Draft Minute on Personal Ethical Choices and Separation of Church and State

Individuals may be called on to make a number of key moral choices in their life: whether to have children (including whether to have an abortion if they become pregnant, or using contraception to try to avoid pregnancy), how to raise their children, with whom and how to have intimate and non-abusive sexual relations, whom to marry, and, at the end of life, whether and how to prolong their life with medical treatment, or seek a physician’s assistance in ending life if terminally ill.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Friends (Quakers) believe that all these moral choices – which are often quite difficult -- are to be made by the individual concerned, not as dictated by the State. We believe that these choices should be made under the scrutiny of the inward Light. Adherents of some religions espouse categorical doctrines on how these choices must be made, and seek to have the State impose these doctrines on all. This approach is contrary to the separation of church and state and prevents the free exercise of religion by those who are convinced that these choices must be made by each individual as guided by the Light.