

Fact Sheet on the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

One of the most important issues to be decided for The United Methodist Church's social witness is our denomination's current "blank check" endorsement of and formal agency affiliation with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

Ending this formal association would NOT change the official UMC position on abortion. In fact, RCRC conflicts with our Social Principles at several key points:

UM Social Principles

Express "belief in the sanctity of unborn human life" (§161J)

Only "reluctant[ly]" give qualified approval to legalized abortion (§161J)

Oppose abortion being used as a "means of birth control" or "gender selection" (§161J)

"Oppose" and "call for the end of" partial-birth abortions, with rare exceptions (§161J)

Teach that "sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the marriage bond" (§161G), which is a covenant of "shared fidelity" (§161C)

Consider homosexual practice to be "incompatible with Christian teaching" (§161G)

RCRC

Refuses to make the same affirmation; has repeatedly trivialized the unborn's moral significance¹

Calls performing abortions "sacred work,"² "holy work,"³ and "God's work"⁴

Refuses to acknowledge ANY reason or situation which would make a choice for abortion clearly immoral; decries even speaking about "abortion as birth control" or "abortion for gender selection"⁵

Has consistently lobbied legislators as well as the Supreme Court since the mid 1990s against any attempt to limit the practice; denounced the recent federal ban on it as "devastating"⁶

Promotes "a new sexual theology" that "will celebrate fidelity in our commitments without legalistic prescription as to the precise forms such fidelity must make"⁷; its Missouri chapter leader asserts that our UMC teaching "just plain doesn't work in our culture"⁸

Argues at length that "[i]t is, at best, inaccurate to use scripture to condemn committed, consensual same-gender sexual relationships"⁹; its leaders frequently speak against the UMC position

In Decision #1047, the Judicial Council notably declined to affirm an assertion that "RCRC does not conflict with the Social Principles."

It is worth noting that several other “mainline” Protestant denominations with similarly nuanced positions on abortion to that of the UMC — namely, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the American Baptist Churches in the USA, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the Northern Province of the Moravian Church — have either refused to formally affiliate with RCRC or else have severed past ties with it.

Meanwhile, this U.S.-focused political group continues to use our church’s name in promoting positions well outside of the mainstream, such as: advocating taxpayer funding of abortions (opposed by 74% of the American people ¹⁰) and defending the legality of partial-birth abortions (a practice 72% favor outlawing ¹¹), while opposing abortion regulations requiring parental notification for girls younger than 18 (supported by 80% ¹²) and 24-hour waiting periods (supported by 78% ¹³).

RCRC certainly does not reflect the official positions of our church or our faithful grassroots membership.

Therefore, we respectfully urge **SUPPORT** for Petition #80033 — “Withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice” (Advanced Daily Christian Advocate Volume 2, p.348) and Petition #80179 — Delete Resolution #114 (p. 393).

We also urge delegates to **OPPOSE** Petition #80727 — Retain Resolution #114 (p. 393).

Another relevant resolution worthy of review is Petition #81453 (ADCA pp. 433-434).

All of these are assigned the Church and Society Committee 2.

For more information, including further documentation for the above points, see the Renewal and Reform Coalition web page on RCRC: <http://www.umdecision2008.org/news/rcrc.htm>

¹ For example, one RCRC publication suggests that aborting a fetus is no morally different from actions to “remove or transplant a kidney.” Roy Bowen Ward, “Is The Fetus a Person? The Bible’s View,” RCRC Educational Series No. 2, page 4; available from http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/RCRC_EdSeries_Fetus.pdf; accessed 11 April 2008. Another RCRC publication argues that while “[p]eople have an absolute value in Western morality, fetuses do not.” Paul D. Simmons, “Personhood, the Bible, and the Abortion Debate,” RCRC Educational Series No. 3, page 2; available from: http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/RCRC_EdSeries_Personhood.pdf; accessed 11 April 2008.

² RCRC, Prayerfully Pro-Choice: Resources for Worship, pp. 27-31; available from <http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Prayerfully.pdf>; accessed 11 April 2008.

³ Prayerfully Pro-Choice, p. 101.

⁴ Prayerfully Pro-Choice, p. 102.

⁵ RCRC, “Words of Choice: Countering Anti-Choice Rhetoric,” pp. 2-4; available from http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Words_of_Choice.pdf; accessed 11 April 2008.

⁶ RCRC News, “Supreme Court Decision A Devastating Setback for Women’s Health and Freedom of Conscience,” available from <http://www.rcrc.org/news/Supreme%20Court%20Decision.cfm>; accessed 11 April 2008. In its “friend of the court” brief filed with the Supreme Court in 2006, RCRC broadly “urge[d] the Court to not allow Congress to force a moral consensus” on the specific practice of partial-birth abortion — available from <http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/gonzales-vcarrhart.pdf>; accessed 11 April 2008. Many other examples of RCRC decrying opposition to partial-birth abortions are noted on the Renewal and Reform Coalition website (www.umdecision2008.org - see above).

⁷ The Reverend Debra W. Haffner, “The Really Good News: What the Bible Says About Sex,” RCRC Educational Series, available from http://www.rcrc.org/issues/good_news.cfm; accessed 11 April 2008.

⁸ Rebecca Turner, “Sexual Ethics in an Oversexed, Fundamentalist World,” 23 January 2005; available from http://www.morcrc.org/Sexual_Ethics_in_an_Oversexed.pdf; accessed 11 April 2008.

⁹ Haffner.

¹⁰ Zogby International poll, April 15-17, 2004.

¹¹ Gallup poll, May 10-13 2007.

¹² CBS News poll, July 13-14, 2005.

¹³ CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll, January 10-12, 2003.