



The Maine Interfaith Council
for Reproductive Choices

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES:
*A Unitarian
Universalist Perspective*

by
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Morality Begins with Freedom, and Freedom Means Having Choices

For Unitarian Universalists, no higher human spiritual or religious authority exists than your own experience. For the past four hundred and more years, liberal religious people, known in the United States under the name Unitarian Universalists, have believed that individual freedom is at the heart of any genuine religious journey.

We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of each person – and in each person's inherent ability to learn to make moral choices. We believe that no government or church authority should be allowed to interfere with the individual's own personal search for truth and meaning. In more traditional terms, we believe that freedom is the essential ingredient for each person to develop a genuine relationship with God (with ultimate truth, with the sacred). We believe that such freedom — to search, to learn, to change, to grow, to choose — is at the heart of what it means to be human, and at the heart of what it means to be religious.

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Reproductive Choices – No One-Size-Fits-All Answers

When it comes to reproductive choices, we believe that each woman is capable of making the best moral choice for her life. Your life consists not only of your physical and emotional wants and needs, but of your relationships and responsibilities, and your spiritual growth. The decision to become a parent (or not) impacts all these parts of your individual life, in ways that no one else can judge for you.

Unitarian Universalists reject the idea that a government authority or a single church teaching can make such complex decisions in advance for all women, for all times, and for the individual woman who will live the life shaped by the choice she makes. The one-answer-fits-all approach is offensive to us, because we believe each person has both the freedom and the responsibility to search for truth and meaning in the actual living of her or his own life.

Of course, we recognize that no one is an island. Each individual, consciously or not, is a part of a web of interdependent relationships of family, community, past, present and future. As individuals, we have a responsibility to make

the best moral decisions we can, given all the circumstances of our lives, including how our decisions will affect others. But we recognize that only when each individual is free to decide the course of her life uncoerced by outside authorities, is it possible to create a true family or a true community based on love, justice and equality.

For us, morality begins in freedom, and freedom is meaningless without choices. No one answer will be right for all women in all circumstances, or even for one woman at different times of her life.

Questions of Life—Here and Now

In seeking truth and meaning as we try to make the best decisions, Unitarian Universalists look to all of the world's great spiritual traditions for inspiration, challenge, insight and wisdom. We are guided always by the use of human reason in judging any claim of truth or wisdom. We are guided by the teachings about love and justice in the Jewish-Christian tradition from which Unitarian Universalism evolved. And we are guided by our own direct experience of the sacred. In any given fork in

the road, these guide-posts may show us the way.

The question of whether and when to become a parent is a profoundly here-and-now

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question. Whether a pregnant woman chooses abortion, adoption or parenting, alone or with others, she is the one whose body, mind, emotions, spirit and future will be affected most profoundly by that decision. At any given point on the path

of your life, each of these decisions can be the most reasonable, the most loving, the most wise, the most moral choice you can make in this time and place.

Unitarian Universalists focus much more on this-world and the here-and-now than on questions about reward and punishment in an afterlife. "The consequences of sin are all in this world," said one of our early 19th century leaders. In other words, the true test of whether a decision is right or wrong is how it affects us and the world we live in now. For us, carefully thinking through these questions and acting on the best answers we discover is what it

means to be religious and faithful.

Based on the best evidence of science and our own moral thinking on these questions, most Unitarian Universalists would reject the idea that life begins at conception. But, whatever our individual opinions, we would support the individual woman's right to think through her beliefs for herself and to make the best choices given her own circumstances.

For us, true choice is at the heart of freedom, and freedom is at the heart of what it means to be a moral person on a religious journey toward truth, meaning and love.



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