



Prayerfully Pro-Choice: A Brief History of the Episcopal Church & All Saints, Pasadena

Since 1967, The Episcopal Church has maintained 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 [about the termination of pregnancy] and to act upon them.” In light of the recent report about a pending decision in the Supreme Court case [Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health](#), The Episcopal Church reaffirms our commitment to “equitable access to women’s health care, including women’s reproductive health care,” which we view as “an integral part of a woman’s struggle to assert her dignity and worth as a human being.” The Office of Government Relations will continue to advocate at the federal level to protect reproductive rights.

All Saints Church has been officially a “prayerfully pro-choice” parish since it first adopted [this pro-choice position statement](#) in 1989.

The statement — reaffirmed in 2004 — includes this affirmation: *That a pregnant woman is the moral agent in the profound and personal decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy; and convinced that this belief is consistent with the Judeo-Christian understanding of God’s empowerment of each person with the freedom to make choices, and the responsibility for those choices.*

“Abortion: The Courts, the Church, the Conscience” is the sermon then Rector George Regas preached in 1989 ahead of the adoption on that position statement.

You will want to [read the whole sermon here](#) ... but to get you started, here are a couple of quotes:

The Supreme Court’s ruling on July 3rd is an attempt to force abortion policy out of the courts and into the political arena – into 50 state legislatures. Justice Scalia wrote that abortion is “a political issue” more than a legal one. So from now on state legislators will grapple with those ethical, medical, and legal complexities that even the Supreme Court couldn’t solve. Walter Dellinger, Professor of Law at Duke University, said, “Virtually all the power in legislatures is held by men who will never be affected by the restriction they impose.” Yet their conclusions will have a profound effect upon one of the most important and intimate decisions of a woman’s life.

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Some politicians speak eloquently of their concern for the innocent fetus, but it is the cruelest irony how so many of these anti-abortionists have no interest in the things that make that newborn child healthy and beautiful. It's brutal to force a poor mother to have a child and then deny her healthy prenatal care. For many poor people in America, life begins at conception and ends at birth. If we are to reduce abortions, we must reaffirm by work and action the rights of the born.

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The Constitution guarantees a woman the right to exercise some control over her unique ability to bear children. The Supreme Court on July 3rd ruled that the right to decide belongs increasingly to politicians. On the steps of the Court, Faye Wattleton, national head of Planned Parenthood, asked rhetorically about these constitutional guarantees: "When did it become a political matter whether Americans have privacy? When did it become a political question whether women had reproduction rights? When did it become a political question whether poor people have the same access to the constitutional rights as the rest?" The answer to the "when" was easy: July 3, 1989. And yet, as Justice Robert Jackson once said, "The very purpose of the Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of ... officials and to establish them as legal principles. One's right to life, liberty and property ... depends on the outcome of no election."

At the National Church level, the Episcopal Church has adopted multiple resolutions supporting abortion rights, including this **1988** Statement on Childbirth & Abortion:

https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1988-C047

That Statement was [reaffirmed in 1994 with a resolution](#) which included these words:

"... 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."

"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."

And in 2016, this reflection on what prayerfully pro-choice looks like written by All Saints staffer Susan Russell was published in the Huffington Post:

<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-prayerfully-pro-choi b 9380064>