

## NOEL Takes Pro-Life Message to Episcopal Church Convention

by Georgette Forney, Executive Director of NOEL

*Noel News*, July 24, 2006: As Sheila Bracken, NOEL's administrative director, and I drove to General Convention (GC) on Sunday, June 11th, we prayed for courage to uphold the sanctity of life in the midst of many who believe in a woman's right to abort her unborn baby.

Each day in the exhibit booth we faced people who glanced at us and then looked away with disgust, often rolling their eyes and moving to the far side of the aisle. But many people did visit with us, taking literature and signing up to receive our informative newsletter, the NOEL News. There were also a number of people who didn't stop to visit but gave us a thumbs-up and said they were glad we were there.

Our booth featured two rocking chairs, lots of great information, and literature including a poster with beautiful drawings of the monthly stages of a baby's development in the womb. We gave away hundreds of the matching brochure. We featured two posters: one that highlighted the Episcopal Church's pro-abortion/choice position and another that noted that racism comes in many forms (a very important GC issue). The text explained that since 1973 abortion killed more African Americans than violent crimes, heart disease, AIDS, accidents and cancer combined.

The rocking chairs served as a magnet to those who were weary by the activities and attitudes at GC and we were blessed on many occasions to pray with women and men who needed prayer, including some who sought help for their abortion.

I submitted NOEL's resolution, which NOEL Board Member, the Rev. D. Lorne Coyle officially sponsored (D063), that asked the GC to rescind the Executive Council's decision to join the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). Two similar resolutions were also proposed by the Diocese of San Diego (C047) and the Diocese of Tennessee (C048). Bishop Keith Ackerman of the Diocese of Quincy also sponsored a resolution proposed by NOEL establishing a Policy on Affiliation (B026). It sought to address the problem of how the Episcopal Church decides which organizations it affiliates itself with because currently there is no policy to guide the decision making process.

With cooperation from the Social and Urban Affairs Committee Chair JoAnn Jones, a lay deputy from the Diocese of Pennsylvania, hearings for our resolutions were finally scheduled for 7:30 am on Monday, June 19th.

Fr. Coyle addressed D063 stating that "the Executive Council's decision to renew its affiliation with RCRC was un-necessarily provocative. In a time when the Episcopal Church is divided internally and faces alienation of the global Anglican Communion, the church's support for abortion seems to drive a wedge in those relationships."

Next, John Vanderstar, a lay deputy from the Diocese of Washington, the member of the Executive Council who spearheaded the Church's affiliation with the RCRC, and also a RCRC board member as well as a member of GC's Social and Urban Affairs Committee, spoke in support of RCRC. He stated that the Church and RCRC both support a woman's right to choose abortion and that he had several papers written by clergy and biblical scholars in support of abortion.

It was then my turn to address the committee. I noted that personal agendas should not control the direction of the Episcopal Church and the issue should be put before the entire GC to vote on. I gave three examples of how the RCRC publications make statements that are counter to the Episcopal Church's statements of belief found in the Book of Common Prayer, Lambeth Resolutions, and GC resolutions.

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Kaeton from the Diocese of Newark (also a board member of RCRC and the Social and Urban Affairs Committee) was the next speaker. She referred to a quote by Martin Niemoller, and then said, "while abortion may not be favored by local churches, we are deputized to follow the Holy Spirit, not the wishes of the folks back home."

Sheila, speaking for the first time before a GC legislative committee said "RCRC does not encourage parental involvement in the issue of abortion. They encourage girls to seek truth from within. This is out of alignment with both society and the Episcopal Church as a recent Zogby poll showed that 69% of Americans support parental notification of abortion and Resolution A094 affirms the role of God, parents, and spiritual advisers to guide a woman before considering abortion."

I also addressed B026, stating "establishing policies that have benchmarks and procedures to guide entities has become common management practices for those who seek to be the 'best.' As the Episcopal Church, it should always be our goal to adopt the 'best' management practices that serve all those in the Church. This resolution gives the Church the opportunity to adopt a 'best' practice policy in relation to how we as the 'church' approve affiliation with other organizations." Mr. Vanderstar also addressed B026 and said that the Executive Council discussed the development of a policy with the national Episcopal Church staff, but the staff felt it required too much paper work and therefore didn't recommend or support the proposal

As we walked out of the hearings, I saw two 'friendly' deputies who had sat listening to all the testimony with tears in their eyes, one of them said, "I am in the wrong Church." He couldn't believe what he had witnessed. As we walked backed to the Exhibit Booth, Sheila said it reminded her of our lobbying experience in Washington DC, "they listen but they don't hear you."

