

Presbyterians, Pro-Life Exhibit...

continued from p. 1

as it has worked to educate the denomination on pro-life issues and to provide resources to pastors and congregations for ministry.

Recently PPL took this body of resources to the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), June 24-27, in Brighton, Michigan. Although the EPC takes a pro-life stand on abortion, as their position statement says, the issue has had poor representation in the past at their General Assembly. But this year many individuals attending the Assembly thanked PPL Executive Director, Marie Bowen, for having a pro-life display there. "This is the first time I've seen a pro-life display at our General Assembly," said one pastor. The display of fetal models and accompanying materials on the development of the child in the womb were of particular interest to participants in the Assembly.

Bowen seldom receives such a warm welcome in her own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA). Last week, Mrs. Bowen and two other PPL Board members attended the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women in Louisville, Kentucky. Mrs. Di Lupton and Mrs. Peggy MacLeod, long time members of PPL's Board of Directors, spent long days at the exhibit booth engaging women in conversation, informing them of the denomination's pro-choice social witness policy and equipping them with information to take back to their churches. Mrs. MacLeod also did mini workshops in the booth on Abortion Recovery Ministry, raising awareness of the numbers of women and men in our churches who suffer negative effects after abortion and offering tips and resources for ministry to these women and their families.

Some visitors to the booth expressed their disagreement with PPL on this issue, but others were grateful for their presence at the gathering of almost 3,000 women. One young Chinese woman, who works as the director of an international adoption agency, viewed PPL's banners showing ultrasound pictures of preborn babies with tears in her eyes and expressed her gratitude for the pro-life display. "I had no idea that there was a 'Presbyterians Pro-Life,'" she exclaimed. "I am so glad I came here."

Others were not so happy with having a pro-life witness in the exhibit hall. A few made "fly-by" comments denigrating our position on life issues – not sticking around to engage in real conversation. Both responses underscore the importance of a visible witness to life in the womb. PPL seeks to be a Christ-like presence, treating every encounter as an opportunity for God to do his transforming work in hearts and minds through the power of the Holy Spirit.

There were encouraging signs of change at this Churchwide Gathering (held every 3 years). The usual pro-abortion workshop was not part of the program this year and in the plenary meetings, a musical based on the story of the Hebrew midwives, *Puah's Midwife Crisis*, brought a uniquely pro-life message. Throughout the exhibits and in church ministry posters, the value of infants and children was affirmed in various ways – from teeny tiny knit infant caps and safe motherhood kits to spotlighted children's homes, this was a new and different atmosphere for Presbyterian Women from the PC(USA). May the God of life be praised!



Red and Yellow, Black and White ... Not All Are Precious in Our Sight

By Day Gardner,
National Black Pro-Life Union

Today in America, we all would like to believe that racism no longer exists, but that is just not the case.

In America, we subconsciously devalue black babies. We are tricked into thinking a black child has less value than a child of another race. In a nation marred by the battles of eradicating slavery and advancing civil rights for women and minorities, we cannot sanction the killing of babies simply because they are of an undesired race or sex.

Although U.S. law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race in various contexts, including the provision of employment, education and housing, African-American babies are still openly targeted and discriminated against.

More proof that black children are targeted for abortion is the fact that Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion chain continuously plants killing centers strategically in our urban and minority neighborhoods. This is no accident! The Alan Guttmacher Institute, along with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that the majority of abortion clinics are located in minority neighborhoods — experts estimate the number to be higher than 75%.

We must come to grip with awful facts. There are those who believe killing black children will somehow make them safer. Some believe black babies are worthless and should be killed before they become welfare recipients. Why else would Planned Parenthood prey on black, poor women in urban and minority areas? This is the greatest civil rights battle of our time!

To date, no state has enacted a law to prohibit race-targeted abortions or the solicitation – or acceptance of funds for purposes of financing race-targeted abortions. Therefore, it is paramount that the federal government set a precedent to ensure that there is protection for these children. A person must not be denied life because of the color of his or her skin. The Prenatal Non-Discrimination Act (PreNDA) introduced by Congressman Trent Franks (AZ) will help to do just that.

Associate Membership Application

Yes, I would like to become an Associate Member of the National Pro-Life Religious Council, Inc.

Enclosed is my fee of \$25.00 for membership as:
_____ an individual _____ a church _____ a group

I would like to make a tax deductible donation of
\$_____ to help NPRC with its important work.

Mail to: NPRC c/o Development Office,
PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306-9811

Contact Person _____

Church or Group _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Denomination _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____

E-mail _____



Uniting for Life

A Christian Pro-Life Newsletter

Issue 523, Vol. 21, No. 3

Summer 2009



Photo Courtesy of LifeNews.com

National Pro-Life Religious Council, PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306

website: www.nprcouncil.org e-mail: mail@nprcouncil.org

National Pro-Life Religious Council

The National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC) is a Christian coalition which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and works to encourage every Christian denomination to affirm and witness to the biblical standard of the value, dignity and sanctity of human life, and to foster ministry to those vulnerable to the violence of abortion or euthanasia.

