



Ohio Religious Coalition  
for  
Reproductive Choice

# UPDATE

Volume 7 Number 2

Fall 2007

## U.S. Supreme Court decision: *Gonzales v. Carhart*

Analysis by Gretchen Borchelt of the National Women's Law Center

On April 18, 2007, the Supreme Court issued *Gonzales v. Carhart*, a bitterly-divided 5-4 decision that upheld a federal ban on dilation and extraction, so-called "partial birth abortion," a non-medical political term invented by anti-abortion strategists. Because the law did not allow an exception for a woman's health, this decision is very troubling and represents a reversal of law and a reframing of the abortion issue.

By upholding an abortion prohibition without a health exception, the court allowed politicians to trump the medical decisions of women and their doctors, and severely undermined the health protections guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*. The Court also departed from the practice of allowing legal challenges immediately after a restrictive law is passed. Instead, each pregnant woman has to file a lawsuit. Finally, the Court weakened the standard used to determine constitutionality, which encourages legislatures to pass new

restrictions, and make it more difficult for courts to strike them down.

In *Carhart*, the Court talked about abortion in a new way. Rather than saying the right to abortion is a part of a woman's liberty or privacy, the Court instead talked about the "harm" of abortion to women in inevitable post-abortion regret, and said the ban would be permitted for *women's own good*. Such a paternalistic attitude evokes an earlier era when the Court did not see women as equals.

The Court was also paternalistic toward doctors, saying it was protecting *them* from having regrets about using the procedure. It focused on fetal rights, and used the language of the religious right to describe them.

The Court's balance has shifted with Justices Roberts and Alito. Now women's rights can be eroded by packing the

see SUPREME COURT on page 2

### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

*The Ohio Religious Coalition is an affiliate of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice comprised of over 40 religious denominations and faith groups. The Ohio Coalition Board is made up of individuals representing Ohio organizations and interests.*

Editor: Barbara Avery  
Copy Editor: Robert Bennett  
Layout: Jan Solari

### EDUCATION MISSION

*The Ohio Religious Coalition works toward an educated society in which people make reproductive choices freely and according to conscience and faith.*

Contact information:  
P.O. Box 82204  
Columbus, OH 43202  
800-587-2330 (toll-free/Ohio)  
614-221-3636  
ohiorcrc@sbcglobal.net  
www.ohiorcrc.org

## Invaluable Health Care Guidelines— In Good Conscience

by Robert Bennett

In April, a group of twelve ethicists, theologians, and health care and religious professionals presented *In Good Conscience* to the public, the result of two years' thought, discussion, and labor. Commissioned by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, *In Good Conscience: Guidelines for the Ethical Provision of Health Care in a Pluralistic Society*, is proposed as a unifying moral document for Americans to use to advocate for quality health care that respects individual needs and wishes, and for individual health care providers, health care institutions, and religious denominations to use as a guide to providing respectful and conscientious health care.

*In Good Conscience* can be used during mergers with Catholic hospitals to counter the "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services," approved by the National

Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops. The sectarian "Directives" (fully described in an Appendix) codify Catholic hospitals' long-standing practices of refusing to provide reproductive health care, such as contraceptive prescriptions, emergency contraceptive (EC) for sexual assault victims, sterilizations, and abortions, except in rare cases of an extreme threat to a woman's life. Nor will Catholic hospitals allow doctors to provide information or refer patients for these medical issues.

*In Good Conscience* can also be used to lobby *against* restrictive laws and for laws supporting comprehensive sex education and contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies, such as the Ohio Prevention First bill.

*In Good Conscience's* "Preamble" affirms fundamental principles which

see HEALTH CARE on page 2

## Faith Matters project in Cleveland; Coordinator hired

Rev. Anthony Thomas (“Tony”) Minor, a Pentecostal minister and community activist, was hired in April to be the Coordinator for Faith Matters. Ohio RCRC has two partners in Faith Matters: Planned Parenthood of Greater Cleveland, and Christian Community, led by Steve Clapp.

Tony was selected from a well-qualified field of applicants by a screening committee chosen for its religious diversity and experience in youth leadership, sexuality education, and reproductive rights.

Tony has been a leader in faith-based HIV/AIDS education, voting rights, and community-led enterprise, and is well-known among African-American clergy and community leaders. A widower, he lives in Cleveland Heights, and is parenting two sons, Scott, 5, and Tom, 18, a freshman at Bowling Green State University.

