balanced 2001-2002 balance by the National Council of Churches (NCC) executive committee should pave the way for continued funding of the agency by the United Methodist Church.

Clare Chapman, an executive with United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, was part of a special financial task force presenting a revised budget to the executive committee, which met Nov. 13-15 in Oakland, Calif.

The new budget total, around \$5.7 million, reflected "what the actual revenue was in the prior year," Chapman told United Methodist News Service. The task force reduced projected spending for 2001-2002 from a previous total of more than \$7 million. ■

who said that?

"It's time to know who you believe in and what you're standing for. Our nation is up against a nation who's got the wrong religion and they're willing to die for it. Are you willing to die for what you believe?"

Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop Gilbert E. Patterson, addressing the Holy Convocation of the Pentecostal denomination for the first time as its national leader. He was quoted by The Commercial Appeal of Memphis, Tennessee. ■