

## 2009 is the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AFSC's Book: *Who Shall Live? Man's Control Over Birth and Death*

### Is it time for further discernment?

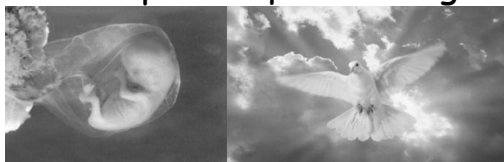
In 1969, the American Friends Service Committee published this report on which it based its abortion position. Forty long years offers much experience on which to base further reflection – especially since the book was written before *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion in the United States. The difference between prediction of what would happen with legalization and experience of what actually did happen deserves to be explored.

- The book predicted child abuse rates would go down as fewer children were unwanted. Yet the rates have skyrocketed, consistent with the consistent-life view that removing a taboo on violence against unborn children is more likely to create violence against born children.
- The book predicted that legal abortions would be safer for women. Yet scandals have continued to arise, and women have continued to die in startlingly unsafe conditions. Was it the outlawing of abortion, or the nature of abortion itself, that leads to these problems?
- Subsequent experience has shown that large numbers of women who have had abortions regard themselves as traumatized by the experience, and such women are a major constituency group of the right-to-life movement.
- Subsequent experience has shown that there are doctors and nurses who have found performing abortions traumatizing to them. Some have been disillusioned as they observe the actual impact of abortion on women, and say so in front of right-to-life audiences.
- The principles of pro-life feminism have become more developed. These hold that abortion is commonly inflicted on women under unjust, sexist, pressured, and callous conditions.
- The principles of the consistent life ethic have become more developed. These hold that all violence is connected and that we should leave no holes in our arguments against war and the death penalty by allowing for violence against unborn children and their mothers.
- Minority groups such as African Americans, GLBT people, and people with disabilities have found themselves targeted and have formed anti-abortion groups.

In its mission statement, AFSC speaks of itself as "a practical expression of the faith of the Religious Society of Friends." Yet Friends are not in unity on the topic of abortion. Wouldn't AFSC therefore benefit from further discernment that includes knowledgeable Friends that are not in unity with their current position?

### Friends Witness for a Pro-life Peace Testimony

[www.prolifequakers.org](http://www.prolifequakers.org)



[admin@prolifequakers.org](mailto:admin@prolifequakers.org) / 811 East 47<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, MO 64110