Let's Talk about Abortion

Chris Davies
Team Leader, Faith INFO

Let's talk about abortion.

As a clergywoman in the United Church of Christ, access to abortion has been one of the issues of which I am most proud that we have a historic legacy of continued support. Clergywomen and clergyfolk in the United Church of Christ have been vocal for decades about a woman's right to choose, ease of access to abortion for all people, and the healthy pathways to get what is necessary and life-affirming.

Yet, as soon as abortion became legal through Roe in 1973, there has been a sustained effort to politicize and polarize the issue using the language of faith. In fact, when looking closely through the lens of faith, there is assurance for me that Jesus would support access to the healthcare that enables a thriving life. Consider his healing of the hemorrhaging woman. Consider his mirror-turning statements, "let they without sin throw the first stone." Consider his clarity on system change towards justice in his messaging of support for the poor, the unhoused, the sick. It is irresponsible to assume that Christianity is inherently anti-abortion.

Abortion is essential healthcare. Here in Ohio, there is a bill recently passed (SB-27) that tries to equate the tissue byproduct of abortion with the fullness of lived human life, through rituals of funeral and cremation. While not yet in effect, the bill irresponsibly mandates religion through ritual, pushing a polarizing agenda through faith, when the state is not actively caring for the fullness of human lives of poor people or unhoused people through the global pandemic. It is irresponsible to value the potential of life more than the lived experiences of Black and Brown people calling for support today. When someone in poverty or without a home passes away, and their family cannot afford care for their beloveds' burial rituals, how dare we prioritize and require rituals for potential life?

Religious freedom means that we need to be free to say no to state-mandated rituals, even and especially when they only reflect a certain kind of faith.

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Abortion is a necessary healthcare procedure. It's time for progressive faith leaders to be clear about where we stand and vocal about access to abortion (using the word abortion). It is time for progressive faith leaders to be clear about the act of faith in standing for radical choice. Radical choice means that no matter what or how or why, we show up for access to abortion. Whether used liberally or conservatively, whether because of sex work or sexual assault, no matter what, abortion should be safe, legal, and affordable.

It is time for us to truly examine where moral authority is assigned, assumed, and claimed. There are people in every single one of our congregations who have had abortions. Everybody loves someone who has had an abortion, whether you are aware of it or not. It is time for us to name the politics the ongoing funding going into the control of the bodies of women, LGBTQ people, people of color, and/or poor people. It is time for us to examine the ways in which the messaging has continued to harm people in service to the potential lives that might be present (even without support for the fullness of thriving upon arrival into the world).

I am proud to continue to show up for access to abortion because of my faith; because I believe that Jesus would be clear about his support for essential healthcare, like abortion, for all people.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Davies is the Team Leader of Faith INFO for the United Church of Christ.

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