

Concerned Clergy for CHOICE



A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION FUND OF FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATES

CLERGY DAY IN ALBANY: WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

On Wednesday, May 10, clergy from across New York State will meet with elected officials in Albany to offer a pro-choice religious perspective on family planning issues. Clergy Day is co-sponsored by the New York State chapters of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Time and time again, state policy makers express their appreciation for the opportunity to hear a pro-choice perspective from religious leaders. To be a part of Clergy Day or to obtain more information, please contact 518-436-8408 or info@fpaofnys.org. Come to the Capitol to join your colleagues in choice!

Expanded Media Training for Clergy

Get the latest word in the art of communication! Building on last year's successful clergy media training, The Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates of NYS and Concerned Clergy for Choice will offer two sessions on media and messaging before and after Clergy Day.

The first session, "Media Training: Getting Your Message Out," Tuesday, May 9 at 5:30 pm, will cover the do's and don'ts, tips on getting your point across and targeting your argument. The second, "Media Training: Putting it in Print," is set for Wednesday, May 10 at 3:30 pm, after legislative visits. This workshop will specifically address print media opportunities with a focus on how to write an effective letter to the editor. Previous sessions have resulted in immediate media visibility for clergy. Please contact FPA to sign up for one or both sessions. There is no charge to participate, and dinner is included.

DR. SUSAN WOOD ADDRESSES FPA'S 29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON APRIL 3, 2006

Mark your calendars and join 1000 reproductive rights advocates at FPA's 29th Annual Conference in Albany on April 3!

The Conference will feature Dr. Susan Wood, a highly sought-after speaker since resigning from the Food and Drug Administration over the agency's handling of Plan B, the "morning-after pill." Dr. Wood has appeared on *60 Minutes* and many news outlets to tell the sad truth about political interference in U. S. public health policy at the FDA. Conference workshops will include author Marge Piercy on "Sexuality and Censorship in the 19th Century: A Discussion of *Sex Wars*" and The Rev. Tom Davis, writer of *Sacred Work: Planned Parenthood and its Clergy Alliances*.

Preaching from the Choir: Conference Luncheon with Kathy Najimy: Known as sunny-spirited Sister Mary Patrick in the movie, *Sister Act*, and named *Ms. Magazine's* Woman of the Year for her support of women's rights, Kathy Najimy will be the featured luncheon speaker.

Further information and registration applications are available through the FPA website at www.fpaofnys.org.



Plenary session
with Dr. Susan
Wood



Luncheon speaker
Kathy Najimy

INSIDE: PULPIT RESOURCE ON COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

REAL SEX EDUCATION SAVES LIVES:

FROM THE DIRECTOR

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION: HONESTY IS THE BEST THEOLOGY

When it comes to candid talk with teens about sex and everything else, clergy know that teens recognize, trust and respect the truth. Teens want to know – and we, as clergy, have a responsibility to advocate for the truth and to provide it as a moral and spiritual obligation. Our experience in religious education has been our great teacher; we have learned that teens have a right to comprehensive sexuality education.



Teens instinctively see through cover-ups and less than candid speech that typify abstinence-only sexuality education. They shrug off empty threats and over-emphasis of the risks. We also know that in any group, some teens will ignore the instruction to abstain, regardless of what their elders have to say. As a matter of morality, none of our teens should be allowed to get sick or become pregnant because no one told them how to protect themselves.

Teens need, recognize and respect the truthful message of comprehensive sexuality education. They desire nothing less than the facts that comprehensive sexuality education provides – it is a matter of life and death. And our faiths demand that we tell the truth--the whole truth--when it comes to safeguarding the well-being of our youth.

What our faiths teach....

The Episcopal Church resolves to:

...give strong support to responsible local public and private school programs of education in human sexuality.

The United Church of Christ maintains:

Scriptural and theological commitment to telling the truth calls for full and honest education about sexual and reproductive health. Young people ... require the skills to make moral and healthy decisions about relationships for themselves now and in their future adult lives.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis supports:

... the inclusion of sex education in the public schools on all levels (from grade school through high school).

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Washington Office of Advocacy:

... advocates for legislation to fund comprehensive sexuality education for young people including medically accurate information about both abstinence and contraception.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN NEW YORK STATE...

