

**Problem  
Pregnancy**

**When  
No  
Choice  
Is Easy**

*For the Pregnant  
Woman*

©Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive  
Options and Women's Ministries Program  
Area, National Ministries Division,  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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*Second Edition*

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Are you pregnant when you don't want to be? Is your pregnancy a problem for other reasons? If so, chances are good that you are upset and confused at this moment. You may even feel panicky and desperate. The disapproval or non-support of those around you might make you decide that your pregnancy must stay a well-kept "secret." It is a lonely feeling for you to have to make important decisions about the future. If you find yourself in this situation, how do you go about making these decisions? Where can you turn for help?

Though you may think you are alone right now, you are not. The church cares about you and would like to support you as you make your decisions about this pregnancy and afterwards. Our church is not here to judge but rather to offer you help and information.

This pamphlet discusses three options for you to consider:

- 1) to keep the baby,
- 2) to make an adoption plan, and
- 3) to have an abortion.

We strongly urge you to read this entire pamphlet before making any decisions.

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## **To Keep the Baby**

Parenthood is a special relationship which is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a vocation (a job), not an avocation (a hobby). Its rewards and its challenges last a lifetime. As a result you may feel overwhelmed with the ideal of motherhood. You may be unsure of your emotional ability to be a good mother or of your financial ability to provide an adequate home, food, and clothing for the baby. These feelings may be stronger if you believe that the baby may not be “normal.” These uncertainties may cause you to decide that motherhood is not for you. Or perhaps the circumstances surrounding your pregnancy cause you to feel guilt, shame, anxiety, or even anger.

The church recognizes that the decision to keep the baby involves a long-term commitment. The church can be a community of support and encouragement for you as you raise a child. If keeping the baby is what you decide, we urge you to seek medical care immediately.

## **To Make an Adoption Plan**

Suppose you feel that you are unable, for whatever reason, to raise

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a child. One possible solution for you in this situation is adoption. We realize that some families feel that giving a child up for adoption is a betrayal of family loyalty, and is even against the will of God. But the Bible tells of a mother who, because she loved her child so deeply, volunteered to give it to another woman. It happened in King Solomon's day, when he had to decide which of two women was the "real" mother of a baby. The "real" mother of the baby, Solomon decided, was the one who loved her child enough to give it away if need be, in order to ensure its welfare. Adoption may be the most loving and responsible thing for a mother to do. As you consider an adoption plan, it is natural for you to have some fears or questions about who will care for the baby. Even though adoption may be emotionally painful for you, it may be the best thing for the baby. What adoption does for a baby is to allow her or him to be born and to have the care that you feel you cannot now provide. What adoption may do for you is to give you the chance to put your life back in order and to plan for your future.

The best way to assure yourself that the baby will be taken care of properly is to deal with a certified adoption agency. They can best

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explain the type of care available for your baby. Your counselor or pastor can put you in touch with such an agency, as well as support you during and after the adoption process. If making an adoption plan is what you decide, we urge you to seek medical care immediately.

## **To Have an Abortion**

By now you know that there are no easy answers. In the first two options, you would have a baby. A third option is not to have a baby. Presbyterians do not have substantial agreement on when human life begins. We have deep respect for human life, but our church also recognizes that in certain circumstances abortion can be a morally acceptable decision to make. The "official" position of this church is that each woman has the ability and responsibility to make good moral choices regarding a problem pregnancy, but abortion ought to be an option of last resort. Presbyterians are not all in agreement with this position.

As you are trying to decide what to do, you may be hearing different messages even from people in the church who want to help you. Some may tell you that no matter what the situation, abortion is wrong. Others may suggest that you should

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think about abortion only if you have been raped or are the victim of incest. Some may say that only if the doctors tell you your physical life is in danger should you consider this option. Others may say that if you are emotionally unable to continue the pregnancy or if you believe you have a severely deformed baby, you should consider abortion. Some believe that early abortions are more acceptable than those occurring closer to viability, when life could possibly be sustainable outside the woman's womb. Still others may say if you believe that there is no way to provide care for a baby, then abortion should be considered.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s "official" policy notes that problem pregnancies are the result of, and influenced by, so many complicated and unsolvable circumstances that the church has neither the wisdom nor the authority to address or decide each situation. Nonetheless, abortion is such a serious decision that you should not think of it as "an easy way out;" that is, abortion should not be used instead of contraception. Abortion should not be used for gender selection only or to obtain fetal parts for transplantation. Abortion should be your decision only when you have considered it

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carefully along with the other two options. If abortion is what you decide, you should proceed immediately to get medical advice and counseling in preparation for this procedure, which is safest when done before 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Furthermore, in some states, abortion can be performed legally only during the first 6 months of pregnancy. Additionally, the church has expressed grave moral concern about a particular late term abortion procedure, dilation and extraction, and has stated that this procedure is appropriate only to save the life of the pregnant woman.

