

A Journey To Washington, DC

By Rev. Paul Stallworth, United Methodist Church

Early in March, just before the final votes on health care reform legislation in Washington, DC, I wrote a letter to the US House of Representatives on health care legislation which was allowing federal dollars to pay for abortions. As the letter was being duplicated, we considered the high cost of mailing the letter to 435 congressional offices and the slow delivery of first-class mail to Capitol Hill. So we decided on an alternative: hand-delivery.

After participating in our Wednesday evening Service of Holy Communion, my wife Marsha and I drove from Morehead City, NC north to the Motel 6 on the other side of Fredericksburg, VA. A short night of sleep and a dash to the train depot led to semi-comfortable seats on a commuter train into Washington, DC.

By 9:30 a.m., we were distributing a copy of the letter to each congressional office on the top floor of the Cannon House Office Building (HOB). Marsha took one side of each hall, and I took the other. That way, we covered all the halls on a floor, and then we moved down a floor and repeated the strategy. After completing our task in the Cannon HOB, we delivered letters throughout the Longworth HOB -- one hall at a time, one floor at a time, moving downward. Leaving Longworth, we entered the gigantic Rayburn HOB and handed out letters in the same way until 4:30 p.m.



Those who greeted us in the congressional offices graciously and thankfully received the letter, engaged in friendly conversation, promised to direct the letter to the representative or other pertinent staffer in the office, and bid good-bye. It was all quite civil, even courteous.

The lunch break in the Longworth HOB cafeteria was memorably refreshing and renewing. Even so, by the end of the day, both of us were exhausted. The train returned us to Fredericksburg. We walked to the car, which had been parked at the

Fredericksburg United Methodist Church. Dinner was followed by the five-hour drive to coastal North Carolina.

It was a long day. It was a day we will never forget. As it turned out, our effort was not especially successful. But from the start, we were under no illusion that our effort would change the world (or the fate or shape of health care reform). Even so, **this is what citizenship in the United States is all about -- participating in the political process, seeking the common good, striving to protect the least of these among us.**

Here is an excerpt from the text of our hand-delivered letter:

"In the Social Principles, The United Methodist Church officially recognizes not only the sanctity of unborn human life, but also the unborn child (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline [2008]). So The United Methodist Church claims that the unborn are children and suggests that they are part of the human community. With these moral truths, the Church through

the ages and most Americans of our day agree.

Because unborn children are members of the larger society, federal legislation should stop federal dollars from paying for procedures -- i.e., abortions -- that would destroy such children. Since the 1970s, the Hyde Amendment has prevented the federal government from paying for many abortions. By standing between federal dollars and abortion providers, the Hyde Amendment has saved millions of lives.

We strongly urge you to vote for health care reform legislation if and only if it contains permanent, bill-wide language that prevents federal dollars from paying for abortions. Such language keeps the federal government out of the abortion business and protects countless unborn children. On the other hand, if legislation lacks such language, vote No.

Courage is always required to stand up and do what is right. It took courage for American preachers and politicians to oppose slavery in the 19th century. It took courage for German pastors and priests and people to oppose the murderous anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 1940s. It took courage for American clergy and laity and politicians to join the Civil Rights Movement and oppose racism. Now, courage is required of you to stand up and vote against health care reform legislation that would result in destroying, not caring for, unborn children."

[Rev. Stallworth is president of the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality and Editor of *LifeWatch*]



Rev. Stallworth

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

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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

The 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)

Ernest Ohlhoff, Director of Religious Outreach, National Right to Life Committee

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

Lutherans for Life (LFL)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

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

United Friends for Life (UFL)

NPRC Board Members Attend NRLC Convention

The National Pro-Life Religious Council recently attended National Right to Life's annual convention in Pittsburgh. This year's convention featured several high-profile, pro-life leaders including, Steven Mosher, president of the Population Research Institute and Dr. Angela Franks, author of *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy*. Mark and LaRee Pickup gave a heartfelt talk at the Prayer Breakfast and Monsignor Jim Lisante was the keynote speaker at the Closing Banquet.

NPRC's board members have been presenters at numerous workshops over the years, and this year was no different. Rev. Ben Sheldon, of Presbyterians Pro-Life and Rev. John Brown of United Friends for Life discussed "Overcoming Pro-Abortion Opposition within a Congregation or Denomination." This workshop provides answers on how to work towards positive when confronted with a church leader or fellow church members who are hindering pro-life activities. Fr. Frank Pavone, of Priests for Life and Rev. Kirk van der Swaagh, of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference lead a workshop entitled "Increasing Local Pro-Life Effectiveness in Pro-Life Religious Denominations." For churches that are already pro-life, this talk teaches how they can become great assets in the fight for life. And for individual members of active pro-life churches, attendees gained new information and ideas at the workshop.

However, NPRC's premiere event at National Right to Life's convention has always been the "We Are the Sheep... Where Are the Shepherds?" workshop. This talk features many of the NPRC board members in a forum setting where they discuss a common problem that many churches in the pro-life movement face: the fact that many pastors simply refuse to face the issue of abortion. Whether a congregation is predominately pro-abortion or predominately pro-life, many church leaders shy away from addressing life issues in their churches, often at a detriment to their members.

This year's talks were particularly inspiring and have proved to be valuable sources of information and advice. For anyone who missed this year's convention, or if you'd like to share what you learned, audio CDs of every workshop are available for purchase at: www.nrlc.org/convention or by calling 202-378-8842.

Mark your calendars for next year's convention: June 23-25, 2011 in Jacksonville, FL. See you there!

National Pro-life Religious Council: Health Care Battle Just Begun

Washington, DC – Fr. Frank Pavone, President of the National Pro-life Religious Council, stated in a press release that the Council, comprised of pro-life groups from many Christian denominations, is calling upon believers to make the next move in the health care debate.

"The American people have spoken in this debate, and our legislators spoke back. So the ball is in our court again. Pro-life people across America remain concerned about the abortion provisions in the health care reform law passed by Congress, despite the President's Executive Order. Moreover, a wider coalition of Americans oppose this legislation for other reasons. We are confident that the legislation will be challenged on many fronts, not only in public opinion but also by legal challenges. Meanwhile, the People of God should press forward in expressing their concerns, calling for corrective legislative action, and preparing for the elections in November," Fr. Pavone stated.



Photo courtesy of LifeNews.com

An Ecumenical Confession For Life

Teaching Truthfully and Ministering Mercifully

Statement by the National Pro-Life Religious Council

May 1, 2010

Our Situation

In our time and place, the dignity of the human person is under attack. Year after year, horrendously high numbers of abortions are performed in American society. Also, the proliferation of embryonic stem cell research, eugenics, euthanasia, and other similar problems exhibit a casual disregard for human dignity.

Occasionally, in the political arena and within church life, the great debate regarding human dignity surfaces. But most often, literally fearing disagreement, churches simply remain silent about these matters. Through their silence, churches in America prove themselves accommodated to American society and deepen their accommodation. Thus routine attacks on the dignity of the human person, in our country, can continue with few serious challenges.

In our time and place, it is crucial that churches (Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic) rely on God's Word and grace, demonstrate the unity that Jesus Christ gives, set aside fearful silence, and strive to teach truthfully and minister mercifully, "in season and out of season" (II Timothy 4:2, RSV here and following), with regard to abortion and other life issues. To assist churches in those tasks, the following ecumenical confession is offered.

Our Confession

I. We believe in the one, true, living, loving, Triune God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This God reveals Himself in history -- through faithful encounter with Israel, most fully through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) in Word and Sacrament. This God speaks and acts. This God is not the creation of humanity's pious imaginations or spiritual enthusiasms.

II. We believe that God the Father is the Creator of humanity -- that is, of each and every human person. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) People are not just products of biological processes.

III. We believe that God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the Redeemer of the world. "In Christ God was reconciling

the world to himself..." (II Corinthians 5:19) Because of the Redeemer Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, no person in this world is without reason to hope. Even those who have participated in abortion or other degradations of humanity, in any way, are lavished with divine forgiveness upon repentance.

IV. We believe that God the Spirit gathers the Church to teach God's truth and to minister God's mercy. "Speaking the truth in love..." (Ephesians 4:15) "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) The Church has no authority to develop teachings or initiate ministries that contradict God's Word and will.

V. We believe that God commands the Church universal, for the sake of justice, to protect and defend the unborn child and mother from abortion -- and other weak, defenseless, and voiceless people from violence. This divine command has been heard and understood since the earliest days of the apostolic Church. "You shall not kill." (Exodus 20:13) In a society that now hosts 1,200,000 abortions a year, in a society that convinces many of its citizens that a US Supreme Court decision that permits abortion also makes it right, in a society that seduces some churches to forget and/or resist God's Word about life, the Church's message and ministry on life will often be rejected.

VI. We believe that God calls the Church to be public about her position on life and abortion. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-14) When the Church is silent or inactive on abortion, she rebels against the Lord of Life and His Gospel. Because Jesus Christ is Life, and came that we might have life, His Gospel can be called a "Gospel of Life."

VII. We believe that God, at The End of History, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Until the glorious End, the Church will neither grow weary nor pause for rest in proclaiming and celebrating the Gospel of Life, and serving the Lord of Life.

