



## **PARO responds to questions about the Abortion Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

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### **1. What is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s position on reproductive choice?**

The PC(USA) believes that women should be able to make decisions about their pregnancies in light of their own faith and conscience. The PC(USA) recognizes that such decisions must often be made in the middle of intensely personal and complicated life situations. The full range of options should be available to women, including giving birth, adoption, and terminating the pregnancy. The current policy statement, The Report of the Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion, adopted by the 204th General Assembly (1992) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is available online at: <http://www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/problem-pregnancies.pdf>

### **2. Does the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) favor abortion?**

No, the PC(USA) does not favor abortion or advocate abortion. The PC(USA) does believe, as articulated in its 1992 statement, that abortion should be one of the options available to women. But the church does not propose a single answer for all women and all situations. PC(USA) policy is genuinely and consistently "pro-choice." Our churches need to be communities of compassionate caring, not judgment, as women make these decisions.

### **3. Does the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) support alternatives to abortion?**

Yes, the PC(USA) emphasizes the importance of considering all the alternatives before making a decision. There are three primary options. First, the pregnant woman may choose to give birth and rear the child after birth. Second, she may choose to give birth and make a plan for adoption. Third, she may decide to terminate the pregnancy.

### **4. When did the Presbyterian Church formally decide in favor of choice?**

In 1970 the Presbyterian Church first expressed support for the right of women to choose to terminate their pregnancy without legal restrictions. Since 1970, the Presbyterian Church has consistently advocated Choice, along with provisions for consultation with a physician and adequate health care for women making reproductive decisions. For example, in 1983 the General Assembly stated: "Biblical faith emphasizes the need for personal moral choice and holds that persons stand ultimately accountable to God for their moral choices."





**5. What does the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) say about the circumstances women face when making decisions about a problem pregnancy?**

The PC(USA) clearly regards the life situation of a pregnant woman as profoundly important in decisions about what she will do. The PC(USA) does not try to provide a complete list of circumstances for when abortion is an acceptable choice. Instead, the church acknowledges it does not have the wisdom or authority to provide guidance in all the kinds of situations women face in problem pregnancies.

**6. What is the Christian basis for a “pro-choice” position on abortion?**

Presbyterians affirm that God is the Creator of all life, and that all life is a gift from God. Because women and men are created in the Image of God, we are entrusted with the responsibility to be stewards of God’s creation. Often, we are called to make decisions when all the options involve some measure of loss or pain. No option is free from ambiguity. So it is with decisions about problem pregnancies. Decisions call for spiritual discernment and ethical deliberation about how best to steward God’s gifts in the midst of limitation and a fallen world. To be coerced or otherwise forced to act against conscience is a grievous violation of a woman’s dignity and right to moral agency as one created in the image of God.

**7. What is the best way to move beyond bitter disagreements among Presbyterians about abortion?**

The PC(USA) believes there are some very specific steps that may be taken. First, acknowledge conscientious disagreement among Presbyterians about these difficult issues. Presbyterians are free to continue to study, discuss, and even disagree about these questions, and to have their views respected by others. Second, accept the legal right of the woman to make decisions about her pregnancy. Reproductive Choice best acknowledges the reality that conscientious persons, including persons of faith, arrive at different conclusions that are deeply held.

**8. What are ways Presbyterians can help to reduce the need for abortion?**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) regards reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies as a high priority. It emphasizes especially the importance of family planning, sexuality education, and the availability of effective and safe contraceptives. The PC(USA) also recognizes that there are economic realities that narrow the options that are realistically available to many pregnant women. Our church has advocated for many years the formation of a society that genuinely supports children, parents and families.

