

QUAKER TESTIMONY REGARDING WOMEN AND ABORTION —

We, the Phoenix Monthly Meeting - Quakers - of the Religious Society of Friends, oppose the attempts at local, state and federal levels, through legislation, court decisions, and other means, to restrict access to safe, legal abortion. We respect the right of others to hold their own beliefs.

What these laws and court decisions do in fact is to take away the right of individuals to decide when they will have a family, and what kind of family they will be able to care for.

We believe that each of us has access to the divine, to a Light within us, and that women are equal to men as we seek to know what is best for us. Our testimony of stewardship leads us to ask such questions as whether it is a good time to start a family, whether we can care for our family, and what impact our actions have on the world around us.

We resist the effort of some to turn their religious doctrine into laws over all of us. This effort to enshrine a religious doctrine — by no means universal — into law is a danger to pregnant people's health and to those who help them. It is also a violation of the Constitution's First Amendment protection for the right to Freedom of Religion and against the Establishment of Religion.

We urge all lawmakers to resist and remove laws that restrict the right of individuals to choose when and how to have their families.

Signed,

Richard Starling and Tom Haines, Co-Clerks
December 4, 2022

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On Sunday, December 4, at our regular Meeting for Worship for Business, Phoenix Meeting approved the above statement on abortion.

This statement came about in the traditional Friends' way. An individual brought her concern to the Ministry and Care Committee, which referred it to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee for seasoning. At the September PSCC meeting, there

was general positive interest in the idea but a need was felt for further refining of the statement and consideration by the wider Phoenix Quaker community. Input from all was invited. A revised statement was brought to the October Meeting for Worship for Business, at which time there was general positive reaction to the idea, with the suggestion that we have a special Called Meeting for the purpose of wider discussion, with everyone in Phoenix Meeting being invited to participate. That meeting occurred on November 20, at which time it was recommended that further refinements to the language be considered, again with an invitation to all in the Meeting to give input. After more input was received a final revised proposed statement was sent around to all who had been present at the Called Meeting. There were no further changes suggested. Accordingly, The Peace and Social Concerns Committee brought a proposal to the December 4 MFWFB (Business Meeting) that the statement be approved, signed by both Co-Clerks, and disseminated to various Friends organizations, the local newspapers, and the Arizona Legislature and Governor.

There was, all along, general support and even appreciation for bringing this concern forward, and the final proposal was approved with a strong sense of unity. Also, it may be worth noting that the final statement looks extremely different from the original. It is clear that one must trust in the process of allowing all Friends to give their spiritual best to improve upon an idea and make changes that had not been seen clearly at the outset.