

Concerned Clergy for CHOICE



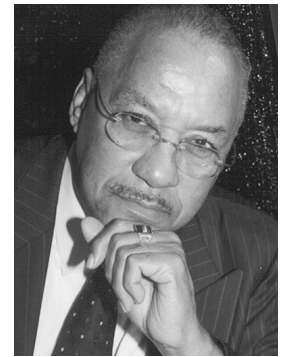
A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION FUND OF FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES

CLERGY DAY IN ALBANY, TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2008

Clergy from across New York State will meet with elected officials in Albany on Tuesday, May 6 to offer pro-choice perspectives on family planning issues and sex education. The Rev. Carlton W. Veazey, President and CEO of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), will speak at the day's policy briefing.

RCRC is a 34 year-old alliance of religious groups from 15 denominations committed to reproductive justice. Rev. Veazey's longstanding commitment to faith-based advocacy has brought him to the leadership of RCRC, where he is also the founder of the Coalition's celebrated National Black Church Initiative.

Time and time again, state policy makers ask to hear about the experiences and perspectives of pro-choice religious leaders. Come to Albany and join your clergy colleagues in support of choice! To receive more information and to register for Clergy Day, 2008, please contact 518-436-8408 or info@fpaofnys.org.



The Rev. Carlton Veazey

ON-CAMERA MEDIA TRAINING FOR CLERGY

MEDIA TRAINING ON MONDAY, MAY 5 IN ALBANY

Anticipate the tough questions!

Get comfortable making your point!

Take control of your interview!

Concerned Clergy for Choice will offer two tracks of "On-Camera Media Training for Clergy," on Monday, May 5 at 6:00 p.m., the evening before Clergy Day.

Track I, "On-Camera Basics," will cover the nuances of deciding to accept an interview, staying on message and holding one's ground with the media. Track II, "The Art of Crafting Talking Points," is designed for clergy who have had some media training, and will explore ways to shape words that speak affirmatively and leave an impact. Both tracks will provide individual on-camera interviews and immediate feedback and support.

More than two dozen New York State clergy have received Concerned Clergy for Choice media training and report greater comfort and effectiveness in media relations.

To learn more and register, please contact info@edfundfpa.org. There is no charge to participate and a light dinner is included.

INSIDE: NEW YORK STATE: A LEADER IN REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

FUNDED BY THE ROBERT STERLING CLARK FOUNDATION

NEW YORK STATE: A LEADER IN REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Faith leaders have consistently responded to the call to establish reproductive justice in New York State. In 1916, sisters Margaret and Edith Sanger opened their first birth control clinic in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. Flyers worded in English, Yiddish and Italian offered women "Safe, Harmless Information" about reproductive health from "trained Nurses" for "a registration fee of 10 cents." The clinic, at 46 Amboy Street was just a short walk from the Brooklyn address where I grew up in the late 50's. I would pass Amboy and Pitkin often as a child, unaware of the history living there.

Last summer's travel took me back to the Brownsville neighborhood of my early youth. I found Pitkin Avenue lined with shops and restaurants, just as I remember. At what I guessed was 46 Amboy stands an unmarked, windowless brick wall, apparently the result of a extension of a nearby store. I studied the blank, weather-worn wall. Physical signs of Sanger's trailblazing are long gone, but *we* are the living memorial, inheritors of the struggle to secure reproductive justice.

I love New York. I grew up here and received all my education here. I am proud to join you in writing the newest chapters in the story that demonstrates our State's leadership in reproductive justice for women, teens and everyone living here.

Rabbi Dennis S. Ross



CLERGY PERSPECTIVES

People share their lives with us, their clergy. They invite us into times of joy and moments of challenge. And we support and stand with person after person.

Through our pastoral work, we witness the importance of access to comprehensive and quality medical services. Our colleagues, The Rev. Finley Schaeff of Saugerties, one of the founders of the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion, and Rabbi Amy Sapowith of Rochester contribute faith perspectives spanning clergy generations on the following pages.

CLERGY ADVISORY BOARD

The Clergy Advisory Board, a group of pro-choice clergy spanning an array of faiths and regions of New York State, advises the Concerned Clergy for Choice project.

Members include:

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
Unitarian Universalist Rochester

The Rev. James R. Bridges
*Unitarian Universalist
Congregation at Rock Tavern*

The Rev. Tom Davis
*United Church of Christ
Saratoga Springs*

The Rev. Dr. Paula Gravelle
Lutheran, Schenectady

Rabbi Marc Gruber
*Central Synagogue
Rockville Centre*

The Rev. Tomi Jacobs
*Christ and Emmanuel Lutheran
Churches in Ghent and
Chatham*

Rabbi Alison Kobey
*B'rith Kodesh
Rochester, NY*

The Rev. Doug Marlow
*Episcopal
Watertown*

The Rev. Joel Miller
*Unitarian Universalist Church
Buffalo*

The Rev. Melanie Miller
*United Church of Christ
Chappaqua*

The Rev. Larry Phillips
*Emmanuel Baptist- Friedens
United Church of Christ
Schenectady*

The Rev. Finley Schaeff
Methodist, Saugerties

Rabbi Shoshanah
King-Tornberg,
Temple Beth Emeth, Albany

The Rev. Samuel Trumbore
*First Unitarian Universalist
Society, Albany*

Rabbi Scott B. Weiner
*The Hebrew Tabernacle
New York*

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IN NEW YORK STATE: PERSPECTIVES ACROSS CLERGY GENERATIONS

The Rev. Finley Schaeff

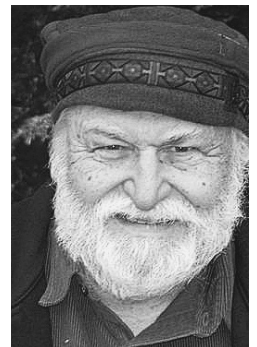
Saugerties, New York

When I was pastor at the Grace Methodist Church in St. Albans, Queens, New York in the 1960's, a woman came in to see me. Her teenage daughter was raped and became pregnant. Could I arrange an abortion? I couldn't. This event made me determined to help women find access to abortions. I was transferred to the Washington Square Methodist Church on West 4th Street in Greenwich Village, and found myself a neighbor of The Rev. Howard Moody, pastor at Judson Memorial Church.