The Faith Matters project’s goals are to bring faith-based sexuality educa-

tion to diverse congregations, with targeted outreach to African-American congregations; to develop faith-based advocacy for reproductive issues; and to help clergy give support to women patients.

During his first few months, Rev. Minor has accomplished a great deal. He contacted many Cleveland clergy, organized two orientations about Faith Matters’ programs, and brought 16 religious leaders to trainings for facilitators of the Black Church Initiatives’ faith-based dialogues. In July, he took six other leaders with him to BCI’s National Black Religious Summit on Sexuality. Several churches will initiate the BCI dialogues this fall. Tony is organizing further BCI trainings, a workshop to develop advocates for reproductive justice, and a clergy workshop this fall.

For information about Faith Matters programs, contact Rev. Minor at Rev\_Minor@yahoo.com or 216-324-6352.

## Freedom of Choice Ohio’s Prevention First Lobby Day—April 17

by Barb Avery, Ohio RCRC Director

For the first time, Ohio RCRC held workshops at Lobby Day on how to educate legislators about the widespread religious support for women’s right to make their own decisions about reproductive health issues. Forty people attended our workshops which started with a panel of Rev. Doyle Luckenbaugh (United Church of Christ), Rabbi Michael Ungar (Conservative Judaism), and myself (Unitarian Universalist) describing our denominations’ perspectives.

I then offered these “talking points” to the group:

1. The Ohio Prevention First Bill would reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, and therefore, the number of abortions, by supporting comprehensive sex education and access to family planning, and emergency contraceptives.
2. A ban on abortion would not stop abortion; it would only make it illegal and dangerous, as American history proves.
3. Besides, a ban imposes one religious belief on a diverse society with many other beliefs, and violates the separation of church and state. Also, many religions support comprehensive sex education for youth and family planning, and find emergency contraception a moral choice.
4. Right to Life (RTL) argues that increased contraception does not reduce abortion, but rather increases it, and cites the Allan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) statistics on California and New York as evidence.
5. RTL distorts the Guttmacher statistics. These two states are most populous, with increasing populations, so of course, the number of abortions increase. A closer look at the AGI statistics (and their analysis) reveals that the rate of abortion is *decreasing* among middle class and wealthy women who have access to education and contraception, but is *increasing* among poor women and teenagers, who do not. (www.agi-usa.org)

continued on next page

## Supreme Court continued from page 1

courts with judges who are hostile to long-standing constitutional decisions like *Roe*. States will continue their attempts to give the Court a vehicle for overturning it. *Carhart* indicates that the Court could be open to this possibility, since it merely “assumes” prior precedent to be controlling, rather than “reaffirming” it. This is an ominous sign that the Court might revisit – and overrule – *Roe* at a later date.

**ACTION:** Ask your Congressperson to vote for the Freedom of Choice bill which would codify *Roe v. Wade*. Ask your Ohio legislator to vote against the current Ohio bill which bans abortion altogether, without exceptions for health or life.

## Health Care continued from page 1

are under attack in contemporary America, such as freedom of medicine from sectarian doctrine, the right to make health care decisions according to one’s own conscience, and the importance of women’s health care. “Core Values” identifies ten of our society’s values for the provision of health care in a pluralistic society, including respect for the human being as moral agent and the consciences of all parties, for the principle of informed consent and medical ethics, for the separation of religion and state and constitutional law; and for all community stakeholders.

*In Good Conscience* describes “Ethical Guidelines” for general health care, health care providers and institutions, reproductive health care, medical surrogates and advance directives, informed consent, and the refusal to provide care.

Everyone interested in the fair, ethical provision of reproductive health care in our society should read *In Good Conscience*, available in full at [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org). They should then consider how best to use it to educate their communities, congregations, and denominations, and also legislators and candidates.

**ACTION:** Read *In Good Conscience* at [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org), discuss it, and make a plan!

## National Black Religious Summit Eleven on Sexuality—July 10-13



Pastor Lucious Terrell, Rev. Penny Willis, Director, RCRC Multicultural Programs Department; Sadawna Gainer, Pastor Orville Gainer, Anne Pearson, Rev. Tony Minor, and Pastor Frank Smith

Seven Ohioans attended the Summit, held annually at Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, D.C. and sponsored by Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice's Black Church Initiative. This year, the Summit, titled "Breaking the Silence: Why the Church?" offered worship services, workshops, and stimulating speakers. Its purpose was described by Rev. Carlton Veazey, CEO of RCRC:

"During this Summit, outstanding ministers and lay people

will provide the tools and direction to help us to become more informed and able to educate people, particularly within our churches, about responsible sexuality."

