

What does the Bible say?

Motherhood is sacred. Therefore, making motherhood safe is a moral imperative. Women who are called to be mothers undertake a sacred responsibility to carry life and bring that new life into the world. We acknowledge the pain and suffering of women forced to be mothers through rape, child marriage, or lack of access to unwanted pregnancy services and products, and of those who have suffered miscarriages. As a family of God, we support women and families in all situations. Mothers are important figures in our biblical tradition. Women like Eve, Hagar, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Mary the mother of Jesus are remembered for their role as bearers of new life. But within the sacred texts, there are also stories of maternal tragedy and loss. Both Rachel (**Genesis 35:16-20**) and the wife of Phinehas (**1 Samuel 4:19-20**) died after prolonged and difficult labors. Tragically, this is still happening today.



In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his disciples that he came to bring abundant life to his followers (**John 10:10**). God's desire is that every mother, every child, and every family not only survives, but thrives. Tragically, survival is often a daily struggle for those who lack access to basic services and care. God calls us to respond to the suffering in the world, to love our neighbors throughout the world. (**Leviticus 19:18**)

What does The United Methodist Church say?

Health is a condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and we view it as a responsibility—public and private. Health care is a basic human right. (**Social Principles ¶ 162.V**)

We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services which will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. (**Social Principles ¶ 162.V**)

For many women, especially those living in poverty and in developing countries, giving birth is dangerous and life-threatening. Worldwide maternal mortality is a leading cause of death for women of childbearing age...God desires that every mother, child, and every family not only survive, but thrive. (**2016 Book of Resolutions, #3203 "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"**)



MATERNAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING



CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**

What do the facts say?

- Every day, 830 women die and 2.9 million newborns die annually from complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Millions sustain serious life-long injuries.¹
- Ninety-nine percent of the more than 356,000 annual maternal deaths occur in the developing world where women lack access to adequate medical services.² These deaths are preventable.
- Currently, 225 million women would like to delay or prevent a pregnancy but lack access to family planning services that would facilitate them to do so.³
- If all the unmet need for family planning was met, maternal deaths would drop by third, and 600,000 fewer children would lose their mothers each year.⁴
- Access to comprehensive family planning services reduces unplanned pregnancies, miscarriages and the rates of abortions.⁵
- Access to comprehensive family planning services means healthy mothers and healthy children.⁶



1 UN Population Fund (UNFPA), 2,3 World Health Organization, 4 UNFPA, 5 Guttmacher Institute

What do you say?

Take **ACTION** for justice...

Support United Methodist projects around the world working on maternal health and family planning.

Advocate for greater investments in sexual and reproductive health including better policies and funding for family planning and reproductive health work in your communities.

Partner with local health initiatives that expand access to information and services for women's health. Ask how you can join with these organizations to ensure women and men in your community have access to the services they need to lead healthy lives.

Promote healthy masculinity and engage men to actively participate in comprehensive family planning. It is not a women's problem; it affects us all, and men should be part of the solution.



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