Anglicans for Life

Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)

International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)

Life Education and Resource Network (LEARN)

Lutherans for Life (LFL)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

National Black Pro-Life Union

National Clergy Council (NCC)

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

Religious Outreach, National Right to Life Committee

Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)/ Lifewatch

United Friends for Life (UFL)

Tell Congress to Exclude Abortion from "Health Care Reform"!

Democratic congressional leaders, who are currently in control of both houses of Congress, are working with the Obama White House to fast-track sweeping "health care reform" legislation – legislation that Barack Obama has already pledged will incorporate expansive pro-abortion provisions.

The White House is currently backing two bills – one in the House of Representatives, and one in the Senate. In the Senate, a bill sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Ma.) was approved on July 15 by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee on a 13-10 party line vote, after the committee rejected a series of amendments proposed by pro-life senators to prevent the bill from mandating insurance coverage of elective abortions and providing federal funding for elective abortions. Pro-life lawmakers were also unsuccessful in attaching such amendments to the similar House bill, H.R. 3200, when it was considered in committees during July.

"Enactment of the Kennedy bill or of H.R. 3200 could result in the greatest expansion of abortion since Roe v. Wade," said NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson. "Among other things, they would produce a system under which federal funds would subsidize abortion on a massive scale."

No congressional Republican has yet endorsed either bill. The Democrats, who hold about 60% of the seats in both houses of Congress, are divided, with some Democrats opposed, either because of the pro-abortion provisions or for other reasons. The bills are expected to come to the House and Senate floors in September.

"Pro-life Americans should vigorously oppose any federal 'health care reform' legislation that does not explicitly exclude abortion from the scope of any government-defined or government-mandated package of health care services," explained Douglas Johnson, NRLC Director of Federal Legislation. "A bill that delegates authority to some government board to require abortion coverage is simply a covert, two-step method for imposing sweeping pro-abortion mandates on employers and all citizens," he said.

Action:

Please take a few minutes to send messages to your two U.S. senators and to your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, to urge them to oppose any federal "health care reform" legislation that does not explicitly exclude abortion. An easy way to do this is to go to the Legislative Action Center on the NRLC web site at www.capwiz.com/nrlc/home. There you can fill in your mailing address and have your message automatically sent by e-mail to your senators and representative. Or call 202-224-3121, and ask to be connected to your senator's office. You can do the same for your U.S. Representative by calling 202-225-3121. If you don't know your representative's name, give the operator your zip code and you will be connected with the correct office.

Presbyterians Pro-Life Exhibit is a Visible Witness to the Value of Life

By Marie Bowen, Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL) is a 30 year old organization that sprang up as a prophetic witness when the Presbyterian Church (USA) began to turn away from its historic and biblical stance against abortion in the early 70s and instead supported a woman's right to choose to abort her unborn child. Over the years, PPL has developed a large body of educational resources

(continued on p. 4)

How can we activate the Church in this era of the Culture of Death? *NPRC Board Members Address Pastor's Questions*

"Nowhere in the mission of the Church in the modern world is the power of authentic Christian unity expressing itself more visibly, powerfully and practically than in the pro-life arena," contended Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director of Priests for Life and president of NPRC, as he introduced NPRC's popular annual workshop, "**We are the Sheep, Where are the Shepherds?**," at the National Right to Life Convention this June. The National Pro-Life Religious Council exemplifies this united effort, he noted. Board members of NPRC formed a panel at the workshop, each taking up a question asked by member of their congregations and their pastors.

◆ **Some pastors say "the Bible is silent on abortion, so we are too." How can we help pastors address the question of abortion?** **Rev. Kirk van der Swaagh**, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, responded that if a pastor knows his Bible well, he will know that the presumption behind scripture is that human beings have an inherent dignity and are made in the image of God so that all human life is to be valued. Jesus is the antidote to sin and death and the concrete expression of sin and death today is the taking of innocent lives in the womb.

◆ **Would it be helpful to share with pastors the experience of someone who has had an abortion, or to have such a person give a testimony in church?** **Vera Faith Lord**, Orthodox Church: Even though some pastors may still think there are no post-abortive women in their congregation, the fact is that everyone knows someone who has been touched by the experience of abortion. Although we may not know them yet, these women are all around us—daughters, sisters, mothers, granddaughters, friends, co-workers. If only one of these women gets started on healing through words heard in church, it is worth it.

