

Concerned Clergy for CHOICE



A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION FUND OF FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES

JOIN US FOR AN EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE CALL LED BY DR. ARTHUR CAPLAN: WHOSE DECISION IS IT?

Noted bioethicist Dr. Arthur Caplan will speak to Concerned Clergy for Choice about “Whose Decision is It? Reproductive Health and Moral Agency,” on Monday, October 31 at 10:30 am, via conference call.

As some denominations seek to impose their religious teachings on others, there arises an increasing and urgent need for progressive religious groups to assert their own faith values, including moral agency. Reflecting the faith-founded support for “choice,” Dr. Caplan will address the right to exercise personal conscience in private medical matters.

Dr. Caplan is the Emmanuel and Robert Hart Professor of Bioethics, chair of the Department of Medical Ethics and director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author or editor of 25 books and over 500 papers in refereed journals of medicine, science, philosophy, bioethics and health policy. He writes a regular column on bioethics for MSNBC.com. He is a frequent guest and commentator on National Public Radio, CNN, MSNBC and in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and elsewhere.



To sign up for this conference call, please contact Concerned Clergy for Choice at info@fpaofnys.org. There is no charge to participate.

Call-in and be a part of a reinvigorated initiative for reproductive justice!

SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH DECISIONS: TRAINING FOR CHAPLAINS, SEMINARIANS AND CLERGY

To address a longstanding absence of educational materials on pastoral care surrounding reproductive health decisions, Concerned Clergy for Choice is offering “Spiritual Dimensions of Reproductive Health Decisions,” a workshop for chaplains, seminarians and clergy. Based on the curriculum, “When a Woman Makes a Choice,” developed by Concerned Clergy for Choice director Rabbi Dennis S. Ross, and The Rev. Dr. Paula J. Gravelle, director of Pastoral Care at Ellis Hospital in Schenectady, “Spiritual Dimensions” will help pastoral care providers offer sensitive and open-minded attention to reproductive matters. Since the 90-minute workshop does not seek to impose a particular religious point of view regarding reproductive health, it is suitable for clergy of all religious backgrounds. For information on bringing this workshop to your community, or if you would like a copy of “When a Woman Makes a Choice,” please contact Concerned Clergy for Choice at info@fpaofnys.org or 518-436-8408.

CONCERNED CLERGY FOR CHOICE JOIN IN PROTEST

Governor Pataki Vetoes Bill that Would Have Increased Access to Emergency Contraception

Members of Concerned Clergy for Choice joined Family Planning Advocates of New York State to protest Governor Pataki's threatened – and eventual – veto of the Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act (A.116/S.3661) at two rallies – one at the New York State Capitol in Albany and one at the Governor's Manhattan office. Representatives of Concerned Clergy for Choice addressed large crowds.



In Albany, Rabbi Donald Cashman of Congregation B'nai Sholom and The Rev. Samuel A. Trumbore, Minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Society, were among the many clergy in attendance. Rev. Trumbore's remarks on moral agency and reproductive health decisions were featured in radio broadcasts. Rabbi Eric B. Stark, director of the Union for Reform Judaism - Greater New York Council, addressed the New York City rally. He said that emergency contraception affirms the ability "to protect women from the roulette of failed contraception and sexual assault."

The Unintended Pregnancy Prevention Act, which overwhelmingly passed the Assembly on January 31, and Senate on June 22, would have increased the availability of emergency contraception to women by enabling pharmacists and nurses to dispense this safe and effective medication through collaborative agreements with physicians. Emergency contraception can reduce the risk of pregnancy by up to 90% when taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex. With 40,000 teen pregnancies in New York each year, teens in particular can benefit from wider access. Emergency contraception continues to be available through doctors' offices and health centers like Planned Parenthood.

CONCERNED CLERGY FOR CHOICE JOINS IN REQUEST ON EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

In response to the omission of emergency contraception in the Department of Justice's protocols for the treatment of victims of sexual assault, Concerned Clergy for Choice joined with the American Civil Liberties Union and a number of religious and victims' advocacy groups in a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. Concerned Clergy for Choice has consistently supported the immediate and full availability of information and access to emergency contraception.

Was this newsletter sent to the right address?

