

RESOLUTION

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RESOLUTION FOR THE NORTH TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE'S SUPPORT OF THE UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLE ON ABORTION IN THE STATE OF TEXAS

FROM:

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WHEREAS, God calls us as people of faith to transform conditions of injustice and advocate for the rights of all people to have access to affordable, equitable, and comprehensive healthcare that includes reproductive and maternal care; and

WHEREAS, the judicial precedents of *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which established a constitutional right to abortion that countless people have relied on for safe, proper, and medically sound abortion procedures by certified medical providers was overturned by the Supreme Court through the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church (2016 *Book of Discipline* ¶161.K) provide guidance on our denomination's ethical standards regarding abortion, stating: "We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers;" and

WHEREAS, our faith compels us to approach abortion with nuance and care, recognizing that our Social Principles compel us to reject an absolute prohibition against abortion – even if we mourn the realities that lead to abortions, especially in late-term pregnancies where clear "conflicts of life with life" emerge; and

WHEREAS, our Social Principles affirm that "a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel," and that state law alone is not a sufficient guide for an incredibly personal, theological, and medical decision such as this; and

WHEREAS, abortion is a vital form of healthcare for all persons who have a uterus, whether they intend to give birth or not, and while these laws restricting access to reproductive healthcare harm every community, they disproportionately impact Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, current Texas law severely impedes the professional autonomy of doctors in decisions to provide reproductive healthcare and calls into question their ability to abide by the Hippocratic oath of "First do no harm;" and

WHEREAS, there is no exception according to Texas law for access to abortion for those experiencing a pregnancy following rape or incest; nor in cases of lethal fetal anomalies, forcing pregnant persons to endanger their own lives with no hope of bringing home a baby (Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 170A.002); and

WHEREAS, the only exception under current Texas law which allows abortion is when there is a "risk of death...or serious risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function;" fear of criminal prosecution has led medical professionals to delay or deny care they otherwise would have provided, with several cases

documented where doctors waited to treat pregnancy complications until a patient's health had deteriorated to the point that their life was in danger (Texas Policy Evaluation Project at the University of Texas at Austin); and

WHEREAS, according to Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 171.208, anyone who performs or induces an abortion or does anything to aid or abet, knowingly or unknowingly, a person obtaining an abortion, barring the few exceptions currently present in the law, or can be proven to have intended to do any of these things, may be subject to civil litigation pending legal interpretation of the religious freedom exemption; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the North Texas Annual Conference will advance the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church through the creation of a task force under the purview and with the support of the Center for Missional Outreach that shall be comprised of two-thirds women, including United Methodist legal professionals, healthcare workers, clergy, professionals from nonprofits working in reproductive health, and any other relevant professionals. The work of this task force shall be to provide consultation and educational resources for clergy, church staff, and United Methodist healthcare workers so that we may “continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth” (Social Principle ¶161.K); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the elected leaders who represent us to oppose the universal ban on abortion in the state of Texas and to strike down laws currently in place that restrict our observance of the United Methodist Social Principle ¶161.K.

Supporters:

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2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles ¶161.K

K) Abortion

The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.

We recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection or eugenics (see Resolution 3184).

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. This procedure shall be performed only by certified medical providers. Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion. We entrust God to provide guidance, wisdom, and discernment to those facing an unintended pregnancy.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We mourn and are committed to promoting the diminishment of high abortion rates. The Church shall encourage ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies such as comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education, advocacy in regard to contraception, and support of initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls around the globe.

Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel that they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. They should also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy. We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption. (See ¶ 161M.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.