

The following resolution was approved by the delegates at a plenary of the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held in Indianapolis June 30-July 4, 2023.

## **Denouncing the *Dobbs* Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare**

### **A Resolution of Witness**

1 **Text of the Motion**

2

3 **Whereas** the *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe v. Wade* and ruled that there is no constitutional  
4 right to abortion;

5

6 **Whereas** a majority of Americans support legal abortion in all or most cases;<sup>1</sup>

7

8 **Whereas** anti-abortion laws do not decrease abortion rates but make abortions more dangerous  
9 by eliminating access to safe, affordable, and medically-necessary abortions;<sup>2</sup>

10

11 **Whereas** abortion care following miscarriage is severely restricted by abortion bans, threatening  
12 the lives of pregnant people in their time of grief;<sup>3</sup>

13

14 **Whereas** people of lower socioeconomic status and people of color are more likely to receive  
15 abortion care, due to systemic factors including poverty, lack of access to contraception, and  
16 distrust of the medical system,<sup>4</sup> and whereas anti-abortion laws deepen unequal access to  
17 comprehensive reproductive care, with insufficient access mostly affecting rural communities  
18 and Black and Brown communities and negative reproductive health outcomes  
19 disproportionately affecting people of color;<sup>5</sup>

20

21 **Whereas** General Synod 8 “[called] for the repeal of all legal prohibitions of physician-  
22 performed abortions”;<sup>6</sup> General Synod 12 “[reaffirmed] full freedom of choice for the persons  
23 involved in making decisions regarding pregnancy”;<sup>7</sup> General Synod 17 “[deplored] the decision  
24 handed down today by the United States Supreme Court severely limiting major provisions of  
25 *Roe v. Wade* as undermining the spirit of the constitutional freedom of choice of women of this  
26 nation and making freedom of choice essentially a luxury for those who are not economically  
27 disadvantaged;”<sup>8</sup>

28

29 **Whereas** previous General Synods (12, 13, 16, 18) have paired support for safe and legal  
30 abortions with a desire for information and resources about contraception and family planning,  
31 and teen abortion rates decline with free access to contraception;<sup>9</sup> and the United Church of  
32 Christ has heeded this call through holistic, faithful sexuality education, Our Whole Lives, which  
33 helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and  
34 behavior;

35

36 **Whereas** Justice Thomas’ concurring opinion in *Dobbs* threatens Constitutional protection for  
37 access to contraception, as well as protection for same-sex sexual relations and marriage;<sup>10</sup>

38

39 **Whereas** the UCC Medical Benefits Plan covers abortion “per Plan policies and per individual  
40 state regulations,”<sup>11</sup> and is now an unequal benefit across states where the UCC Medical Plan has  
41 beneficiaries;

42  
43 **Therefore be it resolved** that the Thirty-Fourth General Synod of the United Church of Christ  
44 affirms the right of all people to access reproductive healthcare including contraception and  
45 abortion and takes the following actions:

46  
47 Proclaims that forced birth is an act of sexual violence and the choice to have and care for  
48 children is a sacred decision which should not be forced upon anyone;

49  
50 Proclaims that every person seeking an abortion is a beloved child of God, our neighbor, a  
51 person we love;

52  
53 Denounces the overturn of legal precedent in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*  
54 and condemns all laws banning abortion or restricting access to reproductive health services;

55  
56 Affirms the morality of resisting by peaceful means, including civil disobedience, any laws  
57 banning abortions, and calls upon every setting of the United Church of Christ to use Just Peace  
58 practices<sup>12</sup> to confront abortion bans and restrictions on reproductive healthcare;

59  
60 Calls upon the National Setting of the United Church of Christ and the Conferences to explore  
61 and pursue all avenues for legal challenges to abortion bans;

62  
63 Directs the United Church of Christ Board to explore creation of a Bail Fund, as necessary, for  
64 UCC members arrested for participation in civil disobedience or other acts of non-violent  
65 Christian witness that promote social, racial, economic, environmental, gender, and reproductive  
66 justice; the UCC Board shall report on their progress of this exploration by General Synod 35;

67  
68 Calls upon the Pension Boards to ensure that benefits parity exists for all beneficiaries covered  
69 under UCC Medical. Benefits parity shall include covering travel costs for any covered persons  
70 needing to travel out of state to access abortion and contraception unlawful in their own State.  
71 Benefits parity in this regard shall be completed no later than the end of 2025. The Pension  
72 Boards shall report on their progress in implementing benefits parity by General Synod 35.

