

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D083
Title: Addressing the Erosion of Reproductive Rights and Autonomy
Proposer: Ms. Evangeline Warren
Topic: Abortion, Health Care, Women

Directly Related: (Attached)

1994-A054 Reaffirm General Convention Statement on Childbirth and Abortion
1991-C021 On the Topic of Termination of Pregnancy (Rejected)
1988-C047 Adopt a Statement on Childbirth and Abortion
1982-B009 Reaffirm the Church's Guidelines on the Termination of Pregnancy

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2018-D032 Advocate for Gender Equity, Including Reproductive Rights, in Healthcare

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

D083 - Addressing the erosion of reproductive rights and autonomy

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Ms. Evangeline Warren

Endorsed by: Mr. Alan Murray, Ms. Dianne Audrick Smith, Ms. Linda Watson-Lorde, Ms. Hanh Tran

Supported by: Nathan Brown

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 08 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention recognizes that pregnancy and childbirth are dangerous undertakings that risk permanent disability and death for those who bear children; and be it further

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church reaffirms that parenthood “should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God” (1988-C047); and be it further;

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church recognizes that access to abortion is a key element in preserving the health, independence, and autonomy of those who can bear children; and be it further;

Resolved, that the 80th General Convention affirms that all Episcopalians should be able to access abortion services and birth control with no restriction on movement, autonomy, type, or timing; and be it further

Resolved, that the 80th General Convention understands that the protection of religious liberty extends to all Episcopalians who may need or desire to access, to utilize, to aid others in the procurement of, or to offer abortion services.

Explanation

As a Church, we have held a nuanced, carefully considered stance on access to abortion since the 1960s. In the current political climate, there is increasing political pressure restricting access to abortion and other forms of reproductive health care above and beyond our own faithfully considered boundaries. In some cases, these political and legal restrictions are so broadly constructed that they disallow access to necessary health care for miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy (a deadly condition), and contraception. This resolution reaffirms our stance, reemphasizes our stance, and underscores the religious foundation for our stance.



Resolution Number: 1994-A054
Title: Reaffirm General Convention Statement on Childbirth and Abortion
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church reaffirms resolution C047 from the 69th General Convention, which states:

All human life is sacred from its inception until death. The Church takes seriously its obligation to help form the consciences of its members concerning this sacredness. Human life, therefore, should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God. It is the responsibility of our congregations to assist their members in becoming informed concerning the spiritual and physiological aspects of sex and sexuality.

The Book of Common Prayer affirms that "the birth of a child is a joyous and solemn occasion in the life of a family. It is also an occasion for rejoicing in the Christian community" (p. 440). As Christians we also affirm responsible family planning.

We regard all abortion as having a tragic dimension, calling for the concern and compassion of all the Christian community.

While we acknowledge that in this country it is the legal right of every woman to have a medically safe abortion, as Christians we believe strongly that if this right is exercised, it should be used only in extreme situations. We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience.

In those cases where an abortion is being considered, members of this Church are urged to seek the dictates of their conscience in prayer, to seek the advice and counsel of members of the Christian community and where appropriate, the sacramental life of this Church.

Whenever members of this Church are consulted with regard to a problem pregnancy, they are to explore, with grave seriousness, with the person or persons seeking advice and counsel, as alternatives to abortion, other positive courses of action, including, but not limited to, the following possibilities: the parents raising the child; another family member raising the child; making the child available for adoption.

It is the responsibility of members of this Church, especially the clergy, to become aware of local agencies and resources which will assist those faced with problem pregnancies.

We believe that legislation concerning abortions will not address the root of the problem. We therefore express our deep conviction that any proposed legislation on the part of national or state governments regarding abortions must take special care to see that the individual conscience is respected, and that the responsibility of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter is acknowledged and honored as the position of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church express its unequivocal opposition to any legislative, executive or judicial action on the part of local, state or national governments that abridges the right of a woman to reach an informed decision about the termination of pregnancy or that would limit the access of a woman to safe means of acting on her decision.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), pp. 323-25.



