



Statement of Faith on Women's Reproductive Health, Rights, And Justice Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

"[R]eproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life. Reproductive health, therefore, implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this are the right of men and women to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice, and the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant." **World Health Organization**¹

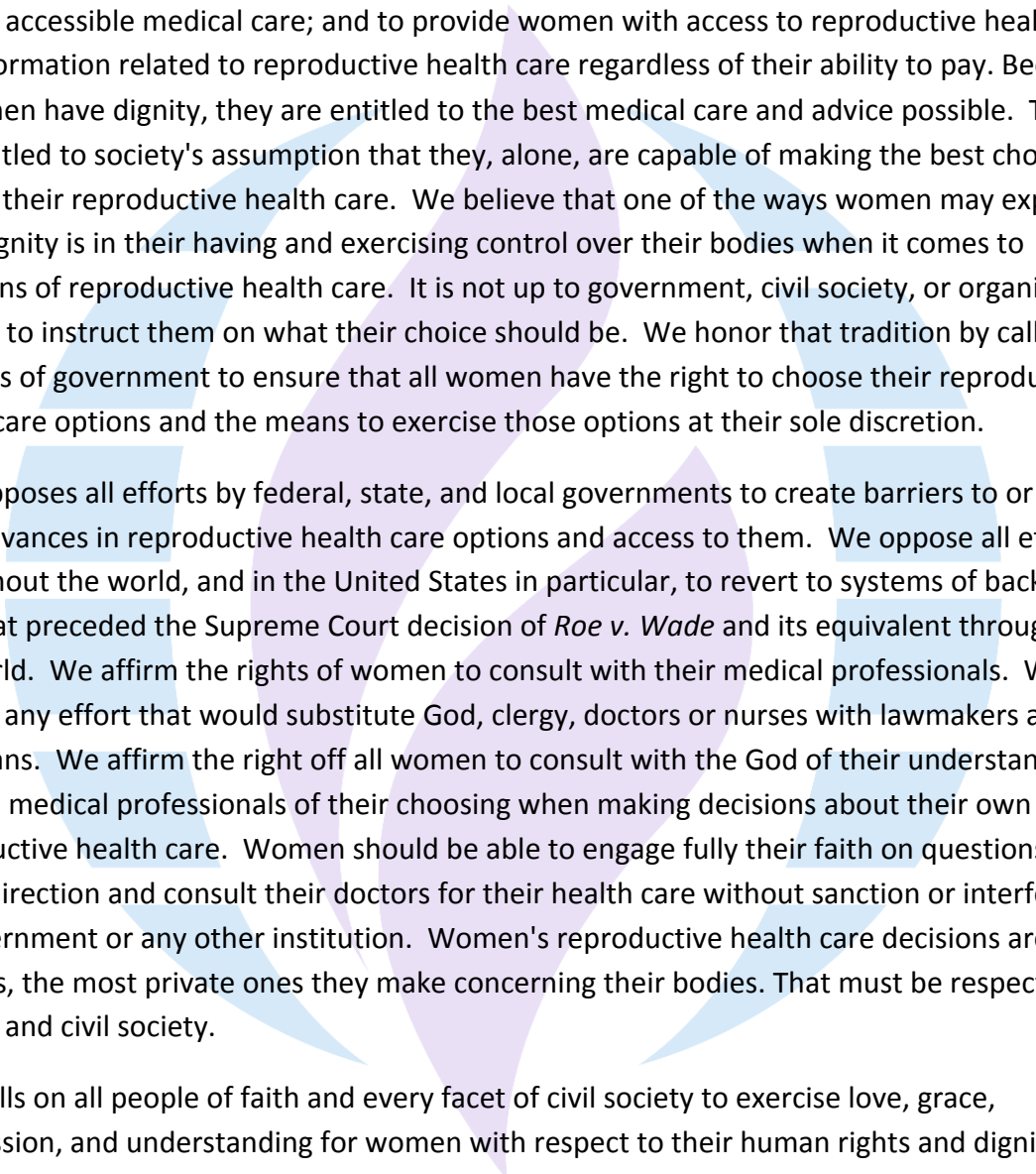
"Reproductive justice is a framework that places the lived experiences of women at the center of the debate and recognizes that they must have the social, economic, and political resources to be healthy, have healthy families, and live in healthy communities." **Cynthia R. Milsap**²

Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) affirms faith in fundamental human rights, the inherent worth and dignity of all human persons, and freedom and equality for women throughout the world. The sacred texts that we hold most dear are a biblical witness to the theological truth that all women are created in the image of God, and thus, are worthy of human dignity as children of God. We recognize that there are systemic injustices that rob women of their dignity and impede the free exercise of a range of choices that may improve their lives and lives of their children and families for the better. We believe that government and public policy must address the broader socioeconomic barriers to women's social, political, physical, spiritual, and economic wellbeing. Accordingly, we embrace the principles of the reproductive justice movement, which affirm "people have the right to have children, people have the right not to have children, people have the right to raise their children in safe and healthy environments, and people have the right to express their sexuality without oppression."³ We join with women, activists and organizers, nonprofit service agencies, and faith communities of every tradition in urging the federal government to provide and maintain adequate funding and support for research and development, prevention and treatment in matters affecting the health and quality of lives of women, including affordable health care insurance, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, breast and ovarian cancer, safe and effective contraceptives, and other methods of pregnancy prevention, maternity care, menopause and chronic illnesses unique to or prevalent among women.

¹ World Health Organization, Health Topics: *Reproductive Health*, February 4, 2012

² Cynthia R. Milsap, "Women's Reproductive Justice: A matter of social justice and a call to care about the least of us," Ecclesio.com, September 24, 2012.

³ Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Congressional Briefing: *Faith Support for Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice*, March 11, 2013; Ross, Loretta J., "The Movement for Reproductive Justice: Six-years Old and Growing," *Collective Voices* 2009: 11:4; Leonard, Toni M. Bond, "Laying the Foundation for the Reproductive Framework," *Collective Voices* 2009: 11:4.



MCC affirms that all people are entitled to the rights and resources that equip them to make their own decisions about their bodies, their sexuality, and their well-being, including the inalienable right of women to control their bodies. We call on all levels of government and civil society to honor and respect those rights. Further, we call on local, state, and federal governments to correct the conditions that underlie the high rate of unintended pregnancy and abortion through responsible sexuality education, affordable family planning services, and high-quality, accessible medical care; and to provide women with access to reproductive health care and information related to reproductive health care regardless of their ability to pay. Because all women have dignity, they are entitled to the best medical care and advice possible. They are entitled to society's assumption that they, alone, are capable of making the best choices around their reproductive health care. We believe that one of the ways women may express their dignity is in their having and exercising control over their bodies when it comes to questions of reproductive health care. It is not up to government, civil society, or organized religion to instruct them on what their choice should be. We honor that tradition by calling on all levels of government to ensure that all women have the right to choose their reproductive health care options and the means to exercise those options at their sole discretion.

MCC opposes all efforts by federal, state, and local governments to create barriers to or roll back advances in reproductive health care options and access to them. We oppose all efforts throughout the world, and in the United States in particular, to revert to systems of back alley care that preceded the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* and its equivalent throughout the world. We affirm the rights of women to consult with their medical professionals. We oppose any effort that would substitute God, clergy, doctors or nurses with lawmakers and politicians. We affirm the right of all women to consult with the God of their understanding and the medical professionals of their choosing when making decisions about their own reproductive health care. Women should be able to engage fully their faith on questions of moral direction and consult their doctors for their health care without sanction or interference by government or any other institution. Women's reproductive health care decisions are, perhaps, the most private ones they make concerning their bodies. That must be respected by the law and civil society.

MCC calls on all people of faith and every facet of civil society to exercise love, grace, compassion, and understanding for women with respect to their human rights and dignity. MCC resolves to dedicate prayer and human capital to eliminating conditions around the world that compromise a woman's right to choose and impede every woman's ability to enjoy lives of social, political, physical, spiritual, and economic wellbeing. With God's help, may it be so.