◆ **How can recent polling data that shows an increase in pro-life conviction among Americans be used to activate our churches in pro-life activity?** **Rev. Paul Stallworth**, United Methodist Church: While this is welcome news, the church should minister, not on the basis of survey results but on the basis of the scriptural truth that God creates each and every human person and no one is just the product of a biological process. The Church is called to be public, the salt of the earth. When she is silent on abortion, she rebels against the Lord of life and the Gospel of Life.

◆ **How should we approach pastors who invite pro-abortion speakers to church events or have pro-abortion persons serving in church ministries?** **Fr. Terry Gensemer**, Charismatic Episcopal Church, suggests inviting the pastor to an informal lunch meeting. Pray before this meeting, and find out the pastor's personal conviction and his reasoning. Express your concern that this is bringing confusion into the congregation that needs to hear the truth and see a consistent witness. Give him readable materials, the scientific truth of life, and information about the need for post-abortive healing.

◆ **How do you respond to church leaders who say, "I don't want to get too vocal about the abortion issue because that might encourage fanatics to kill abortionists?"** **Fr. Frank Pavone**, Priests for Life, pointed out that the irresponsibility of a fanatic does not take away the responsibility of a pastor to oppose evil. Non-violence is not passive. It is a force that resists evil, which means it resists all forms of violence. You resist evil by calling it by its name. If nothing constructive is being done about the evil of abortion, leaving a vacuum, this is what could encourage an unbalanced violent fanatic to fill that vacuum.

◆ **Many pastors use the tax law as an excuse to be silent about abortion and politics. How do we help them distinguish between legitimate boundaries and baseless fears?** **Ernie Ohlhoff**, Director of National Right to Life Outreach Department, explained

that this has been a scare tactic he has observed since he joined the pro-life movement in 1979. It creates a cloud of fear with vague references to the IRS. But, he pointed out, preaching on abortion as a moral issue violates no law. Abortion is the moral issue of our era, and pastors are free to say that.

◆ **Some pastors say we are preaching to the choir. What are some ways to tell them the congregation still needs to hear the pro-life message?** **Rev. John Brown**, United Church of Christ Friends for Life, pointed out that members of our congregations, in the distraction of many issues and concerns, can easily lose sight of the importance of the life issues. Pro-life churches are the backbone of the pro-life movement, he reminded us. They provide the moral/theological underpinning, the finances, and the volunteers. Who better can provide the right perspective on abortion than the Church? Also, circumstances change so we need to continue to think through and address the current questions. We need to tell stories of women hurt by abortion and of the children born as a result of crisis pregnancy work. It may take time, as it did to overturn the slave trade, but we need to work to fully establish a culture of life in order to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, because it is God's will to do so.

◆ **How should we respond to those who say the Church has to focus on a wide range of issues and then use this as an excuse to do nothing about abortion.** **Marie Bowen**, Presbyterians Pro-Life, pointed out that no one can focus on everything. However, the pro-life issue is uniquely important: human life is what Christ died for. In comparison to 12,000 homicides yearly in our country, 1.2 million children die from abortion. So why is abortion not addressed? Why do people concerned about torture ignore torture in the womb? We need to engage people in conversation.

◆ **What things should we be trying to get our churches to do about abortion?** **Georgette Forney**, Anglicans for Life, suggested starting by communicating about other life issues – euthanasia, stem cell research, etc. This can help the pastor to be more open to talking about abortion. For example, ask how the parish would handle a young teen who is pregnant, a child with a disability, the elderly? Give the clergy specific tasks, for example, linking the church's website to pro-life sites, starting a pro-life chapter, supporting a crisis pregnancy center in the area with its needs by asking the congregation to donate to it. If six months later, the church invites a young mother to witness how these things helped her, this will touch people's hearts. As a result, the parish becomes pro-life even though they don't realize it. As soon as we can get people affirming life, we can get them opening their hearts and recognizing that each human life is precious. So many women are hurting they have had to shut down their hearts, but a child can restore these hardened and broken hearts.

◆ **What are some of the materials we can provide pastors to encourage them in pro-life efforts and inform them on pro-life issues?** **Ed Szeto**, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, reminded us that pastors are people too with their own private fears. We need to talk with them to find out why they hesitate to speak out. Also, pastors feel overwhelmed. But providing them with materials can help give them the information they need. We can use materials from all the different denominations that have pro-life brochures, books, videos. We all have a common ground in Scripture. For pastors who think there is no problem, look to Ezekiel 13:19: "By lying to my people who listen to lies you have killed those who should not have died."

The workshop was concluded with remarks by **Rev. Ben Sheldon**, president emeritus of NPRC and of Presbyterians Pro-Life. He challenged workshop attendees to go back to their churches with these pro-life messages, because it is the church that is moving to attack the gates of hell and will overcome the evil of abortion.