The Ohio delegation from the Faith Matters project in Cleveland included Rev. Tony Minor, Coordinator of Faith Matters and Pastor of Lighthouse Community of Faith; Pastor Orville and Sadawna Gainer of MASH Ministries; Ann Pearson, Education Coordinator for Emmanuel Christian Church; Elder Ellen Thrasher, Second Ebenezer Baptist Church; Pastor Frank Smith, LIVE Ministries; and Pastor Lucious Terrell, Youth Devoted to Christ Church.

Pastor Gainer went to the session called "Reasonable and Acceptable," subtitled "Pimps in the Pulpit!" by leader Rev. Kelvin Calloway. He said "More is caught than taught" in churches; that is, congregants learn more from what pastors *do* than from what they *say*.

Several Ohioans attended "Is your church safe for children?" led by Rev. Madison Shockley. When a sex offender on probation asked to join Pilgrim Congregational Church, in Los Angeles, his congregation offered membership, but developed its own "Safe Church" policies and practices. Rev. Gainer's opinion: "This class challenged me greatly, but helped me to see how important it is to have a safe child plan in place." Rev. Gainer and his wife have begun a plan for their church.

The Ohio participants appreciated the opportunity to learn how to start an open dialogue about sexuality in their churches. Anne Pearson's comment: "What a tremendous blessing it was for me to attend the Summit!"

**ACTION:** To read more comments, see [ohiorcrc.org](http://ohiorcrc.org) (Black Church Initiative). To request a copy of the "Safe Church" policy, email [pilgrim.ucc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pilgrim.ucc@sbcglobal.net)

### Lobby Day

6. Studies of abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education programs used in Ohio reveal they teach inaccurate information about contraceptives in order to scare students. (Note: Since Lobby Day, a federally sponsored study by Mathematica revealed they are ineffective in delaying sexual intercourse, and have led teens to dangerous practices, such as unprotected oral sex.)

My two lobbying experiences that afternoon were wildly different. The aide of one of our anti-choice senators countered my points with RTL arguments. I told him he was an intelligent college graduate who could research these matters himself—and advise his senator. He finally said that *he* knew that a ban would just drive abortion underground. Rev. Tony Minor and I visited Rep. Eugene Miller (Cleveland) and met with a warm welcome for our information and an endorsement for the bill. Sen. Miller had become a father at 15 and is raising two daughters as a single parent.

**ACTION:** Use this information to lobby your Ohio legislators to support the Ohio Prevention First bill. Read an outline of the bill and my letter to legislators. [www.ohiorcrc.org](http://www.ohiorcrc.org) (Lobby Day). See [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org) (resources, publications) for religious support. See [www.case.edu](http://www.case.edu) for Dr. Scott Frank's report.

## Panel for Medical Students for Choice (MSFC), University of Toledo

by Barb Avery, with Rupa Natarajan

On April 19, the MSFC chapter at University of Toledo, led by President Rupa Natarajan, sponsored a panel discussion of religious pro-choice views, attended by about 65 medical students.

Cynthia Heilman, Unitarian Universalist, spoke about her denomination's long history, since 1963, of support for reproductive choice. Rev. Carolyn Piper, Baptist, lamented that her church's historic support of the right to individual conscience had been supplanted by an imposed rigidity of opinion on women's role and lack of rights.

Robert Bennett, Episcopalian, said his support for choice arose from his realization that same-sex and reproduction issues are inextricably linked, particularly in the minds of opponents. Barbara Avery explained that Judaism's ethical position mandating an abortion where the health or life of

a woman is threatened is based on scripture.

When a student asked about *Gonzales v. Carhart*, decided on April 18, Barbara suggested medical students should be concerned that the Supreme Court had upheld a law banning a specific surgical technique. This suggestion resonated with the students as an example of medicine being usurped by politics.

Feedback after the panels indicated that students felt it was extremely helpful to hear how religious leaders integrated pro-choice ideals with their beliefs and that they would like to hear even more religious leaders in future panels. MSFC leaders hope to hold this panel annually in order to encourage future physicians to maintain a pro-choice perspective in accordance with doctors' religious beliefs.

