

## **OCMM Abortion and Reproductive Rights Discussion**

### **Request from FCNL for Meeting discernment**

**Approved 2023-04-23**

Old Chatham Quakers acknowledge that all life is sacred. Questions around precisely when human life begins are wrapped in that mystery and, on some level, are unknowable by objective measures. As such, reproductive care and abortion access are spiritual concerns. Quakers believe that the Divine presence is within each of us, so it follows that we each need freedom to follow our own discernment—through prayer or other ways of knowing—in situations that involve spiritual concerns. For the still, small voice to rise above the din, we need agency to act in alignment with our discernment. Through this lens, bans on abortion care infringe on religious freedom.

As Quakers, we recognize that abortion care is an issue of justice and conscience. Bans and criminalizations do not stop abortions; they disproportionately victimize marginalized people, and negatively impact all who need reproductive care (including those experiencing miscarriages and wanted pregnancies). Though we wish for a world in which all experiences are valued and respected equally, we recognize that there are currently systems of oppression and power in place whose intentional structures are harmful to many. We question the ethics of forcing one particular form of life under these systems at the expense of other lives which appear to be valued less.

Though as individuals we may differ in our personal convictions and reproductive choices, we affirm the right of every human to freely access safe, comprehensive, and humane reproductive care in accordance with their own discernment.

In light of the above, and given the present threat to legal reproductive care in the United States, OCMM supports FCNL updating their statement to one explicitly supporting the protection and expansion of comprehensive, humane, and accessible reproductive care, including abortion for all who seek it. We invite FCNL to incorporate, replicate, adapt or adopt the language of this recommendation in their updated statement.