



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 2022

On June 24th, the Supreme Court published their decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, overturning the almost 50-year old precedent of *Roe v. Wade*, which held that states could not constitutionally prohibit abortion prior to fetal viability, and the 1992 decision, *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, which reaffirmed the central holding of *Roe*. This has caused great anger and fear among many people and great rejoicing among others. There is also uncertainty about the impact of the *Dobbs* decision on other constitutional rights that had been recognized by the Court, including the right of access to contraception, legal protection for same-sex intimacy, and the recognition of same-sex marriage. While Justice Alito's opinion disclaimed any effect on these other rights, the Court majority's skepticism about any constitutional rights that are not "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition" and "implicit in the concept of ordered liberty," determined at the time of the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, has understandably caused concern. That is particularly so among those whose voices would not have been heard in the mid-Nineteenth Century, which is the time period the Court uses to fix the content of liberties protected by the Constitution.

We urge everyone to study the ELCA's "social statement on abortion", available at https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/AbortionSS.pdf?_ga=2.15399102.923132481.1656448298-65463897.1642454300. One of the things the social statement recommends is that when we discuss this issue with one another, we move away from hardline rhetoric and listen to one another's stories so that we may better understand why the other feels the way they do. When we can civilly discuss this issue with others, we may be able to come to a compromise that we can all live with.

The reversal of *Roe v. Wade* dramatically harms women of color and culture, victims of sexual violence, and women in poverty. Ideally, our society would be so supportive of families that every child coming into the world would be wanted, loved, and cared for. But our society falls short of that because of our sinfulness. In this new reality we are living into, we ask that people of faith work to create safety nets for those coming into this world and their parents. This includes such things as working to make child care affordable, advocating for living wages, working towards universal health care, and other things that are woefully inadequate to support human life. As Christians, we want everyone to not only survive, but also to thrive.

We also call upon clergy and congregations to offer support to all people in their reproductive choices, whether or not we personally agree with those choices. God loves all of us, and we as Christians are called upon to reflect that unconditional love to those around us.

We, the Gender Justice Task Force of the Upstate New York Synod, want to speak God's love into this situation. God's love is unconditional, unfailing, and unlimited. It doesn't matter if you have had an abortion or if you have had children, God loves you. You are worthy of God's love simply because God created you and God loves you. And because we have been found worthy of God's love, we want to reflect that love to the world around us, which means, in part, working towards those things we have listed above to make our society better.

God goes with us as we work together to love God and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

May God's peace be with you,

The Upstate New York Synod Gender Justice Task Force