On Tuesday, I was advised that both B026 and D063 were sent to the House of Bishops (HoB). Bp. Ackerman, Bp. Mathes and Bp. Packard spoke in support of B026 but when the ballots were counted it lost by 5 votes.

Bp Lipscomb, Bp. Herzog, Bp. Little, Bp. Beckwith, and Bp. Herlong urged the HoB to support D063, and rescind the Church's RCRC membership but a motion to table it was passed and the opportunity for the Church to uphold the sanctity of life died because of the choice made by the majority of bishops. C047 and C048 were both discharged, for procedural reasons.

As I reflect back on our prayer at the beginning of GC, I praise God because He graciously answered it. We spoke boldly and tirelessly to everyone we could about the value of life, the importance of protecting it from fertilization to natural death. We spoke to the youth about abstinence and STD's, we spoke to the elderly about euthanasia.

When we heard about the task force being formed to research the declining population in the Church, we laughed and when we realized that the Episcopal Church chose to uphold the sanctity of abortion, we cried.



Sheila at their Booth explains NOEL Programs to a visitor who is interested in helping women.

## Does Jeremiah Have Anything To Say to our Abortion Culture?

By Ben Sheldon, Former Executive Director

Pro-life people have always found that the Bible has a great deal to say regarding our belief that all life is sacred, including unborn life. Many citations from the Scriptures have filled the pages of pro-life publications and articles. Recently, a study of the ancient prophecy of Jeremiah has brought again to my mind the truth that the shedding of innocent blood is an offense against a holy God and will surely earn his wrathful judgment. In Chapter 19 of Jeremiah, God directed the prophet to take a clay pot and use it as an object lesson to the people of Jerusalem.

With the fragile clay vessel in his hand, Jeremiah solemnly proclaimed the Word of the Lord, reminding them of their sin of shedding innocent blood by "sacrificing their sons in the fire." This was a reference to the Israelites' offering their children in sacrifice to Baal and other Canaanite deities, something that God called the detestable practices of the nations he had driven out of the land. Then Jeremiah smashed the clay pot and warned the Israelites that God would smash them and destroy them because of their sin.

The parallel to our present abortion culture, where unborn children are routinely being sacrificed on the altars of "convenience," fear, prejudice, and selfishness, is painfully clear. The abortion mentality, sadly, is worshipping at the altars of materialism and sexual promiscuity, and it is the innocent blood of unborn babies that is being offered. Will God not wield his rod of punishment and unleash his judgment on our culture, too, as he did on ancient Judah? In His mercy, may he turn us to repentance and contrition for this enormous sin!

## Black Americans for Life: Jackson and Sharpton Do Not Speak For Blacks on Abortion



Day Gardner (standing) with (L to R) Pastor Quentin Poulson, Terri Williams, and Renee Williams

Despite millions of unborn lives hanging in the balance each year as a result of abortion on demand, the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton recently organized a group of black clergy to shift emphasis away from the abortion issue.

"More and more black churches are beginning to support pro-life agendas- not because of a need to fit into a particular party, but rather to draw a line when it comes to life issues," stressed Day Gardner, national director of Black Americans for Life.

"Abortion is the most tragic civil rights violation we face today. You would think that Sharpton and Jackson, as self proclaimed leaders of the civil rights movement all these years, would sound the charge to end abortion," Gardner stated.

Each year, over 35 percent of all abortions in this country are performed on black babies, totaling more than 400,000 deaths and an equal number of women wounded. "We are systematically targeted by the abortion industry as most abortion facilities are deliberately placed in minority neighborhoods," said Gardner.

"Jackson's recent comments are not particularly surprising, given his inconsistency on life issues," stated Gardner. In 1977, Jackson not only wrote an open letter to Congress in support of the pro-life Hyde Amendment, but also published a passionate article in defense of life in the National Right to Life News. "He has since turned his back on supporting the right to life of unborn babies," Gardner continued.

"Jackson and Sharpton once again prove how far out of step they are with the black community they claim to represent," Gardner said. "If they are truly concerned with social justice and civil rights, it is necessary to acknowledge the injustice of the missing fundamental right to life for the unborn."

## 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.

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Church or Group \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Denomination \_\_\_\_\_  
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Mail to: NPRC c/o Development Office,  
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National Pro-Life Religious Council, Inc.  
PO Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306

## Uniting For Life

Summer 2006

### Is Pro-Abortion Charity?

by Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life

**"I'd be happy to contribute to the organization, but I need to make sure that the charity is pro-choice."**

This was a comment I received at my telecommunications workplace after a coworker read a flier that I had posted in the office's pantry. The flier solicited pledges for a local pregnancy center's fundraising "walk-a-thon," which helped raise thousands of dollars that year to help women in crisis pregnancies.

Caught somewhat aback by the question, I began to explain why my coworker should give to the organization even though it was not "pro-choice": I explained how women would be nurtured by caring counselors, how they would be provided with financial and medical support if needed, and how these women would be given a real alternative to having an abortion. But this explanation went nowhere. "No," he said, "I have to make sure it's pro-choice: **I have teenage daughters, you know.**"

You see, somewhere in my coworker's mind there was a fact that he knew to be 100% true - abortion was good for women. And not only that, abortion was liberating for women. Abortion was the ticket to a woman's freedom: you see, my coworker had teenage daughters, and he could not imagine them living in a society where they would not have the unimpeded liberty to dispose of an unwanted child. Such a society might limit the potential of a woman to reach her career goals. After all, my coworker was a strong supporter of women's rights, how could he even think of supporting an organization that might want to convince a woman not to exercise her freedom to abort? No, not him, not my coworker.

However, as we all know, my coworker did not have all the facts. **Abortion is definitely not good for women.** First of all, abortion kills a growing child (not a blob of tissue as my coworker thinks), but a child. Secondly, rather than liberating women, it imprisons them in a web of guilt and sadness. There is something inherently unnatural about abortion, and any post-abortion counselor can see the tell-tale

### National Pro-Life Religious Council Offers New Pro-Life Devotional

A booklet of 30 days worth of Scriptures, meditations and prayers on pro-life themes has been compiled and created by members of the National Pro-Life Religious Council.

To order copies of this devotional, contact:  
National Pro-Life Religious Council, Orders Department  
PO Box 61838 Staten Island, NY 10306  
mail@NPRCouncil.org

**"There are physical, social and psychological consequences of abortion, and these may be worse for teens."** Complications such as perforation, hemorrhaging, infection and even death are involved, as well as higher risks of future infertility, ectopic pregnancy, breast cancer (highest for abortion of 1st pregnancy), drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, suicide and depression.

NRLC Fact Sheet: *Teens & Abortion*, [www.nrlc.org](http://www.nrlc.org)

signs of its devastating emotional effects even years after the abortion has occurred. Thirdly, abortion has many possible physical consequences to include: excessive bleeding, emergency hysterectomies, lifelong infertility, and a greater occurrence of future breast cancer.

But my coworker has never heard any of these negative consequences, because he lives in a world where all the information he receives is pro-abortion. His daily newspaper is pro-abortion, his 7PM news is pro-abortion, the public school that his children attend is pro-abortion, his circle of friends are all pro-abortion, and his church is either pro-abortion or simply ignores the topic. And what's worse, any women or men that he knows who have been negatively touched by abortion are too ashamed to discuss it with him. So my coworker drifts along in ignorance about the true world of abortion, and it is an ignorance, by the way, in which he feels quite comfortable.

That is why I was so excited to read about a study on the causes of premature births recently conducted by the National Academies of Science. Premature births have a much greater likelihood for complications, including neurological disabilities such as cerebral palsy. The study said that **the third most common reason for a premature birth is a previous first trimester abortion.** This study finally backs up with legitimate scientific data what the pro-life community has known for years: abortion is bad for women and their "reproductive health," and not the other way around.

So how can we change the minds of our coworkers to let them know what we pro-lifers have known for thirty years? Well first off all, we need to admit that people like my coworker are in our churches. In fact, I think that many in our churches share most of the opinions of my coworker. So where does that leave us? It means that we have some teaching to do:

1) We need to instruct the faithful about these legitimate medical studies which show the dangers of abortion. They won't read about them in the *Washington Post*, so it is up to us to sound the alarm about the harmful effects abortion has on women. We also need to show them how a child develops in the womb, and how developed a child is during a typical abortion (6-12 weeks). Alexander Tsiaras's book, *From Conception to Birth: A Life Unfolds* is an excellent secular resource in this regard. I never give a pro-life talk without showing the beautiful development pictures in this book. They say that a picture says a thousand words, but it does better than that, it cuts through all the pro-abortion rhetoric as well.

2) We need to instruct our fellow parishioners about God's views on the sanctity of life. One great resource that has come available is the NPRC's new devotional, *30 Days for Life*. This devotional, written by the board members of the NPRC, has some outstanding insights into many familiar pro-life Bible verses. [See ad on left.] My denomination's pro-life chapter has even given the devotional away for free to those churches that desire it.



# Uniting For Life

A Christian Pro-Life Newsletter

Summer 2006

National Pro-Life Religious Council, P.O. Box 61838, Staten Island, NY 10306

website: [www.nprcouncil.org](http://www.nprcouncil.org) e-mail: [mail@nprcouncil.org](mailto: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.

#### Member Organizations

Alpha Omega Life

Black Americans for Life (BAL)

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 Catholic Apostolate for Life

National Clergy Council (NCC)

NOEL for Life

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

Religious Outreach, National Right to Life Committee

Task Force of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)

United Friends for Life (UFL)

## NPRC Workshop Helps Pro-Lifers Encourage Pastors to Preach on Life Issues



L-R: Georgette Forney, NOEL; Rev. Terry Gensamer, CEC; Rev. Kirk Van der Swaagh, CCCC; Dennis DiMauro, LFL; Rev. Cleonard Childress, LEARN

At the NRLC convention (June 22-24 in Nashville, TN), board members of the National Pro-Life Religious Council presented advice culled from years of pro-life experience about how lay persons can encourage their pastors to address the questions surrounding the life issues.

The board members responded to one each of ten questions that pastors are concerned about. It is not possible in this space to adequately report all the great advice that was given, however samples from the first four questions are provided here to whet your appetite. You can order the full text of the discussion in a tape entitled, "We are the Sheep...Where are the Shepherds?" from the National Right to Life Committee, 202-378-8842.

**How do we as Sheep help our Shepherds to be less afraid of addressing the controversial and emotional question of abortion?** **Rev. Ben Sheldon, Presbyterians Pro-Life**, advises speaking gently and courteously of your deep concern for persons who have had abortions. It is



L to R: Fr. Frank Pavone, PFL; Day Gardner, BAL; Rev. John Brown, UFL; Rev. Ben Sheldon, PPL; Vera Faith Lord, Alpha Omega Life

said that every congregation in the United States is likely to have at least one woman who has had an abortion. To one pastor concerned about the emotion and controversy involved, a woman replied, "The gospel is controversial and emotional, but we need to deal with it. Abortion is affecting those who every Sunday sit before the pastor."

**Should pastors fear addressing the abortion question during the 2006 election season out of concern for losing their tax status?** **Fr. Frank Pavone, Priests for Life**, stated emphatically that in the entire history of the United States, no church has ever lost its tax status for preaching on abortion during an election season.

**How do we show pastors that their role goes beyond telling the congregation that abortion is wrong and extends to mobilizing them for action that saves lives?** **Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life**, says give them what they need! Facts about fetal development, history of the Christian church's opposition to abortion from the beginning, an e-mail list of pro-life supporters in his church, an invitation to be spiritual advisor to your pro-life group--these are some of his suggestions. Speak at a meeting of pastors so they can support each other, and also at a meeting of church workers. Pastors need to be supported so they will have the courage to provide leadership on this moral issue.

**What do you say to a pastor who tells you his job is just to preach Christ, not to get involved in the social issues of the day?** **Rev. Kirk van der Swaagh, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference**, explained that the Gospel doesn't take place in a vacuum, disassociated from the rest of life. In Christ, God reconciles all things to Himself: "of Him and through Him and to Him be all things." (Rom. 11) Since God is king of heaven and earth, there are no issues that He is not concerned about and King of. Sin affects everything we do. We have abortion because there is sin. Abortion is a spiritual issue. So is euthanasia.