

Addendum: Draft statement by Working Group on Reproductive Justice

July 19, 2022

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) believe that there is that of God in every person, and that the spiritual journey is one of continual seeking and revelation. Often life brings us to difficult, meaningful moments of decision making. We are taught to hold these decisions in the Light, seeking guidance by Spirit. We may turn to our community for help in gaining clarity. We know and respect the individuality of each person's spiritual journey, knowing that decisions can lead to both endings and beginnings, often in unexpected ways. The decision to have, or not have, children and the decision of who to marry, or not marry, are examples of deeply personal, individual decisions to be made by the person or people involved, in the presence of Spirit.

We are troubled by recent federal and state legal actions which threaten the autonomy of women's and pregnant people's bodies, and which criminalize these private, personal decisions. Friends should work to decriminalize any such decisions, and to preserve an individual's right and ability to carry out their decision.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends draw on our shared beliefs and practice in rejecting the reasoning that would enable judges and legislatures to ban abortion and promote forced birth, no matter the risks. We are also concerned about proposed restrictions on additional rights, including same gender couples and contraceptive access. We support rights of conscience, freedom of religion, and separation of church and state.

As a religious organization that adheres to the testimony of equality, we believe that both rights and equitable access to care are important. We believe an equitable society does not impose the greatest burdens on those least able to bear them.

In allyship with other faith traditions and social justice advocates, we seek to address injustice and inequity in reproductive health. We set forward these queries for consideration by individual Friends, Monthly Meetings, and the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

- What actions do we take that empower and support people to choose when, how and if they will have children?
- How do we support people in our meeting and in our larger community to make informed, values-aligned decisions about their sexual and reproductive health throughout their lives?
- How can we support and help individuals obtain the reproductive health care they seek?
- What conversations do we need to entertain to understand the myriad concerns (e.g. theological, emotional, spiritual, economic and social) of Friends as we carry this work forward?

The Working Group on Reproductive Justice will continue to meet and discern further on these issues, working within the reproductive justice framework. We invite concerned Friends to join us as we work on these issues.

The Working Group consists of Kathy Rogers (Convener), Debby Churchman, Charlie Goedeke, Rob McGarrah, Martha Solt, Sharon Stout.

Liaisons from Ministry and Pastoral Care: Martin Melville, Rebecca Richards.