



The main purpose of these prayer points is to provide useful background for leading prayer or for personal prayer. You may wish to omit some points and insert other information of your own. Since most of the issues are ongoing, from year to year, some of these prayer points are the same as those for previous years. Other points are drawn from events which have happened since last year's day of prayer. Links are provided to facilitate further reading.

The value of human life¹

There was a time when many denied that an unborn child represented human life claiming that it was just a clump of cells, a blob of jelly. There are now very few people who would argue in this way. Some still argue that a fetus is not an individual in its own right but is part of the mother's body; she is free to have it removed as she would be to have a tumour removed. This is a flawed argument because DNA evidence clearly shows the fetus is a unique individual, distinct from its mother, from conception. The argument today has shifted to, "When does human life really begin to matter?"²

Our laws do not protect human life until it is considered "viable" (capable of being born alive). This is currently considered to be up to 24 weeks. An increasing number of children born up to 23 weeks are now surviving. This has led to a call from some to reduce the time to 20 weeks but this would continue to accept that human life is only precious when it is capable of being born alive.³ As Christians we are called to respect the sanctity of all human life, including the unborn because, "the dignity of human beings resides, not in what you can do, but in what you are, by creation."⁴

Please pray that

- the value of human life from conception would be clearly taught within the church and clearly understood by Christians,
- the natural understanding that most secularists have for the sanctity of human life would extend to the unborn.

The statistics

When the Act was passed 51 years ago assurances were given that abortion would be limited to a small number of exceptional cases. Now we have virtually abortion on demand. In 2017 206,880 babies were aborted in England, Wales and Scotland - on average, 567 each day. 98% of all abortions were "social abortions" and more than 39% of those in England and Wales were repeat abortions.⁵ Since the Abortion Act was passed 50 years ago there have been over 8 million abortions carried out in England, Scotland and Wales – more than 10% of the total population. These should be shocking figures but our culture accepts them as the norm.

Please pray that our society wakes up to the significance of these statistics and calls for restraint.

¹ For a fuller exploration of this topic please see "What are humans?" on the image website.

<http://imagenet.org.uk/human.html>

² See, for example, Ann Ferudi writing in the Independent

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/ann-furedi-a-womans-right-to-choose-is-also-her-right-to-be-human-1021691.html>

³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/11085188/Its-time-to-rethink-our-attitude-to-abortion.html>

⁴ John Wyatt, Matters of Life and Death

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017> and <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Sexual-Health/Abortions/>

Christian pregnancy centres

These offer support by phone, text, e-mail or face-to-face. For those struggling with pregnancy there is support given to consider the way forward without pressure. For those struggling after abortion, with unresolved feelings, a post-abortion support programme is offered. Some pregnancy centres also provide parents in need with baby clothes and equipment. Most centres rely on donations and volunteers to maintain these services.

A UK network, Pregnancy Centres Network (PCN)⁶ is an independent charity which aims to support centres by

- co-ordinating information between local centres and regions,
- providing encouragement to centre leaders and their teams,
- building common resources for the benefit of local centres,
- encouraging best practice in the centres.

Please pray

- that these centres would be effective in reaching mothers considering abortion and in helping those who are struggling following abortion,
- for sufficient financial resources and sufficient numbers of volunteers,
- for those considering abortion or who are struggling after abortion,
- for the Pregnancy Centres Network, that it would be effective in serving and supporting Christian Pregnancy Centres.

Training

If incorrect or inappropriate advice is given during crisis pregnancy support (or post abortion support) then grave damage may be done to those vulnerable people who are receiving support. It is crucial that those providing this sort of help are trained to do so.

For many years image has run a recognised training course in Christian Pregnancy Counselling Skills. They also run a Training Trainers course, designed to equip those wanting to run the Christian Pregnancy Counselling Skills course in their own region.⁷ Image also offers a new post-abortion course called Step by Step.

These courses have been devised to equip Christian Pregnancy Centres to function effectively.