**ACTION:** Read articles about religious perspectives at [www.rcrc.org](http://www.rcrc.org), (*Resources*).

## SYRF Interns at Ohio State University

Amber Scott and Ben Sostrom will become SYRF interns this fall, and promote religious pro-choice programming at OSU this year. Both are members of FOCUUS, "Fellowship of Campus Unitarian UniversalistS" at OSU.



Amber Scott, from Hudson, in the fourth year of five in art education, works at the OSU Child Care Center as a teachers' aide in the Infant Room. She volunteers for

FOCUUS, UU District, and Continental UU Young Adult activities. She belongs to the OSU Swing Dance Club, and is a trained "sexpert" for OSU Student Wellness Center, qualified to educate campus groups about contraception.

Amber's belief that reproductive choice is a social justice issue started in her U.U. church's sex education program *Our Whole Lives*. "People's religious ideas should not be imposed on others," she affirms. "People should

have options open to them, because they have to deal with different situations."

Ben Sostrom, from Columbus, in his fourth year, will study 2-3 years more for a dual degree in astrophysics and theater. He works at the OSU's General Clinical Research Center, providing computer and website support for patient research, and in the Astronomy Department. He volunteers for FOCUUS, Ohio PIRG, and the Memorial Garden Committee at First Unitarian Universalist Church. He started *Jungle Boy Studios* with some friends to make independent films.



Ben's interest in reproductive justice arose out of his Unitarian Universalist spirituality and ethics. He's observed female friends have pregnancies in difficult circumstances and

wants them to be able to make the best decisions for their lives.

## ACTS (SYRF) Event at Oberlin College

ACTS (Affirming Choice Through Spirituality) at Oberlin College sponsored a panel on "Spirituality, Religion and Reproductive Choice" on May 2. ACTS, an official Oberlin group, although part of RCRC's SYRF (Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom), had to take another name; an Oberlin "SURF" group already existed! Christina James, and Aisha Hadlock, co-chairs, were pleased that about 30 students participated in the event.

Cynthia Heilman, a Unitarian Universalist, spoke about her denomination's comprehensive sex education, "Our Whole Lives." She said religious leaders and activists can and should tackle difficult issues together.

Rev. Tony Minor, Faith Matters Coordinator, discussed bringing HIV/AIDS and sex education to religious youth. He hoped students would join SYRF groups and tell others about religious support for education and prevention. Rabbi Shimon Brand's simple and touching message was that most religions have more in common than meets the eye and discovering this can bring about peace.

Rev. David Hill, of First Church (United Church of Christ), described his denomination's support for reproductive choice and how members worked to live in harmony. For example, Rev. Hill said that he and a pro-life church member had agreed to disagree, instead of imposing their views on each other. Kevin Moy ('10) said: "As someone without much experience in this area, I found the panel extremely educational. It was great to hear members of different religious communities discuss the intersection between sexuality and spirituality."

**ACTION:** To learn how to start a SYRF group in your school or congregation, see [www.syrf.org](http://www.syrf.org). Contact the SYRF office at [info@syrf.org](mailto:info@syrf.org), or Emily Goodstein at 202-628-7700.

## National RCRC Affiliate Conference held April 24-26

### Five Ohioans attended the RCRC Conference in Washington, D.C. and benefited from workshops and networking

*In Good Conscience: Guidelines for the Ethical Provision of Health Care in a Pluralistic Society* was introduced by an RCRC-sponsored committee of ethicists and health and religious professionals, after two years of development. Everyone attended workshops to plan how to introduce the guidelines to denominations, legislators and congregations.

Rev. Tony Minor, Coordinator of Faith Matters in Cleveland, participated in the Multicultural Programs Department



SYRF interns  
Aisha Hadlock and  
Christina James

workshop led by Rev. Penny Willis, MPD Director. Rev. Richard Venus, Unitarian Universalist minister and All Options Clergy Counselor from Dayton, attended a workshop on financial development led by Joan Woods, RCRC Development Director.

Christina James and Aisha Hadlock, SYRF interns at Oberlin, attended several workshops for SYRF leaders, including one on how to engage the “Millennial Generation” in SYRF activities.

Barbara Avery co-led the Affiliate meeting and attended the Council of Governors meeting. She attended a workshop where RCRC’s Religious Leadership Council presented theological support for providing “safe haven” for women who must stay overnight for surgeries, or, if Roe were overturned and some states banned abortion, might need to go to another state.

