

## ***First and Center***

Pastor's Blog

May 22, 2019



Over the years, I have stayed fairly silent on the topic of abortion. If pressed, I would say I was pro-choice, but I held off on contributions to Planned Parenthood or rallies to preserve women's right to choose. My feelings are influenced by my own infertility, as well as my gratitude to the women who bore and then relinquished their children to me as adoptive mother. It's complicated when I know that if I had become pregnant, the child would have seemed alive to me from day one.

But that's just it; the child would have seemed alive because I would imagine our future together, but the child would not have been alive until birth. In Biblical as well as Christian tradition, a person was considered alive when they breathed for the first time. In all those interminable and obscure laws in the first five books of the Bible, there is not one about abortion. We know it happened because in Numbers 5, there is actually a method for aborting a child laid out, and commanded in a very specific circumstance.

I know women who have had abortions for a whole variety of reasons. Some carried a wanted child that suddenly, late in the pregnancy, threatened her life and had to be aborted. Some were young and afraid, without a willing partner to parent or support from family or money to care for the child. Each struggled with the decision carefully.

A colleague of mine, Kaji Dousa, says that she wants women who have had abortions to know that, as a pastor and a Christian, she does not think having had an abortion requires seeking forgiveness. I agree with her. If you are reading this and have had an abortion, I know all this talk must be triggering that difficult experience. I pray for you. You did not do anything wrong.

I firmly believe the new legislation is totally about controlling women and not about a love for "life." If those state legislators thought "life" was holy, they would be working to ensure those children had proper homes, food, education and health care. They would be against the death penalty. They would also be working hard to make sure men understood their responsibilities for any life conceived with their participation.

This is a difficult topic about which people, including people of many faiths, will continue to struggle. The struggle is good. Shutting down choice is not.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister