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## **Reproductive Health and Justice**

### **Why the UCC is a leader in this area**

God has given us life, and life is sacred and good. God has also given us the responsibility to make decisions which reflect a reverence for life in circumstances when conflicting realities are present. Jesus affirmed women as full partners in the faith, capable of making decisions that affect their lives.

There are many justice issues related to reproductive health, including access to pre- and post-natal care for all women, equal access to the full range of legal reproductive health services including abortion, the right of women to determine when, if and how many children she should have, access to emergency contraception and other family planning services and information, the right not to be sterilized against one's wishes, and the ability of women to negotiate safe sexual practices and non-coercive sexual experiences.

The United Church of Christ has affirmed and re-affirmed since 1971 that access to safe and legal abortion is consistent with a woman's right to follow the dictates of her own faith and beliefs in determining when and if she should have children, and it has supported comprehensive sexuality education as one measure to prevent unwanted or unplanned pregnancies, and to create healthy and responsible sexual persons and relationships. (General Synods VIII, IX, XI, XII, XIII, XVI, XVII, and XVIII)

We have also supported that women with limited financial means should be able to receive public funding in order to exercise her legal right to the full range of reproductive health services. What is legally available to women must be accessible to all women.

The United Church of Christ is one of the founding faith groups of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, formed in 1973 as the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. Over the years, RCRC has continued to bring a strong voice of faith on the moral and religious issues that swirl around public debate over abortion, contraception and pregnancy prevention. Because there are many religious and theological perspectives on when life and personhood begin, the UCC joins others in advocating that public policy must honor this rich religious diversity. Our position is not a pro-abortion position but a pro-faith, pro-family and pro-woman position.

RCRC has resources to train clergy and others in a counseling position in All Options Counseling which is centered on what is best for the individual woman and supports her decision-making. It also has a pro-choice religious leadership network, specific resources for African American and Latina/o church communities, a Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom network active on college and university campuses, many state affiliates, resources for post-abortion counseling, a Theologies of Choice course for seminaries, and a Seminarians for Choice network. For more information, visit [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org).

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