## **Making Your Own Decision**

Presbyterians believe that God alone is Lord of the conscience. No decision is easy, but a decision must be made. There are many questions involved. As you consider the following questions and begin moving toward your final decision, know that the church wants to help you and support you, because no matter what your circumstances, you are a person who is loved and valued by God. The following questions are raised to help you begin moving toward your own decision.

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## **1. How do I really feel about being pregnant?**

(a) Do I want to have a baby at this time in my life?

(b) Can I handle all of the responsibility of raising a child?

(c) Can I provide the love and emotional support a growing child needs? Am I thinking of keeping the baby for the baby's sake or in hopes that the father will stay with me, or to have someone who needs me, that I can love?

(d) Will I regret keeping the baby? How will I feel about the limits motherhood will put on my free time and future plans? Will I have to quit school or job? Can I count on any support from the father or his family? Can I count on any support from my own family?

## **2. How do I really feel about giving the baby to someone else?**

(a) Am I willing to give life but not yet ready or able to raise a child? Is adoption a way that I can give a baby to someone else who could not otherwise have one?

(b) Could someone else give the child a better home than I can at this time in my life?

(c) Will the baby's father be supportive of a decision to allow

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the baby to be adopted? If not, how will I proceed?

(d) Will I regret planning for adoption? Can I handle the emotional feelings of giving the baby away?

### **3. How do I feel about having an abortion?**

(a) Do I feel I have good reasons for having an abortion?

(b) Will the baby's father be supportive of a decision to have an abortion? If not, how will I proceed?

(c) Will I have the emotional support that I need during and after the abortion?

(d) How will I pay for an abortion?

(e) Will I feel regret? If so, how can I handle it?

Our church does not advocate abortion, but acknowledges circumstances that may make abortion the least objectionable of difficult options. There is no biblical evidence to support the idea that abortion is an unpardonable sin. We do not advocate laws that limit information and counseling about or that limit access to abortion services.

You may have other questions. We urge you to get them all out in the open. We hope that this

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pamphlet has helped you understand better the choices that are before you. None of them is easy, but you still have to decide on one. You probably already have been given all sorts of advice about what to do. If not, you will. Some of that advice is helpful, and some is not. Some people, even your parents or your partner, may want to make your decision for you. But you must make that final decision about what you are going to do. Do not let anyone pressure you or limit your options as you make your decision.

There are those in your community, including your church, who care about you and are available to help you. If you want to learn more about the church's policy, additional materials are available. (See p. 11)

Whether you decide to keep the baby, allow someone to adopt the baby, or have an abortion, you will need some expert advice about medical, legal, and other matters. Below are some suggestions about where to find that help.

- pastor (your own or another)
- campus minister or chaplain, if you are in college or in the service
- physician
- trusted teacher
- trusted adult friend

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- school counselor
  - welfare social worker
  - hospital social worker
  - certified adoption agency
  - other certified counselor or psychologist
  - family planning clinics

The church wants you to feel our love and support no matter what you decide. We want you to remember throughout the decision-making process that you are a person who is valuable in the sight of God, and God loves you and will be with you, no matter what.

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**For the following resources call  
PDS at 1-800-524-2612**

Web address:

[www.pcusa.org/marketplace](http://www.pcusa.org/marketplace)

*There's Always A Father*

PDS # 72 710 99 015

*When You Need the Wisdom of  
Solomon*

PDS# 72 710 99 016

*When No Choice is Easy*

PDS# 72 710 99 017

*Problem Pregnancies and Abortion*  
(1992 policy paper)

OGA-92-017

*The Covenant of Life and the Caring  
Community and Covenant Creation:  
Theological Reflections on  
Contraception and Abortion (1983  
policy paper)* OGA-88-109

**For more information on resources,  
contact:**

*Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive  
Options (PARO)*, a network officially  
affiliated with the church through  
the National Ministries Division

Tel: 502-569-5794

Web address:

[www.pcusa.org/phewa/paro](http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/paro)

*Women's Ministries Program Area,*  
National Ministries Division

Tel: 502-569-5382/85

*Religious Coalition for Reproductive  
Choice (RCRC)*, an interfaith group  
with Presbyterian participation

Tel: 202-628-7700

Web address: [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org)

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