



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—May 6, 2005

First Presidential Ethics Forum will Focus on Stem Cell Research

KEUKA PARK, N.Y.—President Bush and Sen. Kerry debated the stem cell research issue during the 2004 election and it continues to be a hot-button topic into 2005.

Keuka College will investigate this controversial issue when the first Presidential Ethics Forum is held Thursday, May 12, at 4 p.m. in Norton Chapel. It is free and open to the public.



“We want to have an open, intelligent and honest discussion about this divisive issue,” said Rev. Gerry Fish, College chaplain. “We want everyone to understand the facts and then make their own decisions. It’s all about education.”

Two faculty members will take part in the forum: Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion Mike McKenzie and Associate Professor of Biology Katherine Klingensmith. McKenzie will serve as moderator and discuss how one goes about making personal decisions regarding ethical issues. Klingensmith will present a scientific overview of stem cell research

A stem cell is a primitive type of cell that can be coaxed into developing into most of the 220 types of cells found in the human body, such as blood cells, heart cells, and brain cells. Stem cells can be extracted from very young human embryos—typically from surplus frozen embryos left over from in-vitro fertilization procedures at fertility clinics.

Some researchers regard them as offering the greatest potential for the alleviation of human suffering since the development of antibiotics. They contend that more than 100 million Americans suffering from heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, and other diseases that may eventually be treated more effectively—or cured—with stem cells.

However, opponents of stem cell research believe that a few-days-old embryo is a human person. Extracting its stem cells kills the embryo, an act they consider murder.

Advocates on each side of the issue will speak at the forum. Rev. Denise Yarborough, pastor of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Penn Yan and an ethics instructor in Keuka’s Accelerated Studies for Adults Program, will take the pro-stem cell research side. Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester, will present the opposing view.

The program will conclude with a question-and-answer session (audience members will have the opportunity to pose their questions in writing).