



Intersections

Fall 2011
Volume 3 Issue 2

Eliminating the Religious Stigma of Abortion
National Edition

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Watch and Share our Videos :
www.YouTube.com/faithaloud

Pray to End Sidewalk Bullying!

This fall, Faith Aloud launched its semi-annual "40 Days of Prayer to Keep Abortion Safe and Legal" Campaign. Every day from September 28 to November 6, we posted a daily prayer and fact about reproductive justice on Facebook and Twitter. We are proud to say these prayers were re-posted and re-tweeted over 100 times!

This campaign was a direct response to an anti-choice group called "Operation Rescue" (or "Operation Save America") who semi-annually plans 40-day intensive protests on clinics in hopes of bullying patients and doctors out of a woman's right to choose. During the "40 Days for Life" campaign, the amount of protesters often doubles outside of clinics. Parents pull their children out of school to picket, buses of youth groups are dropped off, and large congregations appear, sometimes to scream at women that they are murderers going to hell, other times trying to offer them inaccurate information, while endlessly harassing the clinic staff members.

Our hope is to give clinics the spiritual strength to stand tall and reject these onslaughts by religious bullies. The goal of our "40 Days of Prayer" campaign, besides praying for the well-being of the people we pray for, is to promote awareness of the challenges doctors, patients and staff face, disseminate factual information, reduce the stigma of abortion, and above all, promote a positive portrayal of the dignity of women and their power to make decisions.

Comment from our YouTube page:

"This is an incredibly refreshing video. I know there are a lot of women who have chosen abortion who are very grateful that this has been posted. i will be passing it along."

Comments from our Facebook wall:

"Thank you [Faith Aloud](#) for your beautiful, powerful and sacred work!"

"I love the work of [Faith Aloud](#) in St. Louis, MO. They've launched their own "40 Days of Prayer," which has caught my attention in the last few days. Thank you, Rebecca, staff and board for your awesome visionary work!"



As one of our clinic defense posters states, our message is simple: **Bring Only Love.**

Victory in Mississippi! "Eggs are People" Initiative Defeated!

We thank Mississippi citizens who voted down legislation that would have given full personhood rights to fertilized eggs. Not only would all abortion have been banned, but also many forms of birth control and in-vitro fertilization. Although many news outlets expected the proposition to pass, the bill was defeated by a significant margin, with 58% against, and 42% for.

Inside this Issue

Page 2

Facts and Prayers for Abortion
Remembering Ryan Mathews
A Tribute to Judith Widdicombe

Page 3

The Shame and Blame Game
Faith Aloud in Your City!
Spreading the Word

A Sampler of Our Prayers

We pray for women for whom pregnancy is not good news, that they know they have choices. We pray for women who were joyfully expecting a child, but have learned that the pregnancy is not sustainable. We pray for parents whose teen daughters are pregnant, that they help her through this difficult time with kindness and openness.

We give thanks for the doctors who provide quality abortion care, and pray that they may be kept safe. We pray for elected officials, that they may always support a woman's right to make her own medical decisions. We pray for increased financial support for low income women to access contraception, abortion, and childcare.

We ask for blessings upon the women who pass through hostile protesters on their way into an abortion clinic. May they be shielded from physical and emotional harm from those who do not know them. May they stand tall and refuse shame.

We pray for women who were taught by their religion to be ashamed. We pray for an end to hateful language that diminishes the dignity of women. We pray for compassionate religious voices to speak out for the autonomy of women.

Did You Know?

*About half of American women have experienced an unintended pregnancy, and about one-third will have had an abortion by age 45.

*Nine out of 10 abortions performed in the U.S. happen within the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy.

*42% of women seeking abortions live below the federally-established poverty level - \$10,830 for a single woman with no children .

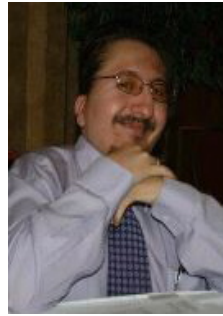
*72% of all women receiving an abortion report an affiliation with Christianity.

*87% of all U.S. counties do not have an abortion provider.

*Roughly half of all women seeking abortions already have one or more children .

Source: The Guttmacher Institute, "Facts on Induced Abortion in the U.S." 2010.

Ryan Mathews



We were devastated this fall to lose a dear friend and staff member. Ryan Mathews, passed away on October 12. Ryan, 28, was a recent graduate of Eden Seminary and was ordained at his funeral by the UCC and Disciples of Christ. Ryan was a strong proponent for social justice and had a gift for seeing how seemingly separate issues intersect. We especially benefited from Ryan's unique perspective on reproductive choice and its importance for people with disabilities:

*"Freedom of choice is one of our most inalienable rights, but for people with disabilities, the freedom to choose becomes even more important. Due to the limitations of their own physical condition, people with disabilities may feel powerless to make choices in their lives, hold dearly the choices they **can** make in their lives. As children of God, we are endowed with the great gift of choice, and that beautiful gift is inclusive to all."* -Ryan Mathews

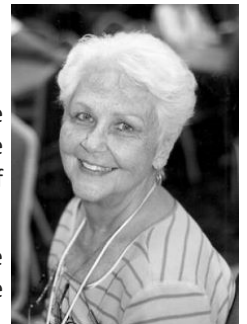
We are deeply saddened at the loss of such an inspiring, good-hearted person and we are so grateful for his vibrant spirit and the wonderful gifts Ryan shared with Faith Aloud.