- the highest rates of gonorrhea are among 15-24 year olds, more than four times the national average.
- more than 4 in 10 young people have had sex before they graduate high school.
- there were nearly 40,000 teen pregnancies in 2003.
- a 2003 Zogby poll of likely voters shows that 77% of New Yorkers support age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education.
- popular support for sex education crosses geographic lines with 83% of suburban voters, 76% of upstate voters and 74% of New York City voters favoring such programs.

A PULPIT RESOURCE FOR CLERGY

FROM SILENCE TO DIALOGUE: OUR CLERGY SPEAK ABOUT SEX EDUCATION



Speaking from my experience as a minister to teens, I know that we need to reach out to our youth with comprehensive sex education based on the principle that knowledge is power. If we equip our kids with accurate information about the risks and

responsibilities involved in sexual activity, they can make informed, respectful and responsible decisions. We are not “promoting” sex. We are recognizing our obligation to teens who are sexually active. We are helping them to understand how to best stay healthy — and alive. They need to know that we care about their well-being and their safety. They need to know that their lives matter. They need the reliable and honest truth that comprehensive sexuality education can provide.

*Rev. Kaaren Anderson, Co-Parish Minister
First Unitarian Church, Rochester, NY*



People of faith support age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education for the same reason: we love our kids and we want them to be safe. Our children receive messages about sex every day. They encounter dangerous misinformation in song lyrics, movies and even the news.

Our children need honest information to make responsible decisions. Our silence must be transformed.

Comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education will help to begin that transformation from a dangerous silence to an honest, life-saving conversation. Coming of age in a faith community that promotes comprehensive sex education can transform a dangerous silence into a sacred conversation; a sacred conversation that affirms our sexuality, that respects all people and helps teens make informed decisions.

*Rev. Melanie Miller, Associate Minister for Families
First Congregational Church, Chappaqua, NY*

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY:

“Research shows [that] comprehensive sex education – programs that are age-appropriate, medically accurate and teach about abstinence and contraception – helps young people postpone intercourse, reduce the frequency of sexual intercourse, reduce the number of sexual partners, and increase the use of condoms and other forms of contraception.”

*Dana Czuczka, Associate Director of Policy
Planned Parenthood of New York City*

“We believe that abstinence-only education programs, as defined by federal funding requirements, are morally problematic, by withholding information and promoting questionable and inaccurate opinions. Abstinence-only programs threaten fundamental human rights to health, information, and life.”

Journal of Adolescent Health, January, 2006

“School officials interested in fostering health education continue to confront a lack of trained teachers, embarrassment and discomfort among the available teachers and inconsistent use of curricula in the schools, all of which prevent instruction of the mandated curriculum in a comprehensive and coherent manner.”

*“Failing Grade: Health Education in NYC Schools”
A report by Assemblymember Scott Stringer, June 2003*

“We need to give teens, teachers and families honest information that will help young people live healthy lives.”

*JoAnn M. Smith, President and CEO
Family Planning Advocates of New York State*

ON COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION:

The American Medical Association “recognizes that the primary responsibility for family life education is in the home, and additionally supports the concept of a complementary family life and sexuality education program in the schools at all levels, at local option and direction (and) urges schools to implement comprehensive, developmentally appropriate sexuality education.”

American Medical Association, H-170.968, Sexuality Education, Abstinence, and Distribution of Condoms in Schools

“Children and adolescents need accurate and comprehensive education about sexuality to practice healthy sexual behavior as adults.”

Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health and Committee on Adolescence, American Academy of Pediatrics

“We...call on our elected leaders to ensure that our young people receive medically accurate and balanced sexuality education.... Twelve denominations favor curriculums that discuss abstinence as one option and include information about all aspects of human sexuality, with the objective of developing sexually healthy adults who can make responsible choices about their reproductive lives.”

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Statement on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Clergy Advisory Board

To learn more about keeping teens healthy and to sign the Planned Parenthood clergy statement on comprehensive sexuality education, visit www.getthefactsny.com.

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. 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
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. Samuel Trumbore
First Unitarian Universalist Society
Albany



SIGN UP FOR E-ALERT

The E-alert network of Concerned Clergy for Choice is now 275 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.