If you have moved, or if you wish to remove your name from our list, please contact us:

info@fpaofnys.org
or call 518-436-8408

VISITS BY THE DIRECTOR

Rabbi Dennis S. Ross visits communities for consultations and presentations on stem cell research and sex education. Please contact Concerned Clergy for Choice through info@fpaofnys.org or at 518-436-8408 to arrange for a discussion or presentation at your house of worship, clergy association or community or denominational meeting.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Sex is Sinful? It Ain't Necessarily So!

Behind all of the “anti” rhetoric – anti-abortion, anti-emergency contraception, anti-stem cell research – is the assumption that sex is inherently evil, if not outright sinful, and should therefore be shunned. Among pro-choice, progressive religious groups, I am finding a different, healthier and more sensible attitude toward human sexuality.

As my religious tradition evolved, Judaism typically emphasized the potential for holiness in sexual relations. In contrast to faiths that view sex as inherently evil, the Jewish faith has taught that Adam and Eve had sex in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall. Thus, sex is not a sign of the loss of God's grace. Later Jewish sources often saw a role for sex in marriage, separate and apart from procreation, believing that sexual relations are good for both the marital relationship and partners.

Notably, many other faith groups share in that sentiment, as documented by The Rev. Tom Davis in his recently released book, *Sacred Work: Planned Parenthood and its Clergy Alliances*. Rev. Davis highlights the historic involvement of mainstream Jewish and Christian leaders in reproductive rights advocacy going back to the founding of Planned Parent by Margaret Sanger. Underlying the religious argument for access to contraception Davis maintains, is an emphasis on respectful sexuality. And many of our denominations have also offered a formal national endorsement of resolutions that uphold the privacy – and potential sanctity – of physical intimacy.

So, when we consider a common interfaith outlook in an increasingly hostile political environment, we need to identify our core beliefs as they contrast – and conflict – with those of more restrictive denominations. While sex is not inherently evil, neither is it something to take lightly. And when we engage in sexual behavior in an atmosphere of responsibility, we can fulfill the potential for holiness in life.



Rabbi Dennis S. Ross
Director, Concerned Clergy for Choice



CONCERNED CLERGY FOR CHOICE: WHO WE ARE

Concerned Clergy for Choice members are religious leaders of all faiths who:

- care about reproductive rights
- believe that concern about reproductive rights is a social justice issue
- want our voices heard in the conversation about women's health issues
- honor the ability of women to make decisions about their health care and support a woman's right to choose

As advocates for reproductive rights, members of Concerned Clergy for Choice have a collective voice that can be heard above the din of anti-choice propaganda. We have the *opportunity* to be agents of justice when, for many, justice feels beyond their reach. We have the *responsibility* to speak out on behalf of others. We have the *privilege* of sharing in the lives of others in their strongest and most vulnerable moments.

CLERGY DAY 2005 — AND 2006

Last spring, more than two-dozen representatives of Concerned Clergy for Choice held fifty meetings with legislators and staff on Medicaid funding for abortion and the Healthy Teens Act, which would provide comprehensive sex education to the youth of New York. The Healthy Teens Act passed the New York State Assembly this year and will be considered by the state legislature again next year. Clergy Day 2005 received widespread media attention with stories covered by radio, newspaper and television outlets throughout the state.

Mark your calendar and join us on **Wednesday, May 10**, for Clergy Day 2006.



Above: Senator Liz Krueger (D-NYC) addresses clergy at a briefing session.

SAVE THE DATE: FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES OF NYS' 29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2006

Earlier this year more than 1,000 reproductive rights advocates from across New York State came to Albany to hear Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and attend plenaries covering the latest developments in sex education, immigrant health and emergency contraception. Several dozen religious leaders participated in a workshop on stem cell research featuring Dr. John Balint of Albany Medical Center. Next year's conference, set for **Monday, April 3, 2006**, promises to be just as informative and exciting. Plan to be with us in Albany!

CLERGY ADVISORY BOARD

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

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
Rochester Unitarian Church

The Rev. Julie Berghdal
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Plattsburgh

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
First United Congregational
Church of Christ, Gloversville

Rabbi Alison Kobey
Temple B'rith Kodesh, Rochester

The Rev. Joel Miller
Unitarian Universalist Church, Buffalo

The Rev. Martha Munson
Unitarian Universalist, Batavia

The Rev. Samuel Trumbore
First Unitarian Universalist Society,
Albany



CLERGY E-ALERT

The E-alert network of Concerned Clergy for Choice is now 250 members strong. Join us today to receive information about news breaking headlines and timely notice of important events. To sign up, contact info@fpaofnys.org.