



Lifewatch

Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality

12/1/09

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identification purposes only.
They do not necessarily suggest
Institutional involvement in the
work of the Taskforce.

Dear Friend of Lifewatch:

Not so many years ago, there were no bishops in The United Methodist Church who dared associate with the cause of protecting unborn children and their mothers.

But as noted in this issue of Lifewatch, next month will bring the third United Methodist bishop to preach at our January 22 service in Simpson Memorial Chapel, Washington, DC.

While we have grown from modest beginnings to cultivate a vibrant witness for life in The UMC, *I'm prayerful, thankful, and circumspect about what lies ahead in 2010.*

I'm prayerful, because our budget continues to depend on a loyal group of about 120 donors giving \$15, \$25, and \$35 dollars a month--or the equivalent in annual gifts. I'm prayerful that you, or you and a friend, or a Sunday School class will find a way to support this ministry for life.

I'm thankful that in spite of difficulties, incremental, but real, progress is being made.

In our nation, the abortion rate continues to drop. (In 2006, there were "only" about 1.2 million abortions.)

* Yes, that is horrible, but the trend over recent years is downward. For example: Planned Parenthood recently ended abortion services in York, PA, and has not replaced its departed abortionist in Erie. And in Bryan Texas, Abby Johnson resigned her Planned Parenthood directorship after watching an abortion ultrasound and regretting that her business was promoting instead of preventing abortions.

In our ministry, there is incremental, but real, outreach:

* We hosted display tables at five Annual Conferences in 2009--one at the Florida Annual Conference, where 2012 General Conference will be held.

* A new testimony flyer for The UMC, "Twice Loved," which deals with adoption and how local UM churches are involved, was developed by Judy Vasbey and Cindy Evans.

In our church, there is incremental and real change:

- * It seems more and more bishops are confidently including abortion among the church's life issues.
- * More church and seminary leaders--who are too numerous to mention--are outspoken about saving the unborn and women from abortion.
- * The Central Conferences, especially our African sisters and brothers, are helping to move The UMC in a pro-life direction.

Yet, I'm circumspect about the challenges ahead:

- * In our nation, RU-486 abortion pill usage is increasing--and "health care reform" may well aid and abet abortion in various forms.
- * In our ministry, financial challenges could limit our Annual Conference outreach, which is already more limited than Cindy and I would like. This in the face of millions spent by groups thwarting unborn life and Christian family formation in the churches.
- * In our church, our agencies are still implementing the dated pro-choice ideology of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, along with exporting "comprehensive" family planning services, which have contributed to sexual and marital free fall in secular Western societies.

In spite of the challenges, I do not believe that God's providence will retreat now.

Yes, difficulties and uncertainties abound. But might not Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Living Bread who came down from heaven, multiply our meager efforts in ways that we can not yet imagine?

This December, we recall another time of uncertainty and difficulty. A prayerful young girl heard the words--"for with God nothing will be impossible"--and replied simply--"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 2, RSV)

Especially this season, please remember Lifewatch in your giving and your prayers. We can do nothing without God's grace and your support.

In Christ,



(The Rev.) Paul T. Stallsworth
Pastor, and President of Lifewatch