



Fascism or Families

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One hundred years ago, the Fascist government of Italy led by Benito Mussolini began an attempt to increase the country's population [from forty million to sixty million by 1950](#). Birth control devices were banned, abortion was outlawed, sex education became illegal, and the age of consent for marriage was lowered.

Financial incentives ensued. Marital loans were reduced for each child a couple had. Married men with more than six children didn't pay any taxes, while bachelors between the ages of 25 and 65 paid higher taxes. Some state-owned organizations dismissed women employees, leading private industry to do the same over time.

In 1925, women had the right to vote in local elections, but in 1926, local elections were abolished. By 1939, women who had five children received a medal from the state, and a bow was added for each additional child.

Fast forward a hundred years. Last year, the [White House was seriously considering proposals that would incentivize Americans to marry and have children](#), including a potential \$5,000 bonus per child and a "[national Medal of Motherhood](#)" for women with six or more children. One hundred years later, same plan, different country.

A majority of US women today are speaking up to say that instead of a medal, what's really [needed is affordable child care, health insurance, and housing](#).



When any setting of the United Church of Christ advocates for [Reproductive Justice](#), we are advocating for the right of people to maintain bodily autonomy, the right of people to have children, the right for people to not have children, and the right for them to parent any children they do have in safe and sustainable communities. Not just to have babies, [as Vice President JD Vance passionately advocates for](#), or not have babies (a right that has been dramatically reduced by [the June 2022 decision in Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization](#)), but to care for people and to create safe and sustainable communities for children and families of all kinds. We advocate for communities to have affordable childcare, health insurance, housing, and education. We aspire to build communities where people do not live in fear of neighbors being abducted by ICE or children being bullied for their gender. We want communities that have sensible gun laws, livable wages, parental leave, and enough food even when school lunches aren't available in the summer.

These are justice issues, deeply rooted in how this country has evolved into where it is today. When we continue to decide that some people are less worthy than others and to create systems of oppression that deny people basic needs, such as child care and health care, we not only do harm to these siblings, but we ignore the gospel. The message of the gospel is that we are all worthy of care, we are all responsible to care for one another, and we are called to do so in community.

My call to action is this: Raise your voice, educate your kids, cast your vote—for true support of families and communities to thrive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Amy Johnson serves as the Minister for Sexuality Education & Justice for the United Church of Christ.

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