



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | [diocesemo.org](http://diocesemo.org)

### Office of the Bishop

January 24, 2023

*"Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" –BCP 304*

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Ours is a faith that begins at the font, is transformed at the cross, and is defined in the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior. Ours is a sacramental and incarnational faith. We believe we are all children of God, made in God's image and likeness, endowed with the gifts of reason, memory, and skill for the building up of God's reign and the realization of Beloved Community.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we place great value on the sanctity of human life and recognize the Divine image in all of God's beloved children. We believe and fully support the moral agency of each individual, that is, the right and responsibility of all of us to act as our conscience dictates.

In seeking to serve Christ and to respect the God-bestowed dignity of every human being, I have joined with other religious leaders of varying faith traditions from across the State of Missouri in a legal challenge to the anti-abortion laws enacted by the State Legislature.

While the Episcopal Church has championed the equal rights and bodily autonomy of women, and those who may become pregnant, since the 1960's, this is in no way Diocesan policy to be imposed on or implemented in any member or congregation within the Diocese of Missouri. In addition, no Diocesan funds or resources have been or will be used in the furtherance of this legal action.

Abortion continues to be a divisive topic across our nation, and I am aware that there are those who are loving and faithful Episcopalians who wholeheartedly disagree with my action and the stance of the Episcopal Church. As is our Episcopal understanding, it is my hope that we may disagree without being disagreeable, knowing that in matters of theology all may, some should, none must.

I want to assure you that in joining this legal suit, it is my intention to uphold our understanding as the Episcopal Church that all life is sacred, that dignity and self-autonomy are gifts from God, and that making the decision to terminate a pregnancy is a difficult decision to be made by individuals and families and not by the elected leaders. As the Body of Christ, the Church, we acknowledge that there will be pain, loss, and grief whenever the difficult decision for an abortion is made, while also acknowledging that there will be circumstances where this loss may be the greater good.



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | [diocesemo.org](http://diocesemo.org)

It is my hope that in standing with other faith leaders in opposing the State of Missouri's ban on reproductive choice, we might create a future where the rights and dignity of all, especially women, are honored, respected, and valued.

I ask your prayers as we discern God's will and as we seek to do justly, love kindly, and walk humbly with our God. I am confident that in Christ Jesus, all shall be well and together we will continue to be communities of hope, justice, and inclusion.

You have been and will remain in my prayers as we to share the Good News of Jesus in words and action.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deon K. Johnson", with a small cross symbol to the left.

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson  
XI Bishop of Missouri

P.S. To learn more about this legal action please visit: <https://www.au.org/missouri-abortion-lawsuit/>