Signed by NPRC Board Members:

Georgette Forney, Anglicans for Life

Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)

Rev. Terry Gensemer, International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)

Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life (LFL)

Marie Bowen, Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Fr. Frank Pavone, Priests for Life (PFL)

Ernie Ohlhoff, Director, Outreach Department, National Right to Life Committee (NRLC)

Rev. Paul Stallworth, Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)/Lifewatch

Ed Szeto, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

Rev. John Brown, United Friends for Life (UFL), United Church of Christ

Please distribute to your pastor for your church congregation!

New Focus on Mothers and Babies on PC(USA) Webpage

By Marie Bowen, Presbyterians Pro-Life Executive Director

How refreshing that mothers are the focus of almost every page of the PC(USA) website this month!

The various PC(USA) web entries for March have united around a theme of motherhood. If you go to the PC(USA) website and type 'mother' in the search engine, you will see what I mean. I am encouraged by this focus on women as mothers.

For example, Beth Newberry has written a thoughtful article, "Mothers in Ministry." She explores the challenges and blessings of the dual calling experienced by moms in ministry. She discusses ways churches can adapt and support women who seek to balance the priorities of ministry and family. Kendal Land reminds us in "Better than Abraham" that fathers in ministry need the considered care of congregations also and the freedom to give priority to their families.

A ministry of hope for those facing infertility is spotlighted.

"Pregnant with Hope," by Bethany Furkin, introduces Susan Radulovacki, a member of Peachtree Presbyterian Church, whose own experience with the pain of infertility prompted her to write a Bible Study to bring hope to those struggling with infertility. The article notes the importance of ministry that brings hope and support to couples facing infertility. The Peachtree Church conducts a Bible Study for infertile couples twice a year. A leadership guide is available online.

Current projects benefit mothers and babies.

I found more good news on the denomination's website among the current ministry projects. PPL is cautious about endorsing ministry projects of the PC(USA) because of the denomination's support for abortion. So, I am delighted that I am able to encourage pro-life churches to support two current projects that benefit women and babies. The need is great. We who uphold the value of human life from fertilization to natural death ought to be the first to give generous support to projects providing practical ministry to pregnant women and infants.

Baby Kits

The Presbyterian Disaster Association gives a variety of kits assembled by churches to those devastated by the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. Among those is a Baby Kit. For information about the contents of the kits and where to mail them go here. This is a great project for any group in your church. Patterns for handmade gowns and baby sweaters for inclusion in the kits can be online. The kit value is \$39 and donations are accepted in lieu of kits.

A Mother's day project

Healthy Women Healthy Families, is a Presbyterian Women project that offers unique Mother's Day cards when you make a contribution. Donations benefit women in African countries, providing pre-natal care, fistula surgeries, and health education for women.

I wondered if funds would be used to pay for abortion or to promote birth control, so I asked!

Will abortion be funded?

I have been assured by staff at the PC(USA) that funds donated to Healthy Women Healthy Families will NOT be used to provide abortions, or to promote birth control. Beth Bingham, Associate for Constituency Relations International Health & Development (GAMC), says:

"The goal of Healthy Women Healthy families is to protect and restore the health of women and children. This includes helping women to have successful pregnancies, by protecting them from malaria (the most frequent cause of miscarriage and premature delivery in sub-Saharan Africa,) assuring that they have adequate nutrition, and encouraging women to come to a hospital to deliver, rather than having an unattended birth which can have devastating consequences such as fistulas and stillbirth."

Health education activities in this project are focused on teaching families healthy living habits and increasing nutrition.

PPL will continue to monitor the website and publications of the PC(USA) and report our good and bad findings. We thank God for this good news!

It is important to remember that although we have been encouraged

by an increased attention given to mothers and children and to women who are pregnant and their babies by PC(USA) entities, the social witness policy on abortion in the PC(USA) has not changed. Our denomination still condones abortion and lobbies for a woman's right to abort her child. Our denomination continues to exhibit moral confusion about issues like abortion and care at the end of life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life is working diligently toward making changes at the General Assembly level that would move our church toward a more faithful stance--one that reflects the clear teaching of Scripture about the value of human life. Our next issue will focus on some of the business coming to the General Assembly that has implications for our witness to the world on life issues. Our GA team will be there in Minneapolis and we need your help to put on our events there and have a lively pro-life witness at the Assembly. Please pray for us and give generously to support our work. We are grateful for your help!



This young woman in Malawi endured a fistula that resulted in incontinence following obstructed labor in two pregnancies. Both of her first babies were stillborn. After coming to Mulanje Mission Hospital she had successful fistula repair surgery and was subsequently able to give birth to the baby held here by her husband. Since this photo was taken this couple has welcomed two more children into their family.