In late 1966, I approached Rev. Moody and proposed starting a clergy counseling service that would refer women for abortions. He agreed, and we co-founded what came to be known as the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion (CCSA). The initial meetings – attended by 8 or 9 clergy and non-clergy advocates – were held at my church, Washington Square Methodist. We argued over including the word “abortion” in the organization's title. After intense debate, we voted to call ourselves the “Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion.” Rev. Moody assumed the leadership of the CCSA and we established an office at his church, Judson Memorial. As time passed, Rev Moody had the savvy and the staff to create what became a national movement.

I continued to participate in CCSA activities, counseling and referring many women to physicians. The difficulties were minimal, though we were wiretapped and even called before a grand jury. A number of us testified but no indictments were issued.

Of the 21 clergy listed as original members of the CCSA by *The New York Times* on May 21, 1967, eight or nine of us were co-founders of this daring project. The others, as counselors, deserve immense credit.



The Rev. Finley Schaeff

Rabbi Amy Sapowith

Temple Sinai, Rochester, New York



Rabbi Amy Sapowith

As I prepare a speech directed to our thirteen year olds who are becoming bat or bar mitzvah, I often tailor my words around a theme of a celebrant's favorite film. The film *Juno* has been popular of late. And so I went to the film fully expecting to be entertained and delighted. And I was, but for one key scene that allows the plot to unfold: Juno's visit to the abortion clinic. The filmmakers couldn't have made an establishment look more irresponsible, what with a self-absorbed teenage receptionist dressed in shabby attire to ignore those who walk through the door into a grim waiting area. The impression was clearly more one of indifferent consumerism than of a compassionate care provider. There was no indication that she would receive the kind of professional and caring medical attention that any woman would deserve.

As a rabbi who works with teens and who tends to people of all ages in times of crisis, I see the value of exploring one's faith tradition about matters of personhood—something that was sorely lacking in the film. Juno had no context within which to decide the course of action best for her, only the wisdom of adolescence that could make life-changing decisions based on split-second impressions. The film failed to present a realistic picture.

Religious leaders should educate teens as to positive faith perspectives on reproductive health care decisions. For instance, Judaism has long taught that full personhood and human rights equivalent to the woman's

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BRINGING REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE TO NEW YORK STATE

The year was 1917 when Carnegie Hall filled with 3,000 at a rally calling for the repeal of a law forbidding dissemination of birth control information. One speaker called out “Fifth Avenue doctors” who refused contraception to the poor while practicing birth control in their own families and enabling wealthier patients to do the same. Margaret Sanger, then under indictment by a Brooklyn Grand Jury and facing trial for education about contraception, also addressed the rally with words that capture the moral dimension of our work on behalf of reproductive justice, sex education and the moral agency of women:

“I was one of eleven children. My mother died when I was 17 because she had had too many children and had worked herself to death. I became a nurse to help support my family and I soon discovered that 75 percent of the diseases of men and women are due to sex ignorance. I determined that when I was able I would do what I could to solve that problem. I found that the average person was as ignorant of sex matters as our most primitive ancestors. There has been progress in every department of our lives except in this most important – creation..... I got sixty-three letters in one week from poor mothers in Oyster Bay asking me for birth control information. No woman can call herself free until she can choose the time she will become a mother.”

– The New York Times, January 30, 1917

Three years prior to the U. S. Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, New York demonstrated its leadership by repealing state laws that prohibited abortion. As New York came forward, members of the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion recognized that the state would receive many women in need of medical services. The clergy helped found a non-profit clinic in which any woman could obtain a safe and affordable abortion and be treated with courtesy; even women who could not pay anything received medical help. When the Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health, known as Women’s Services, opened on East 73rd Street its services were in great demand.

“So many women came to New York City that there were actual lines of women on the street outside the offices of doctors who were offering abortion services. Women’s Services remained open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week. Usually 100 abortions were done each day. In the first thirteen months of its operation, the center performed 26,000 abortions without a fatality. It was the model for the many freestanding clinics that were to come after it all across the country.”

– Sacred Work: Planned Parenthood and its Clergy Alliances by The Rev. Tom Davis

Rabbi Amy Sapowith, *continued from page 3*

arrive only in the final stages of birthing, not at conception. In fact, when the woman’s life or well being is endangered by her pregnancy, Judaism has taught that the needs of the pregnant woman should come first. Jewish women, once informed by this perspective, are then empowered to make their own life decisions based on their own understanding of the traditional teachings.

Jewish tradition maintains that any one embracing the covenant hears God’s words in a way that he or she understands, all according to each person’s strength, wisdom, and preparation. This means that Torah itself empowers us with different points of view based on a common striving for moral rectitude. This freedom to differ over even matters of ultimate importance, such as reproductive choice, is what makes Judaism an enduring, tolerant, and compassionate tradition. To deny a Jewish woman and her family the ability to obtain a safe, legal abortion after considering the range of Jewish perspectives relevant to the specific situation is to deprive Jews of their fundamental right of religious freedom.