Resolution Number: 1991-C021
Title: On the Topic of Termination of Pregnancy
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected (Resolution Died With Adjournment)
Final Text:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That this 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church express its unequivocal opposition to any legislative, executive or judicial action on the part of local, state or national governments that abridge the right of a woman to reach the informed decision about the termination of pregnancy and that would limit the access of a woman to safe means of acting on her decision.



Resolution Number: 1988-C047
Title: Adopt a Statement on Childbirth and Abortion
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 69th General Convention
adopt the following statement on childbirth and abortion:

All human life is sacred. Hence, it is sacred from its inception until death. The Church takes seriously its obligation to help form the consciences of its members concerning this sacredness. Human life, therefore, should be initiated only advisedly and in full accord with this understanding of the power to conceive and give birth which is bestowed by God.

It is the responsibility of our congregations to assist their members in becoming informed concerning the spiritual, physiological and psychological aspects of sex and sexuality.

The Book of Common Prayer affirms that "the birth of a child is a joyous and solemn occasion in the life of a family. It is also an occasion for rejoicing in the Christian community" (p 440). As Christians we also affirm responsible family planning.

We regard all abortion as having a tragic dimension, calling for the concern and compassion of all the Christian community.

While we acknowledge that in this country it is the legal right of every woman to have a medically safe abortion, as Christians we believe strongly that if this right is exercised, it should be used only in extreme situations. We emphatically oppose abortion as a means of birth control, family planning, sex selection, or any reason of mere convenience.

In those cases where an abortion is being considered, members of this Church are urged to seek the dictates of their consciences in prayer, to seek the advice and counsel of members of the Christian community and where appropriate the sacramental life of this Church.

Whenever members of this Church are consulted with regard to a problem pregnancy, they are to explore, with grave seriousness, with the person or persons seeking advice and counsel, as alternatives to abortion, other positive courses of action, including, but not limited to, the following possibilities: the parents raising the child; another family member raising the child; making the child available for adoption.

It is the responsibility of members of this Church, especially the clergy, to become aware of local agencies and resources which will assist those faced with problem pregnancies.

We believe that legislation concerning abortions will not address the root of the problem. We therefore express our deep conviction that any proposed legislation on the part of national or state governments regarding abortions must take special care to see that individual

conscience is respected, and that the responsibility of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter is acknowledged and honored.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988* (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 683.



Resolution Number: 1982-B009
Title: Reaffirm the Church's Guidelines on the Termination of Pregnancy
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the following principles and guidelines adopted by the 65th General Convention (1976) and reaffirmed by the 66th General Convention (1979) be reaffirmed by this 67th General Convention:

The beginning of new human life, because it is a gift of the power of God's love for his people, and thereby sacred, should not and must not be undertaken unadvisedly or lightly but in full accordance of the understanding for which this power to conceive and give birth is bestowed by God.

Such understanding includes the responsibility for Christians to limit the size of their families and to practice responsible birth control. Such means for moral limitations do not include abortion for convenience.

The position of this Church, stated at the 62nd General Convention of the Church in Seattle in 1967, which declared support for the "termination of pregnancy" particularly in those cases where "the physical or mental health of the mother is threatened seriously, or where there is substantial reason to believe that the child would be born badly deformed in mind or body, or where the pregnancy has resulted from rape or incest" is reaffirmed. Termination of pregnancy for these reasons is permissible.

In those cases where it is firmly and deeply believed by the person or persons concerned that pregnancy should be terminated for causes other than the above, members of this Church are urged to seek the advice and counsel of a Priest of this Church, and, where appropriate, penance.

Whenever members of this Church are consulted with regard to proposed termination of pregnancy, they are to explore, with the person or persons seeking advice and counsel, other preferable courses of action.

The Episcopal Church expresses its unequivocal opposition to any legislation on the part of the national or state governments which would abridge or deny the right of individuals to reach informed decisions in this matter and to act upon them.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, New Orleans, 1982* (New York: General Convention, 1983), p. C-156.