

# Supporting Individuals Facing Abortion Decisions

## Opening

Pregnancy-related crises often involve fear, pressure, and a perceived lack of options. Individuals considering abortion may be navigating complex emotional, relational, and practical circumstances that require careful pastoral attention.

This document offers suggestions for pastors to create safe, non-judgmental space, to affirm the dignity of all involved, and to provide compassionate, life-affirming care grounded in grace and truth.

## 1. Crisis Response At A Glance

*(What to do immediately)*

- Create a safe, non-judgmental space
- Listen to pressures influencing the decision
- Ensure emotional and physical safety
- Listen for alternatives considered
- Offer practical and compassionate alternatives as trust is built
- Communicate grace, support, and ongoing care

## 2. Pastoral Posture

*(How to be with the person)*

- Approach with empathy, not interrogation
- Acknowledge fear, confusion, and perceived lack of options
- Avoid shaming language or assumptions
- Affirm dignity of both mother and child
- Communicate that the church's role is support, not pressure

## 3. What To Do Now

*(Concrete, time-ordered steps)*

1. Listen carefully to the person's situation and concerns
2. Identify external pressures:
  - Financial
  - Relational
  - Housing
  - Safety or abandonment
3. Offer concrete supports:
  - Practical assistance
  - Referrals to pregnancy care home, adoption agency and family-support services
4. Address medical realities compassionately:
  - Including ectopic pregnancy and serious complications

5. Affirm continued pastoral care regardless of decision

## 4. What To Avoid

*(Common pastoral mistakes in this crisis)*

- Rushing to persuasion rather than care
- Minimizing complexity or fear
- Treating abortion as only a moral issue rather than a crisis
- Ignoring trauma history or safety concerns
- Offering help without follow-through

## 5. When To Involve Others

*(with consent and referrals)*

- Medical providers for accurate information and care
- Social-service agencies for housing or financial instability
- Trusted family members
- Professional counseling when trauma or coercion is present

## 6. Ongoing & Follow-Up Care

*(What care looks like after the moment passes)*

- Provide ongoing pastoral check-ins
- Acknowledge that post-abortion grief or trauma may surface years later:
  - During another pregnancy
  - Marriage
  - Menopause
- Recognize that men and family members may also grieve
- Offer referrals to counseling and healing ministries
- Maintain a posture of grace, confidentiality, and long-term care

## Closing

Pastoral care in abortion-related crises is often ongoing rather than momentary. Grief, regret, or trauma may surface long after a decision has been made, and continued pastoral presence remains essential.

In these situations, pastors are called to hold moral clarity together with tenderness—offering support, pointing to hope and restoration in Christ, and committing to long-term care marked by grace and faithfulness.