

Reproductive Care: Alternative Queries

In 2023, the Friends Committee on National Legislation called for Friends Meetings and Churches to process their position on abortion policy to give feedback for what FCNL's position would be. While the discussion had admirably widespread participation, there were many complexities of the issue that were missing. We hope Meetings and individuals who wish to avoid oversimplification on this issue might find these additional queries helpful to consider.

These are more queries than would normally be considered in one group session, but that gives the group more options about which ones they wish to consider.

1. Do we have the capability to explain the perspectives of abortion opponents in such a way that they can agree that we gave a fair rendition of their views? Are we familiar enough with pro-life feminism or the consistent life ethic (promoted by peace activists) to be able to explain them in a way that their proponents would regard as accurate? Is the ability to explain differing perspectives on this – along with on war, nuclear weapons, etc. – valuable as a spiritual practice? As a peacemaking practice?
2. How comfortable are we when abortion is chosen because the fetus is female when it wouldn't have been chosen if the fetus were male? Are we sensitive to how common this is in other parts of the world? What does this practice do to the status of women in general, and to the mindset of the pregnant woman? What does the fact that the biological gender can be known say about the humanity of the fetus?
3. Have we considered that a side-effect of ready abortion availability is that impregnating men may feel they have no responsibility for children they fathered? That they consider it her choice to give birth, and not theirs, and therefore, they are justified in avoiding attention to the child or child-support payments? Does this lack of support help account for the increased feminization of poverty since abortion legalization in the U.S.? How does ready abortion availability impact men who feel entitled to sex?
4. How would we deal with encountering a person who understands abortion to be the killing of a baby, but thinks this is acceptable as a problem-solver? How well could we talk such a person out of the idea that violence isn't a problem-solver in other contexts? How do we answer people who understand abortion as the killing of a baby and are therefore puzzled as to how people could account themselves pacifists if they favor its availability?
5. When the fetus having a disability is offered as a reason for aborting the fetus, what impact does this have on people living with disabilities? Can we expect such people to resent this as a form of bigotry against them? What does it do towards public attitudes about those living with disabilities?
6. Does requiring children to be wanted before they can be born impact parental attitudes in a negative way? Does the ready availability of abortion help remove a taboo against hurting children in the minds of some parents?

7. If you were aware that a group of women were filing a lawsuit because they took a drug regimen that left them with cramps and bleeding for several days, which they had not anticipated, would you be sympathetic with their claims? Would you become more sympathetic if emergency room visits were part of the problem? Would your sympathy change if you found the drug regimen in question was intended to induce abortion?

8. A common technique in trying to get people to oppose war or nuclear weapons is to show the reality of what it does to victims. These pictures of war victims and hibakusha are hard to look at. Is showing such pictures an effective or morally necessary method? When abortion opponents show pictures of fetuses who have been torn apart, is this the same or different?

9. How do we feel about organizations formed by former abortion doctors, nurses, and other staff who now oppose abortion based on their own experiences? When combat veterans form peace groups in opposition to war, is this similar? If we discount the groups of former abortion workers, does that give us insight into how others discount the combat veteran peace groups?

10. How much is our understanding on abortion due to the merits of the issue, and how much is it due to our normal position on the leftwing/rightwing divide? How much does our position contribute to such a divide?



These queries were drafted by the ad hoc committee, Friends Witness for a Pro-Life Peace Testimony (FWPPT), whose members are affiliated with different Meetings around the United States and Great Britain. Questions, comments, and written responses of group discussions can be sent to:

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Discussion and documentation on these and related issues, plus links to other websites that would be of interest to Friends, can be found at the FWPPT website:

www.prolifequakers.org