

Resolution to Join the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and its California Affiliate

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Financial Impact: \$100-\$300 Per Year

Background

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice was (RCRC) founded in 1973 with The United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society and The United Methodist Women as founding members. United Methodist membership continued on the general church level until the May 2016, General Conference voted to withdraw general agencies from RCRC. In 1989 an affiliate chapter was formed in Southern California and operates under the name California Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Nothing in General Conference legislation prohibits membership of Annual Conferences or their agencies.

The RCRC is a community of religious organizations of faithful individuals dedicated to reproductive justice through education, organization and advocacy. The coalition provides speakers and resources, offers non-judgmental counseling to persons dealing with reproductive issues, and empowers people of faith to think about, discuss and work for policies that promote justice, equality and religious liberty.

Although theologically diverse, RCRC members are united in their belief in religious liberty and the God-given ability of women to live as faithful, responsible, moral agents. For four decades, the RCRC has been working where faith intersects with issues related to our reproductive lives.

The rationale of the RCRC looks beyond the bitter abortion debate to seek solutions to pressing problems such as unintended pregnancy, the spread of HIV/AIDS, inadequate health care and health insurance, and the severe reduction in reproductive health care services. We support access to sex education, family planning and contraception, affordable child care and health care, and adoption services, as well as safe, legal, compassionate abortion care, regardless of income. As an organization committed to reproductive justice, we work for public policies that ensure the medical, economic, and educational resources necessary for healthy families and communities that are equipped to nurture children in healthy, safe environments (<http://rcrc.org/>).

The purposes and actions of RCRC are consistent with our United Methodist statement on Responsible Parenthood (161.1) and abortion in The Social Principles. With the RCRC, we believe in a loving God who is very much present in times of pain, loss and difficult decisions.

A “YES” vote for the petition before you allows for official membership and relationship between the California-Nevada Annual Conference and the California Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, both nationally and in the affiliate group in California, faith-based coalitions established decades ago for the purpose of being present as a voice of compassion and justice in the world.

Our Social Principle on Abortion reads as follows:

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...

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 pregnant 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 ¶ 161L.) 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. (Book of Discipline ¶ 161 J)

Ministry to Those Who Have Experienced an Abortion We urge local pastors to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with post-abortion stress. We further encourage local churches to make available contact information for counseling agencies that offer programs to address post-abortion stress for all seeking help. (BOD ¶ 161 K)

The RCRC provides, resources, advocacy and training which make all of the above possible in our ministry, advocacy, and justice to the world as it pertains to reproductive health.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we the people of the 2016 California-Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, affirm the work of the national Religious Coalition of Reproductive choice, and move to join as members both the affiliate group California Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, and the national Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. The conference secretary is directed to complete and submit our membership application to the California RCRC, 1460 Pelham Rd. 106-G, Seal Beach, CA 90740, and to the national RCRC in Washington D.C.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference Council on Finance and Administration is directed to seek funding of between \$100-\$300 for annual membership fees within the Partners in Ministry focus area.