Please pray:

- for the Christian Pregnancy Counselling Skills courses, that they will equip many to do this work,
- for those being trained and for those doing the training in the Training Trainers course,
- that the Step by Step post-abortion course would be an effective resource for the pregnancy centres and that many would know healing through it.

Ireland and Northern Ireland

Although the Day of Prayer is specifically about the UK, this year's referendum in Ireland will have repercussions in the UK and especially in Northern Ireland. The 8th Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland had recognised the equal right to life of the mother and the unborn child but on 25th May 2018 the people of Ireland voted to repeal the 8th Amendment. The Irish Government intends to legislate by the end of the year to make it relatively easy for a woman to obtain an abortion in early pregnancy.⁸

⁶ <https://pregnancycentresnetwork.org.uk/>

⁷ <http://www.imagenet.org.uk/training.html>

⁸ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6382415/ireland-abortion-referendum-results-yes-repeal-8th-amendment-legal-latest/>

As Ireland moves towards allowing abortion there are fears that legislation will not fully protect freedom of conscience opt-outs for doctors.⁹ “It is not acceptable for a doctor to say ‘I won’t provide this service and I won’t refer’” – Dr Favier, pro abortion campaigner.¹⁰

The legalising of abortion in Ireland will increase the pressure on Northern Ireland to allow abortion. “Ms Kavanagh (pro abortion campaigner) said they had overcome the first major hurdle in their abortion access fight but the ‘war’ was not over, as they were now fighting for abortion access on the entire island of Ireland. ‘We’re an all-Ireland campaigner’”¹¹

Please pray:

- that Ireland’s abortion laws would not herald the loss of unborn lives to the same scale that we have seen in the UK,
- that Northern Ireland would resist the pressure to go down the same route,
- for pro-life medical practitioners,
- for those who are part of the pro-life movement in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Buffer zones

In April 2018 Ealing Council voted unanimously in April to ban pro-life vigils outside the Marie Stopes abortion clinic in Ealing. This ban was imposed despite a complete lack of any evidence of harassment. Life has commented, “It is noteworthy that the clinic in Mattock Lane, Ealing, is equipped with two CCTV cameras, trained on the gates. Yet despite their ‘log’ of problems allegedly caused by those who pray outside, they cannot produce any evidence beyond hearsay.”¹² Ealing Council have been given a “National Best Practice Award” by Jeremy Corbyn in recognition of their imposition of this ban.¹³

There have been calls from pro-abortion campaigners for the introduction of national buffer zones but in September the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, has said, “introducing national buffer zones would not be a proportionate response” and noting that, “legislation already exists to restrict protest activities that cause harm to others” and, “the majority of activities are more passive in nature.”¹⁴ Nevertheless at least eight local authorities in England are considering following Ealing’s lead.¹⁵

Please pray:

- that there would be restraint on the imposition of further buffer zones,
- for those who participate in pro-life prayer vigils,
- for those who attend abortion centres with crisis pregnancies.

Parliament and the media

The All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group exists, “to provide a forum for discussion of pro-life issues including abortion, euthanasia and research upon the human embryo.”¹⁶

- **Thank God** for the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group,
- **Please pray** for politicians and for those in the media that they would be able to convey truth with clarity, compassion and courage.

⁹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/indefensible-to-force-gps-to-act-against-their-will-on-abortion-1.3642523>

¹⁰ <http://www.itv.com/news/2018-09-29/thousands-join-march-for-all-ireland-abortion-services/>

¹¹ <http://www.itv.com/news/2018-09-29/thousands-join-march-for-all-ireland-abortion-services/>

¹² <https://lifecharity.org.uk/news-and-views/in-defence-of-liberty-and-the-unborn/>

¹³ <https://www.ealinglabour.com/2018/09/23/award2018/>

¹⁴ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-09-13/HCWS958>

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/23/abortion-clinic-buffer-zones-being-considered-by-more-councils-lambert-protests>

¹⁶ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmllparty/180131/pro-life.htm>