

Other options For dealing with unwanted pregnancies *

- ✓ Increase support and decrease expenses for those who want to adopt. Also decrease barriers to adoption.
- ✓ Create more social and financial supports for pregnant women who are considering putting children up for adoption
- ✓ Change economic and social conditions so that a woman with an unintended pregnancy can carry the pregnancy to term and have adequate social and financial support for raising the child.

Questions

1. The sexual activity rates among teens in western Europe are at the same level as teens in the U.S., but their pregnancy rates are half those of the U.S. Why?
2. Does a moral position about sexuality outside of marriage lead to regulations which prevent meaningful access to contraception for unmarried persons who need it?
3. Many people who oppose abortion also oppose provision of contraceptive services to those at risk of unwanted pregnancy. How can we understand this?
4. Do we provide both political and financial support to those trying to improve access to contraception? Why or why not?

Queries

1. What position does your spiritual community take, particularly with young people, about sexual relationships, from which pregnancy may result?
2. What steps are we ready to take as individuals, as a spiritual community, and as part of the body politic, to help take away the occasion for abortion?
3. How can individuals with different beliefs about the morality of abortion work together to take away the occasion of abortion?

Sources of facts

- Henshaw, Stanley and Kathryn Kost. "Abortion patients in 1994–1995: Characteristics and Contraceptive Use," *Family Planning Perspectives*, 8/1996.
- Centers for Disease Control. "Abortion Surveillance–2001," <<http://www.cdc.gov>>; *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly*, (53) No. SS09;1 11/26/04.
- Torres, A. and J.D. Forrest, 1988. "Why Do Women Have Abortions?" *Family Planning Perspectives*, 20(4):169–176.
- Kulczycki, A., M. Potts and A. Rosenfield, 1996. "Abortion and Fertility Regulation," *The Lancet* 347:1663–68.

Other resources

- Emergency contraception: (1-888-NOT-2-LATE) or: <<http://www.opr.princeton.edu/ec/ec.html>>.
- Alan Guttmacher Institute. *Sharing Responsibility: Women, Society and Abortion Worldwide*, AGI 120 Wall St., New York, NY 10005, 1999.
- Malcolm, Jean and Stewart Mulford. "Two Friends Look at Abortion," 1997.
- Stockland, N.L. "The Myth of the Abortion Trauma Syndrome," *JAMA* 268(15):2078–79, 1992.

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Quaker Earthcare Witness

173-b N. Prospect St. Burlington VT 05401-1607

Tel: 802/658-0308

E-mail: <info@QuakerEarthcare.org>

Website: <www.QuakerEarthcare.org>

QEW's Vision and Witness

WE ARE CALLED to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

WE WORK to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity.

WE PROMOTE these Truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating our message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship with the earth.

Toward Taking Away the Occasion of Abortion



This Quaker Earthcare Witness pamphlet is intended as an aid to worship-sharing on this sensitive topic.

Contact QEW for our other publications on population and other concerns.

Toward Taking Away the Occasion of Abortion

THE desire to live in unity with nature makes us aware of the pressures that the rapidly increasing human population places upon the earth's resources and ability to maintain life on Earth. Multiple approaches are needed in order to stabilize population. The goal of stabilizing population is sometimes erroneously equated with support for abortion, but support for one does not imply support for the other. Moreover, it is clear that greater use of effective contraception can reduce both fertility and abortion rates.

Historically Friends have not had unity on the matter of abortion. Friends would like to reduce the number of abortions, prevent unwanted pregnancies, and move toward taking away the occasion of abortion. This pamphlet is an attempt to bring Friends together to seek spiritual discernment and to find common ground on ways to take away the occasion of abortion.

Facts

Some facts about the present scope of abortion:

In the world

- ◆ About 50 million abortions are performed each year; the population growth rate would be considerably higher if these abortions were not performed.
- ◆ About 40 percent of these are performed where abortion is illegal. Some 50 to 100 thousand women die each year due to complications of abortions (usually illegal).
- ◆ Abortion rates typically go down as contraceptive use rates go up in a country.

In the United States

- ◆ There are about 853,000 abortions each year (2001 data). This is 16 abortions per 1,000 women age 15–44 each year, which represents 500 per 1,000 women over their lifetimes.

- ◆ Seventy-nine percent of abortions are obtained by unmarried women (2001 data).
- ◆ Approximately 50 percent of women seeking abortion had used no method of contraception. These figures show the tremendous scope and the serious consequences of abortion. They do not touch the potential emotional damage involved.

We all need compassion

We all need compassion—to give it and to receive it—in order to bridge our divisiveness, heal our wounds and begin to come together to work on this difficult issue. Compassion for Friends means “holding someone in the Light.” Compassion is needed for:

- ◆ The women who risk death in order to avoid having a child.
- ◆ Those who believe there is never an occasion for abortion.
- ◆ Those who make adoption difficult.
- ◆ Those who have unwanted pregnancies and put their children up for adoption.
- ◆ Those who spurn single women with children.
- ◆ Those who abort under pressure from others.
- ◆ Those who oppose any modern contraceptive methods.
- ◆ Those who use abortion instead of contraception.
- ◆ Those who advise us to rely on abstinence alone to prevent pregnancy.
- ◆ Those who think they can eradicate abortion through fear.

How can we show our compassion?

- ✓ Talk with those with whom we disagree; listen to them and share the reasons for their own views.
- ✓ Welcome children. Help single mothers to live easily in our communities.
- ✓ Recognize that under current social condi-

tions unwanted pregnancy is a fact of life. Support family planning at home and abroad.

- ✓ Pray and search together for divine guidance.

Potential ways to take away the occasion of abortion *

- ✓ Prevent unwanted pregnancies.
- ✓ Promote an understanding of sexuality as an expression of spiritual commitment.
- ✓ Encourage greater self-esteem and responsibility by helping everyone make clear and informed choices about sexual behavior.
- ✓ Improve communication within couples.
- ✓ Educate ourselves, our youth, and others how not to become pregnant by:
 - Explaining the facts of reproduction and the rhythm method (especially the time of ovulation)
 - Sharing about how to deal with sexual passions and emotions.
 - Holding up the options of abstinence and celibacy for those who feel so led.
 - Explaining how to use contraception and showing how and where to get it.
 - Making available emergency contraception, sometimes known as the morning-after pill, but effective up to 72 hours after unprotected intercourse.
 - Providing the right questions to ask of our partners. For example: “How are we going to prevent pregnancy?”
- ✓ Increase contraceptive use among women and men at risk of unintended pregnancy.
- ✓ Increase access to contraception.
- ✓ Increase research into new contraceptive methods.

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* Many of the ways have been shown to delay sexual activity or increase contraceptive use, both of which indirectly decrease the abortion rate. Among Friends there may not be unity about this list.