

## **Summit Congregation Unanimously Passes Reproductive Rights Statement**

SUMMIT -- Members of the Unitarian Church in Summit voted unanimously at the congregation's June 12 annual meeting to adopt a statement in support of state and federal funding for reproductive health care services to women, men, and families who otherwise could not afford quality health care. The statement opposes recent and ongoing efforts to eliminate funding for these efforts. "We abhor the fact that last year, the State of New Jersey completely eliminated the state budget line that allocated \$7.4 million for basic reproductive health care services," the statement says.

Such family-planning services are provided at clinics run by Planned Parenthood and other organizations. The clinics provide routine gynecological exams, basic contraception, health screenings (blood pressure, anemia and diabetes), cancer screenings, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV testing and counseling, pregnancy testing, pre-pregnancy counseling and pre-natal care.

In its statement, the congregation noted that cutting these services denies low-income men, women and teenagers the right to access care that promotes their well-being. The church supports legislation currently pending in the New Jersey legislature to restore funding in this area.

The congregation's statement also urges Congress to maintain federal funding for family planning known as the Title X Family Planning program. The Title X program is designed to provide access to contraceptive services, supplies and information to all who want and need them, and the law gives priority to people from low-income families.

Parish Minister Vanessa Southern stated: "These cuts are shortsighted and disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in our society, denying them access to basic health care. Our vote was unanimous in its concern that these funds and the care they provide, be restored immediately. This is not a budget issue. This is a human rights issue."

As the resolution noted, only three percent of the medical procedures performed by Planned Parenthood involve abortion services. The congregation voiced its support for Planned Parenthood and other clinics, and the full array of services they provide for families and individuals, even as it focused in this resolution on the restoration of funding for only the non-abortion-related care.

The unanimous vote on adopting the statement was in accordance with the Unitarian congregation's policy that an official stand on a public issue can be taken only with a supermajority (two-thirds vote) or more in favor.

The Unitarian Church in Summit draws members from various religious and cultural backgrounds who join together in religious community. In this tradition, there is no creed or test of membership. Instead the community is bound together by shared values, like the commitment to a free and responsible search for truth and meaning and the worth and dignity of all people, and a desire to translate our values into lives of courageous service. Summit is a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

For further information about the church or the statement, please contact Rev. Southern at (908) 273-3245 or visit the church's web site at [ucsummit.org](http://ucsummit.org).