

# Interfaith Clergy Gather To Bless Texas Abortion Clinic And Its Staff

Christians, Jews and others prayed and walked through rooms at Whole Woman's Health of Austin, following the footsteps of patients who seek care.

By [Carol Kuruvilla](#), 07/10/2019:

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/austin-abortion-clinic-blessing\\_n\\_5d24efe8e4b07e698c42007e?ncid=newsltushpmgnews\\_\\_TheMorningEmail\\_\\_071119](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/austin-abortion-clinic-blessing_n_5d24efe8e4b07e698c42007e?ncid=newsltushpmgnews__TheMorningEmail__071119)

Jordan Steyer Clergy gather to pray at Whole Woman's Health of Austin on Tuesday, July 9,



2019.

About a dozen Christian, Jewish and other religious clergy gathered at an [abortion](#) care center in Austin, Texas, on Tuesday to bless the clinic and the work that takes place inside it.

The blessing ceremony at Whole Woman's Health of Austin was for patients as well as for the clinic's staff, according to Rev. Amelia Fulbright, a campus minister in Austin.

"The first and foremost goal was to say that we support you and the work that you're doing, especially in a state where you're constantly having to meet new regulations or deal with critics and protesters," she said.

Bolstered by President [Donald Trump](#)'s overtures to the anti-abortion movement, Republican lawmakers around the country [have made moves this year](#) to curtail abortion access in their states. In April, [Texas' House of Representatives considered a bill](#) that would have criminalized abortions and made it possible for women and doctors who participate in the procedure to receive the death penalty.

Even though the bill ultimately failed, Texas is still a [difficult](#) state for people seeking abortion care. State lawmakers have [imposed strict requirements](#) on patients, mandating that they must undergo sonograms and receive pamphlets about alternatives to abortion. Afterward, patients often have to wait 24 hours before they can have an abortion. Texas law also forbids insurers from covering abortion unless the procedure is required to prevent death or serious physical injury.



Jordan Steyer The blessing ceremony, attended primarily by clergy and clinic staff, was organized by the advocacy groups Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and Texas Freedom Network, and by Whole Woman’s Health, a nationwide network of abortion care centers.

Whole Woman’s Health of Austin, which provides abortion care and other gynecological services, was [forced to move to its new location on the city’s northwest side in February](#) after the building it had occupied for 16 years was bought out by a [crisis pregnancy center](#). CPCs are often faith-based organizations that masquerade as medical clinics in order to counsel women against having abortions.

Fulbright, the founder of Labyrinth Progressive Student Ministry, an ecumenical Christian organization, said that there’s a narrative in Christian communities that real Christians must be part of the anti-abortion movement.

The abortion clinic blessing ceremony in Austin, organized by [local](#) and [national](#) progressive advocacy groups, demonstrated that there are alternative ways for people of faith to think about abortion rights, she said.

“For me, in particular as a Christian minister, I feel like it’s important to offer a different narrative,” she said.

“As clergy, we have the privilege of counseling people at really vulnerable moments in their lives, and some of those have to do with reproductive choices,” she added. “I want people to know that there are clergy who are safe people to talk to so that they don’t have to navigate those choices alone.”

During the blessing ceremony, clergy and clinic staff participated in a prayerful walk through the center’s space, following the path that a typical patient would take after arriving at the center to seek care.

Fulbright said that she prayed for peace as she moved through the center’s waiting rooms, patient rooms, counseling rooms and staff offices.

“As people of faith, it’s not that we think we’re bringing God to this place; we believe God is already present in that space,” Fulbright told HuffPost. “But it’s to ask for prayers of safety, healing and peace, to infuse the space with an energy that is life-giving for women, a lot of whom are in an anxious time.”

She said one of the most meaningful moments of the ceremony was when her 4-month-old baby became hungry. She said being able to nurse her child in that setting, surrounded by people who understood the importance of being able to choose motherhood, illustrated to her that abortion clinics are a “life-affirming space.”

“It paints a different picture than what the anti-abortion movement would like you to think happens in abortion clinics,” she said.

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PHOTO GALLERY

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Jordan Steyer A number of clergy burned sage as they walked through the clinic's various rooms.