Rev. Minor and Barbara participated in the training for facilitators of Faith and Choices workshops led by Kieley Todd Ruska, Minnesota RCRC’s Director. Kieley conducted this workshop for two large groups of clergy in South Dakota before its vote on the abortion ban, and weathered some tense and confrontational discussions which remained civil due to the structure provided by the workshop curriculum.

**ACTION:** Scan the power-point presentation about the Millennial Generation at [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org). Contact Ohio RCRC about Faith and Choices workshop training.

## Why participate in workshops All Options Clergy Counseling and Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Loss?

Ohio RCRC has sponsored All Options Clergy Counseling (AOCC) workshops since 1994 for clergy who wish to learn how to help congregants cope with unwanted pregnancies. The workshop offers counseling strategies, ceremonies, and resources to equip clergy to support women in making the best decisions for themselves.

Ohio RCRC also has a toll-free Hotline offering clergy counseling to women with problem pregnancies. Currently, fifteen Ohio clergy are available to talk with women about their circumstances, religious concerns, and options.

We have also had calls to our Hotline from women who, after abortions, have religious concerns, anxiety and regrets. Our new workshop, Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Loss (PCRL), prepares pastors to deal with such concerns among their congregants, as well as miscarriage, stillbirth, prenatal loss due to fetal anomalies, infertility, adoption and gay and lesbian

strategies to create families. PCRL also offers relevant information and resources, counseling strategies, and liturgies.

Long term All Options Counselor Rev. Carolyn Piper says: “The benefit of the AOCC workshop is that one is introduced to material that has been field tested. Even though I am a Fellow in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and a Licensed Social Worker working within a framework of religious faith, it is good to learn how to be respectful of the fears an unwanted pregnancy can bring to all concerned. Persons under stress can easily lose perspective, and it is the counselor’s role to maintain a focus to help a counselee think through what is the best decision.”

A northeast Ohio counselor says: “The seminar put me in touch with like-minded women and men, offered a succinct up-to-date review of crisis counseling, gave me confidence I

could help, and qualified me for the Hotline. My first Hotline request was from a young woman who understood what she needed to do to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. A minor whose parents would not give her permission, she had had to go before a judge who determined she was able to make the decision herself. Because the clinic was 40 miles away, she needed general support and transportation. I drove her to both required appointments. She appreciated that a pastor was there in her ‘time of need.’ “

**Please consider attending the AOCC or PCRL workshops—or both!** Your congregants need your support, and you may choose to help the desperate women who call our Hotline with concerns that make it difficult for them to think clearly about their decisions.

**ACTION:** See [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) (All Options Counseling) for more information.

# What's Next?

## Clergy workshops

**Pastoral Counseling for Reproductive Loss in Cleveland.** Wed., Oct. 24, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at Mt. Zion Congregational Church, 10723 Magnolia Dr., Cleveland, Ohio, 44106. Fee: \$25.00

**All Options Clergy Counseling in Columbus.** Thur. Oct. 25, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. at Congregation Tifereth Israel, 1354 E. Broad Street, Columbus. Fee: \$30

Fees pay for manuals and lunches. Scholarships are available.

Registration forms can be downloaded at [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org) (All Options Counseling). Contact Ohio RCRC office before Sept. 12 for information (p.1).

Or contact Rev. Minor at Faith Matters at any time. Email: [Rev\\_Minor@yahoo.com](mailto:Rev_Minor@yahoo.com); phone: 216-324-6352.

## Faith Matters programs—Cleveland

Youth Leaders Workshops: training for facilitators of faith-based dialogues on sexuality: "Keeping It Real!" for teens; "Breaking the Silence" for adults. Contact Rev. Tony Minor for information about dates and locations.



Rev. Tony Minor, Rev. Carlton Veazey, CEO of RCRC, Barbara Avery, and Rev. Richard Venus attend RCRC National Conference. Story on page 5.

## Ohio RCRC needs you!

Please send us the enclosed card to indicate how you would like to be involved. Also, please send a generous check to become a member or renew your membership, and to support this newsletter and our other programs.

Address service requested

www.ohiorc.org  
ohiorc@sbcglobal.net  
614-221-3636  
800-587-2330 (toll-free/Ohio)  
Columbus, OH 43202  
P.O. Box 82204



Ohio Religious Coalition  
for Reproductive Choice

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE PAID  
COLUMBUS, OH  
PERMIT NO. 1656