Politics or Faith? The Christian Tradition of Life *The Rev. Briane K. Turley, Anglicans for Life*

Several years ago, a parishioner stopped by my office to dispute a pro-life sermon I had delivered to our congregation a few days earlier. "You are dragging your politics into the church," he insisted. "I think it is wrong for you to preach on politics. We come to church to hear about faith, not politics."

In response, I explained to my Christian brother that our Church's pro-life commitment is theological in its origins and has never been politically inspired. Therefore, I suggested that it was my faith which had come into conflict with his politics....

Yet the fact is that the boundaries between faith and politics, among Christianity and good citizenship have gone hand in hand since the days of the primitive church. A citizen of the Roman Empire, St. Paul from time to time publicly addressed moral issues that ran counter to Christ's teachings—the Athenian Areopagus in Acts 17 provided just such a forum. While his opposition to Greco-Roman morality would, at that time, have been deemed "political," the Apostle embraced his role as a fellow citizen in this world guiding his neighbors toward life in the Kingdom of God.

Moreover, from the first century until the early 1960s, all of Christendom spoke with a unified voice to its surrounding cultures on the sanctity of human life, and especially the value God places on our most vulnerable. St Paul set the character of the Church's theology of life when, to the Church in Corinth, he articulated God's passion for the defenseless:

"[T]he members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:22-26)

Millennia before life issues like abortion and euthanasia were usurped as the exclusive fare of death-culture political pundits, virtually all Christians consistently underscored the importance of honoring the lives of our most vulnerable: our preborn children, those with moderate and profound disabilities, and our elderly.

Depending on the time and place, Catholic leaders recommended different means for men and women to repent of their involvement in abortion and gain restoration to the faith, but Catholicism remained unswerving in its teachings that abortion and euthanasia are unacceptable acts.

Many things changed during the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, but the Reformers' commitment to life was not among them. Early Protestant leaders including Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Menno Simons maintained invariable pro-life stands.

Be a Pro-life Freedom Rider!

Fr. Frank Pavone, National Director, Priests for Life

Dr. Alveda King, who is a full-time member of the Pastoral Team of Priests for Life and niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., will be leading "Pro-life Freedom Rides" in the coming year, building on a method that the Civil Rights Movement used effectively forty years ago.

In that movement, thirteen individuals boarded a bus in Washington DC in 1961 and headed for New Orleans. Their intent was to test the enforcement of a Supreme Court decision made the previous year that outlawed racial segregation in the restaurants and waiting areas of bus terminals that served interstate travelers.

That one ride led to dozens of others in various parts of the country, with hundreds of people getting involved.

Now, Dr. King and the team of Priests for Life believe it is time

Luther, for example, declared, "How great, therefore, the wickedness of human nature is! How many girls there are who prevent conception and kill and expel tender fetuses, although procreation is the work of God."

Reformed Church leader, John Calvin, argued that "it is almost a monstrous crime to rob [the preborn child] of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a fetus in the womb before it has come to light."

It was not until the late 1960s and early '70s that many poorly catechized Christians gradually capitulated to the dominant culture's siren song, which lulled them into believing that many core theological and moral issues (including family matters, human sexuality, and our consistent honoring of human life) subsist in the political rather than the broader ecclesial sphere.

Once Protestant and Anglican citizens in many Western countries succumbed to the pressures of secularized authority, a growing number circumvented open discourse on life issues ranging from euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide to abortion and infanticide (late-term and partial-birth abortion) on the grounds that they were deemed too "political."

This misappropriation of what is first and foremost a theological matter only solidified as political parties in North America and Europe polarized and some Christians did, in fact, conflate their faith with partisanship. And while we are called to speak the truth we have received to the state, politics cannot feed our faith. Faith, however, can and should help inform our politics.

The process of restoring life issues to an appropriate place in our congregations as primarily faith issues—issues our priests are duty-bound redemptively to address—will not be easy. Nor will the restoration happen overnight. Yet because so many seminaries have followed cultural rather than biblical norms, it is critical that we begin the process of educating our clergy and their laity on the ancient Christian theology of life and their role as Christian apologists to stand for what we know to be holy in God's sight.

It is important that committed Anglicans do at least three things. First, encourage pastors to speak on pro-life issues on a regular basis and, just as importantly, offer words of encouragement when they do so. Second, keep pressing life-appropriate literature into the hands of our clergy and then follow up from time to time by asking if they have had a chance to read what you gave them. If the bishops and other clergy fail to understand the importance of life issues and remain unaware of their responsibility to address them during this time of wholesale slaughter, our ability to impact our faith communities will be severely limited. Finally, pray for your clergy. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide them, in this and every other regard, on the paths of holiness and righteousness for His name's sake.