

Celebration of Life Presbyterian Church  
2530 S Alma School Road  
Mesa, AZ 85210

April 10th, 2024

Brad Munroe, General Presbyter  
Robert Schultz, Stated Clerk  
Presbytery Council and members of the Presbytery  
Presbytery of Grand Canyon  
4141 E Thomas Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85018

Dear Friends

Throughout the centuries the Presbyterian church has served our Lord Jesus Christ through proclamation and speaking the Word of God to all persons, including those in power. We are a community of witnesses, pointing beyond ourselves through word and work to justice, hope and grace. As members of this church we hold fast to our faith in God who has placed us in Mesa, Arizona in order to share our faith boldly and publicly.

We believe that God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from doctrines and commandments of any person. The recent ruling by the Arizona Supreme Court reinstating the 1864 ban on abortion brazenly disregards the integrity of all persons by criminalizing those who in good conscience must seek abortions for any reason. Additionally, this makes those who perform the procedure, as well as those who receive health care from the procedure, liable to criminal punishment.

To quote the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Resolution on Reproductive Health, 2012:

*(a) We know that the state has a limited legitimate interest in regulating abortions and in restricting abortions and in restricting abortions in certain circumstances. (b) Within this context of the state's limited legitimate interest, no law should impose criminal penalties against any woman who*

*chooses or physician who performs a medically safe abortion. (c) Within this same context of the state's limited legitimate interest, no law should deny access to safe and affordable services for the persons seeking to terminate a problem pregnancy. (d) No law or administrative decision should provide for a complete ban on abortion. (e) No law or administrative decision should (i) limit access to abortions; (ii) limit information and counseling concerning abortions; or (iii) limit or prohibit public funding for necessary abortions for the socially and economically disadvantaged. (f) No law should prohibit access to, nor the practice of contraceptive measures. (g) No law should sanction any action intended to harm or harass those persons contemplating or deciding to have an abortion...*

*The PC(USA) has wisely recognized that people of good faith can differ in their interpretation of Scripture, their understanding of when human life begins, and their decision about the morality of abortion... (l)t has opposed efforts to criminalize those seeking or providing abortions. Understanding the tragic dimensions that can accompany our reproductive lives, the church has stood for the freedom of adults to choose among hard choices with the best possible information and support. To restrict access to reproductive health care for individuals and families, especially to target the most vulnerable women and families, is an unjust exercise of governmental coercion. Such actions unjustly expose poor women and men and their families to a greater likelihood of unplanned pregnancies, serious illness detected too late, increased suffering, and earlier loss of life.*

We, the Session of Celebration of Life, request that the council and staff prayerfully consider any avenue(s) of addressing reproductive justice in the light of the recent ruling of the Arizona Supreme Court on abortion, including but not limited to:

1. Distribution to congregations and all teaching elders:
  - a. The implications to Arizonans on the ruling of the Arizona Supreme Court: *"Absent the federal constitutional abortion right, and because [the 15-week abortion ban] does not independently authorize abortion, there is no provision in*

*federal or state law prohibiting [the 1864 abortion ban's] operation. Accordingly, [the 1864 ban] is now enforceable,"* (Arizona Supreme Court Justice John Lopez writing in his opinion.)

- b. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Resolution on Reproductive Health, On Providing Just Access to Reproductive Health Care (Item 21-03)
  - c. Resources within the presbytery (and Arizona) to women who are seeking reproductive options and/or justice;
2. Encourage and embolden pastors, clerks, councils and members to:
- a. Provide pastoral care to women and their families who must find medical care outside of the state and are financially burdened by making unnecessary travel plans.
  - b. Remind congregations that our faith in Christ is a public affair. It instructs us how to speak to the broader society on important issues of our day.
  - c. Prayerfully consider scripture, their own conscience and the PC(USA) documents on reproductive justice.
  - d. Contact and urge their Arizona legislative representatives and senators to repeal the 1864 law and/or bring new legislation.
  - e. Contact Governor Katie Hobbs and Attorney General Kris Mayers in support of their stand against this law.
  - f. Contact and urge local county District Attorneys to carefully weigh alternative options before criminally prosecuting those seeking or providing reproductive health care.
  - g. Vote their conscience in the upcoming 2024 election.
3. Instructing the Stated Clerk and General Presbyter to:
- a. Provide opportunities of prayer and study materials to the Presbytery about reproductive justice particularly in the wake of SCOTUS repealing Roe vs Wade.
  - b. Communicate the policy of the PC(USA) as stated above to the Arizona legislature, Governor and Attorney General urging the repealing of the 1864 law.

- c. Invite the Rev. Jimmy Hawkins, advocacy director of the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness to hold a workshop on these national issues (hopefully jointly with de Cristo.)

We realize the action steps we have listed are many and that time is short, especially for women facing life and death health care decisions. But our faith in Jesus Christ demands that we speak out clearly and decisively. We are hopeful that our Presbytery, the council and staff will realize the urgent need to speak out before anyone is criminalized in our state by this law.

In the Peace and hope of our Lord Jesus Christ,



Jane Machucha  
Clerk of Session,  
Celebration of Life



the Rev. David Hicks  
Interim Pastor,  
Celebration of Life