



ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Ph (724) 266-9400 • Fax (724) 266-1129

Provincial Office: 800 Maplewood Ave. • Ambridge, PA 15003

Archbishop's Office: Judah Crossing, Building 2200 • 367 Athens Highway • Loganville, GA 30052

The Honorable Stephen M. Hahn, M.D.
Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993-0002

October 2, 2020

Dear Commissioner Hahn,

Our nation is currently engaged in a dire battle to defend itself against the deadly COVID-19 virus. Leading this fight on our behalf is the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and its related and affiliated entities employing programs such as Operation Warp Speed (“OWS”). We applaud these efforts and express gratitude for all of your good efforts on behalf of the American people and the people of the world. We believe in and support the development of vaccines. In our current efforts our country serves as the example to the world of scientific mobilization to defeat our viral foe. However, in the process of doing so we implore you to ensure that our country also serves as a moral and ethical example to the world in connection with such efforts.

Thus, I am writing on behalf of myself and in my capacity as the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America regarding the COVID-19 vaccines currently being developed under the OWS program. It is incumbent upon me to add our voice to those of the other religious leaders, bioethicists, and people of conscience who have contacted you to voice their concerns and objections to those vaccines being created under the OWS program utilizing cell lines created from the cells of aborted babies (specifically HEK293 cells derived from an unborn child aborted in 1972; and PER.C6 cells derived from the retinal tissue of an 18-week old baby aborted in 1985).

As you know, the commercialization of fetal tissue is not a new practice. Unfortunately, the utilization of embryonic and fetal cells from elective abortions in the pharmaceutical industry and medical research, including in the creation of vaccines, is commonplace. We subscribe to the biblical teaching that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. Thus, by virtue of that fact, from the moment of conception, the life of every human being has value, is precious, and is to be absolutely respected and protected. No one, under any circumstance, may claim the right to destroy the life of an innocent human being. Therefore, abortion, and anything that fosters, supports, or encourages abortion, is morally illicit and to be resisted.

Each medical benefit or scientific advance gained through the use of fetal tissue derived from elective abortions desensitizes the beneficiaries, scientists, and doctors to the original evil act that produced these cells. Aborted fetal tissues used in laboratories are minimized and treated merely as “human cells,” and the human beings whose lives were taken to provide those cells become irrelevant and with time even forgotten. The greatest concern is that desensitization leads to dehumanization and ultimately to scandal by erroneously validating elective abortions for a perceived societal greater good. Absent careful oversight, the unborn could become, like fetal tissue cell lines, merely cells, a commodity cultured within the uterus

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of a woman to be used for scientific exploration and profit. Therefore, all people of good conscience have the responsibility to voice opposition to the use of fetal tissue from elective abortions in order to promote the development of alternatives, affirm the value of all human life, and limit scandal.

We have reviewed the nine leading OWS candidates which are receiving governmental funding under this program. It appears that three use ethically compromised aborted fetal cell lines in the production of their vaccines: Astrazeneca, Janssen/Johnson & Johnson, and Vaxart. A second group of three utilize ethical cell lines: Merck/IAVI, Novavax, and Sanofi-GSK. Finally, three apparently use no cell lines at all: Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, and Inovia. This reveals a crucial fact – the use of cell lines created through the use of aborted fetal tissue is not absolutely necessary to the creation of the vaccine.

The United States is clearly the global leader in science and technology. In this role, we also set the standards for what is acceptable and ethical in these areas. Thus, it is incumbent on the United States to uphold and promote ethical principles in all things but especially in this instance involving the development of a COVID vaccine which will be distributed worldwide. The world is watching. The American people are watching. What we do will establish what is acceptable.

It is of the utmost importance that the American people – and those of faith and conscience around the world - be assured access to a vaccine that is produced ethically. Members of the Anglican Church in North America and other religious communities could not in good conscience use a vaccine tested or produced through cells harvested after an elective abortion. No American should be forced to choose between being vaccinated against this potentially dangerous virus and violating his or her conscience and closely held religious beliefs. We are fortunate that there is absolutely no need to employ ethically problematic cell lines to produce the required vaccine, or any vaccine for that matter, as other cell lines or processes that do not involve the cells of aborted fetuses are readily available and are regularly utilized in the production of vaccines.

Therefore Commissioner, I urgently and respectfully implore you to ensure that Americans and the rest of the world will have access to a COVID vaccine that does not raise ethical and/or religious concerns and to encourage those in the OWS program to use only ethical cell lines or processes for the production of this vital vaccine.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

The Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach
Archbishop and Primate
Anglican Church in North America

CC: President Donald J. Trump
Vice President Michael R. Pence