

An Open Letter to the Supreme Court of the State of Idaho
From the ministers of Knox Presbytery

To the Honorable Members of the Idaho Supreme Court,

We are writing this letter on the occasion of your responsibility to make a decision regarding the suit brought by Planned Parenthood against Idaho because of Idaho's "trigger law." In the event that *Roe* was ever struck down, the representatives of the state of Idaho had determined that we wished to return our abortion laws to roughly the same position they were in prior to *Roe*. You were asked to place a temporary restraining order on both the trigger law and the heartbeat law, and we heartily commend you for your refusal to do so. At the same time, these cases are still going to come before you on the merits, and we wanted to remind you of the most important considerations.

But before we get to the central issue before us, we wanted to acknowledge that the weight of your responsibility for our state and our people is considerable, and we truly appreciate the labors you undertake on our behalf. We honor both your persons and your office, and we write everything below with all of that constantly in mind.

We had initially considered seeking an *amicus* status from you so that we could address this matter, but we decided that this was not the right vehicle for what we needed to say. As important as civil law processes are, we believe that we have a message for you from God's Word. There are two aspects of this that are very important, and which required a pointed reminder. The first of those things would be the biblical definition of personhood, and the second is the certainty of a future and final judgment.

We call upon you, first, to recognize that human life has the dignity that it does because we are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 9:6). All who are descended from our first parents in the Garden—which would be all of us—are image bearers of God by virtue of that simple fact. This is why the Christian approach to all our "life issues" begins and ends with the recognition that personhood is inextricably linked to the mere fact of being a son of Adam or daughter of Eve. Because of the sanctity of God's Word and law, it follows that all human life is to be accorded the dignity befitting an image bearer of God. This is foundational.

But in secular legal theory, the category of human life and personhood are logically distinct and separable. In this approach, personhood is a legal status that is granted by society and can also, as circumstances vary, be withheld by society. But if this legal status of personhood can be legally withheld by society from individuals who are indisputably human, then we cannot complain when the reasons given by society don't happen to suit our private opinions—because that is all they are by this point, *private opinions*. If we go down this road, then personhood could be withheld from humans for being black, or being Jewish, or being handicapped, or being comatose. Some might say that we are highlighting extreme examples, but the entire abortion debate actually centers on this point. Does our society have the right to deny personhood to the unborn simply because of their age, or size, or vulnerability, or the sheer fact of their inconvenient existence? We don't believe so—as the Declaration rightly acknowledges, we are endowed by our *Creator* with our inalienable rights.

Our society at large is currently claiming that right to *bestow* or *withhold* personhood. We as Christian ministers, appealing to the Scriptures, deny that any such right exists. The Supreme Court of the United States recently recognized in *Dobbs* that the people of Idaho do have the authority to recognize that humanity and personhood are inseparable. The issue is now before you, and so we call upon you to refrain from placing any kind of restraint on Idaho's trigger or heartbeat law.

The second part of our message is this. The judgment with which you judge you shall be judged (Matt. 7:1-2). There was a time when magistrates at the state and local level thought they could just shrug and say that the Supreme Court in *Roe* had taken the issue out of their hands. But *Dobbs* has now returned the issue to the states, and it is currently before you. Children will live or die based upon what you do. "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter" (Prov. 24:11). You are judges, and you have a very grave responsibility here. If you do not rescue those who are in harm's way, these young Idahoans, when you have a very clear and direct opportunity to save them, then Scripture teaches that God will bring the recompense. There will come a time when you will have to stand before God and give an accounting of your reasoning in this matter. And the judgment with which you judge you shall be judged.

There will be some who urge you to disregard what we are telling you here, and they will try to justify that by labeling us with a tag that sounds very ominous, like *Christofascist*. But we are nothing of the sort. We are simply Presbyterian ministers, servants of Jehovah, the Most High God, and His Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are Christian ministers, and believe that we have an obligation to speak the truth to you in this pivotal moment in Idaho's history.

There will come a day when each one of you stands before Him, and in that day there will be no media, there will be no lobbying organizations, there will be no pressure groups. You will simply stand before God to give an accounting for all that you have done, and this decision will be right in the center of all your actions. God the great Father "judges impartially according to each one's deeds" (1 Peter 1:17). In that day, the only possible mediator is Jesus Christ, and if you have rejected Him and His Word, then it will go hard with you. "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:51-52).

We have spoken plainly in this matter, but we are hopeful of better things concerning you. You are judges of high honor in our state, and we do honor you. What we are doing in this letter is calling upon you to honor the One who placed you in this crucial position.

Remember your Creator. Honor His Word. Love the children.

Respectfully,

The Ministers of Knox Presbytery
The Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches