

Does the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) Speak for You?

Our United Methodist Church has a very moderate, nuanced official position on the difficult issue of abortion. It is not as strongly “pro-life” as some of us would like, but it is also not as clearly “pro-choice” as others wish. But there is NOTHING moderate or nuanced about a DC-based political lobbying group called the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

RCRC opposes ANY legal restriction or even moral opposition to any abortion, no matter how late-term. And in doing so, they use our church's name! In their political lobbying, RCRC leaders have claimed to “represent” our denomination and its millions of members.¹

Our denomination is one of a small handful of religious bodies formally affiliated with RCRC. Therefore, our UMC's *Book of Resolutions* is “on record in support of the work of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice” (#3204), without qualification. Should this continue?

RCRC consistently lobbied to defend grisly “partial-birth” abortions,² even after our *Social Principles* (§161J) included a statement “call[ing] for the end of” this late-term practice. **The UMC's “being at the table” did nothing to moderate RCRC's extremism.**

RCRC's literature and lobbying openly opposes parts of our UMC's position, such as our rejecting abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection, our support for abortion-alternative pregnancy resource centers, and “Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life.”³ RCRC refuses to morally oppose abortion being used as a means of sex selection, and RCRC directly criticizes our church's stance against this practice (widespread in much of the world).

Should We Bless Abortion as “Holy”? In contrast to our UMC, RCRC dismisses the value of unborn human life. RCRC even promotes rituals to bless ALL the work of elective abortion clinics, describing aborting unborn children as *always* “holy work” and “God's work.”⁴

Being a Part of RCRC Needlessly Alienates Us from Our U.S. Mission Field: 69% of Americans believe there are at least SOME circumstances in which abortion should be illegal,⁵ while RCRC lobbies to keep abortion legal in ALL circumstances, no matter how late-term. 71% of Americans believe girls younger than 18 should be required to obtain parental *consent* before undergoing abortion surgery,⁶ while RCRC has long lobbied against all requirements for parental consent or even *notification.*⁷ 68% of Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion, with slightly stronger opposition levels among young adults,⁸ while RCRC lobbies for taxpayer funding of medically unnecessary abortions.⁹ 60% of Americans favor banning most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy,¹⁰ while RCRC opposes all such late-term abortion restrictions.¹¹ Remaining in RCRC gives our neighbors reasons not to come to our churches.

What Others Say: Prominent UMC leaders, including bishops and Ms. Marget Sikes, the former General Board of Church and Society board of directors Secretary, have urged our church to cut its ties with RCRC. The proper committee at the last General Conference voted decisively to do so. But time ran out for plenary consideration of that committee-approved petition.

Other “mainline” denominations with similar positions on abortion to that of the UMC have decided to either sever their past ties with RCRC or decline invitations to join it.¹² We can follow their good example by **supporting Petition #60837: Withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproduction Choice (page 327).** This would not stop dialogue with anyone, but would simply protect our beloved United Methodist Church's faithfulness, name, and witness.

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¹ For example, see this RCRC testimony to the U.S. Senate:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20100203053803/http://leahy.senate.gov/press/200307/073103f.html>.

² For example, see <https://web.archive.org/web/20090212204850/http://www.rcrc.org/news/Supreme%20Court%20Decision.cfm>.

³ Especially seen in RCRC's publication, “Words of Choice: Countering Anti-Choice Rhetoric.”

⁴ RCRC, “Prayerfully Pro-Choice,” pp. 63, 73-74, 101-102; also: <http://rcrc.org/prayer-for-providers-of-womens-health-care/>.

⁵ November 18-23, 2014 Quinnipiac University poll; <http://www.pollingreport.com/abortion.htm>.

⁶ July 15-17, 2011 Gallup poll; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1576/Abortion.aspx>.

⁷ RCRC, “History”; <http://rcrc.org/homepage/about/history/>.

⁸ Jan 7-13, 2015 Knights of Columbus-Marist poll.

⁹ RCRC, “Access to Abortion Care”; <http://rcrc.org/homepage/policy/access-to-abortion-care/>.

¹⁰ November 18-23, 2014 Quinnipiac University poll; <http://www.pollingreport.com/abortion.htm>.

¹¹ See <http://rcrc.org/press-room/statements-and-rcrc-news/release-11-08-2013-religious-orgs-decry-proposed-natl-abortion-ban/>.

¹² For American Baptists, Northern Moravians, and the ELCA, see *Holy Abortion?* (<http://www.nprcouncil.org/resources/holyabortion.htm>); for Disciples of Christ, see “DHM Says ‘No’ to Abortion Rights Ties,” *The Disciple*, August 1994.