Judith Widdicombe

We remember and honor the life of Judith Widdicombe, a truly incredible voice in the movement for Reproductive Justice, who passed away on the 3rd of November.

Judith has been an icon in the struggle for reproductive autonomy since the 1960's. Labor and delivery nurse by day, Judith spent her evenings and weekends helping desperate women obtain safe-if not legal-abortions. In March 1973, Judith opened Reproductive Health Services as a non-profit agency committed to serving women with full options counseling by highly trained volunteers. Judith is among the pioneers who established the Clergy Consultation Service to help women in the days before Roe, established the National Abortion Federation, serving as its first president, and was active with national NARAL from its inception and founded its Missouri affiliate in 1969. Judith fought many abortion battles in the Supreme Court.

We are grateful for her innumerable contributions to reproductive justice and vow to continue her legacy of fearless advocacy for women.



Follow us: www.twitter.com/faith_aloud

The Shame and Blame Game

SHAME. With the approaching elections and Republican primaries, abortion and contraception are constantly in the news. Do any candidates trust women? Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain, and Rick Santorum oppose all abortions, including those to end pregnancies caused by rape or incest. Santorum went as far as describing abortions as “traumatizing” and thinks that victims of sexual assault would benefit from carrying their rapist’s baby to term.



Even more troubling, the Republican primary candidates all support the “**Let Her Die**” Bill”, which passed in the House of Representative on October 14th. This bill would deny funding to hospitals that provide emergency abortion care, and gives hospitals the right to deny her treatment “on moral grounds” if a woman has a life-threatening condition that requires her pregnancy to be terminated.

This is one of many extreme anti-abortion bills proposed this year to turn back the clock of women’s rights to the era before Roe v. Wade.

BLAME. Oddly enough, despite Santorum’s staunch opposition to abortion, he blames single mothers for being the cause of the poor economy and problems for the Republican party: “Look at the political base of the Democratic Party: it is single mothers who run a household. So if you want to reduce the Democratic advantage, what you want to do is build two parent families.” What will we see next? A “Make Them Get Married” Bill?

Herman Cain has been accused by multiple women of sexual harassment, but his response is to threaten and intimidate them and their families.

We reject this fundamentalist, misogynist assault upon the women of America! Women are good. Women are strong. Women are wise. Women are powerful. And this is what they fear: when women make decisions, the power shifts, the old boys’ network breaks up, and the priorities of the nation change.

We’re All in This Together!

At Faith Aloud, we are determined to change the dialogue on reproductive choices with the goal of eliminating the religious stigma of abortion. In this charged political climate where abortion is increasingly attacked, speech surrounding this issue tends to focus on women as victims. Although it is important to understand the unique hardships women face, **we focus our attention on the power of women.** In order to disrupt this rhetoric that questions women’s autonomy, we need to focus on their strengths, not their struggles. We need to communicate that women are strong, moral, and intelligent, and that we have faith in women to make good choices. Will you help us get the word out? Generous donations from our supporters make all the difference! This holiday season, please support our efforts to continue to fight for women’s right to choose without shame or stigma.

Your Donations Help Us to:

- *Provide abortion clinics and family planning centers all over the country with supportive spiritual materials.
- *Provide free spiritual counseling by specially trained clergy members to women all over the country.
- *Lobby for legislation that supports reproductive Justice and LGBT rights.
- *Keep our followers updated on current events.
- *Disseminate information and unique religious messages that work to eliminate the stigma of abortion.

Good News Gets Around!

This fall Faith Aloud provided trainings and presentations to our supporters all over the country on how to provide “Spiritual Care Before and After Abortion.”

The Rev. Rebecca Turner met with doctors, nurses, counselors, escorts, clergy, seminarians, and activists to talk about the importance of honoring the spirituality of women seeking abortion care.



Thank you to everyone who welcomed us in:

Fargo, ND Cleveland, OH Portland, OR
Falls Church, VA St. Louis, MO

To request a training in your city, contact us at:
execdirector@faithaloud.org or 888-717-5010.

Our “Spiritual Care Before and After Abortion” training is now available as an Online Course! Study from the comfort of your home or office, any day or time. You will receive all of the same resources that we distribute in live trainings.
www.faithaloud.org/moodle



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL VOICE FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Does belief in God give one a license to let women die?

To refuse to fill a prescription for birth control? To scream hate at women entering medical clinics? To bully?

It's a ludicrous question, isn't it? Any religious faith should be used to give comfort, support, and strength to all who need it. Yet in our world, "religious exemption" is offered to anyone who wants to treat women with shame and disrespect.

We believe in the dignity of women.

We believe that God has placed within women the strength and responsibility of deciding if and when to bring a child into the world. We believe that God's compassionate presence is always available to women who are making decisions. We believe in the goodness of strong women.

We're taking our message of hope all over America.

Women need support, not shame. Please read our news and do what you can to uphold and increase the power of women's decisions. You are helping Faith Aloud bring kind and loving care to women around the country.

You make the difference!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Turner".

The Rev. Rebecca Turner, Executive Director