73  
74 In the period between General Synod 34 and the end of 2025, the 34<sup>th</sup> General Synod calls upon  
75 the UCBMA (United Church Board Ministerial Assistance) to provide emergency grants to any  
76 UCC Medical beneficiaries and other eligible applicants to cover out of pocket costs and travel  
77 costs incurred by accessing care not available in their home state. Eligible costs shall include  
78 any such costs impacting households of any authorized minister, member in discernment, and  
79 eligible lay employee. The UCBMA shall continue to ensure that the application process for  
80 such emergency grants will not require the disclosure of medically sensitive information. The  
81 UCBMA—in collaboration with the Pension Boards, Conference Ministers, and the National  
82 Setting—shall widely communicate the availability of these emergency grants throughout the  
83 United Church of Christ

84 Calls upon Local Churches and their members to engage with the Our Whole Lives: Sexuality  
85 and Our Faith curriculum to promote holistic sexuality education, including information and  
86 education about contraception, and to support and offer access to contraceptives;

87  
88 Calls upon Local Churches, Associations, and Conferences to physically, financially, and  
89 spiritually accompany people seeking and receiving abortions and other reproductive healthcare,  
90 in partnership with local health care agencies and abortion funds.

91  
92 **Funding:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with  
93 the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

94  
95 **Implementation:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or  
96 other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/05/06/americas-abortion-quandary/>

<sup>2</sup> “Women living under the most restrictive abortion laws (i.e., where abortion is prohibited altogether or allowed only to save a woman’s life) have abortions at about the same rate as those living where the procedure is available without restriction as to reason” (p. 8)

“The more restrictive the legal setting, the higher the proportion of abortions that are least safe – ranging from less than 1% in the least-restrictive countries to 31% in the most-restrictive countries... even where abortion is broadly legal, inadequate provision of affordable services can limit access to safe services. In addition, persistent stigma can affect the willingness of providers to offer abortions, and can lead women to prioritize secrecy over safety.” (p. 5)

[https://www.gutmacher.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/abortion-worldwide-2017.pdf](https://www.gutmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/abortion-worldwide-2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/05/10/1097734167/in-texas-abortion-laws-inhibit-care-for-miscarriages>

“One Texas law passed last year lists several medications as abortion-inducing drugs and largely bars their use for abortion after the seventh week of pregnancy. But two of those drugs, misoprostol and mifepristone, are the only drugs recommended in the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists guidelines for treating a patient after an early pregnancy loss.

The other miscarriage treatment is a procedure described as surgical uterine evacuation to remove the pregnancy tissue — the same approach as for an abortion.”

“For some [patients, waiting until the bleeding starts and the pregnancy tissue is naturally released] is too difficult, given the emotions surrounding the pregnancy loss... Instead, the patient may choose medication or a surgical evacuation procedure, which Briggs said may prove necessary to avoid a patient becoming septic if some of the tissue remains in the uterus.”

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3780732/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7813444/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc\\_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000009&pg\\_seq=60&search\\_doc=](http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000009&pg_seq=60&search_doc=)

<sup>7</sup> [http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc\\_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000013&pg\\_seq=91&search\\_doc=](http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000013&pg_seq=91&search_doc=)

<sup>8</sup> [http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc\\_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000018&pg\\_seq=54&search\\_doc=](http://rescarta.ucc.org/jsp/RcWebImageViewer.jsp?doc_id=8abee2f6-352d-48f9-958b-49a311bc4489/ucoc0000/UD000001/00000018&pg_seq=54&search_doc=)

<sup>9</sup> Colorado’s [teen birth rate fell 54 percent and the teen abortion rate declined 64 percent in the last eight years](#) due to free access to contraception, especially IUD’s.

<sup>10</sup> “in future cases, we should reconsider all of this Court’s substantive due process precedents, including Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell.” [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392\\_6j37.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://pbucc.org/images/pbucc/publications/Health/Non-Med\\_Highlights\\_2023\\_102022.pdf](https://pbucc.org/images/pbucc/publications/Health/Non-Med_Highlights_2023_102022.pdf)

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<sup>12</sup> Just Peace Practices:

1. Support non-violent direct action.
2. Take independent initiatives to reduce threat.
3. Use cooperative conflict resolution.
4. Acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness.
5. Advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty.
6. Foster just and sustainable economic development.
7. Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system.
8. Strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights.
9. Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade.
10. Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations.