

JOHN PAUL II AND PROVIDENCE

Growing up Methodist in western Kansas 40 or 50 years ago, I discovered that most Methodists in the 1950s and 1960s had mixed opinions about the Roman Catholic Church. We were angered by our own conventional wisdom of the time (false though it may have been), that Catholics thought only they would go to heaven. We were a little put off by the heavy, strange ritual of the Catholic mass. We were amused by rumors, true or false we did not know, of Catholic nuns keeping watch over the local theater to see if any of their Catholic-school students attended the Beatles' movie, "A Hard Day's Night." Despite all of that, we were neighbors and friends, and sometimes very good friends, of Roman Catholics. And in our heart of hearts, we knew that there was a seldom admitted kinship between "us" and "them."

Then the late 1960s arrived. The various social movements of the time, it could be said, destabilized The United Methodist Church, and most other churches, in America. During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the American churches became less sure of—even deemphasized or compromised or abandoned—their basic doctrines, moral teachings, and communal practices. For example, it was during these years that official United Methodist teaching on life and abortion first departed from the universal Church's teaching on these matters.

But 1978 brought the papal ministry of John Paul II. The winsome public persona of Pope John Paul II caused many, if not most, United Methodists to become more positive towards Roman Catholicism and Catholics. But more importantly, many of us Methodists became grateful to God for the great gifts that this pope gave to The United Methodist Church—and to world Christianity, as well.

The gifts of Pope John Paul II's ministry have indeed positively influenced The United Methodist Church and other churches. A few of those gifts deserve mention.

John Paul II, philosopher and theologian that he was, asserted the existence of truth. Not a truth. Not his truth. But the truth, which is personified and embodied in Jesus Christ. Throughout his ministry, the pope did not use the truth as a weapon against others. Rather, he served the truth for the good of

others. He did not impose the truth on anybody. Rather, he proposed the truth for everyone.

Furthermore, John Paul II taught the truth of humanity. From "the strange world within the Bible" (Karl Barth), and especially because of Jesus Christ, John Paul II advanced this truth: the person is created by God, for life with God, now and forever. In other words, according to the pope, God creates each and every person on purpose, for purpose.

Taking truth seriously, and taking humanity seriously, John Paul II was unafraid and unembarrassed to take moral truth seriously. Since there is the truth about humanity, it is not surprising that there is moral truth for the good of humanity. Again, for John Paul II, the issue is moral truth. Not moral truths in tension or in conflict. Not moral opinions. But moral truth. He proposed the moral truth, always and everywhere, that innocent human life is not to be abused or taken. By concentrating on truth, the truth about man, and moral truth, John Paul II set the moral-theological standard for the Church catholic—including the United Methodist witness of Lifewatch.

The truth about humanity and morality meant that the pontiff consistently opposed those ideas, institutions, laws, movements, and practices that harmed the person. During his entire adult life, he denounced and resisted Nazism, Communism, capitalism without constraints, hedonism, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, terrorism, and unjust war, because they violated anthropological and moral truth.

The world-wide travels and political engagements of the pope demonstrated his love for all people and his commitment to their well being. That is, his devotion to the truth did not remain academic and speculative; rather, his devotion to truth was given feet and flight during his papal ministry. In John Paul II, people saw—in person, on television screens, in the print media, and on the Web—a servant of the truth acting in love. The pope's talk became his walk.

Because John Paul II lovingly spoke and lived the truth, which the modern and post-modern worlds had tried to batter, United Methodist clergy and laity were given renewed confidence in "the faith which

was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3, RSV).

In a day when more than a few United Methodist leaders were questioning the

centrality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, arguing against the claims of The Apostles’ Creed, promoting abortion rights and sexual libertinism, John Paul II provided consistent witness, sophisticated arguments, instruction on the foundations of Scripture and Tradition, and hope in God for the future.

For these reasons, this United Methodist pastor and the Lifewatch community understand the life and ministry of John Paul II as a gift of providence to The United Methodist Church, to the Church universal, and to the whole world. (PTS) ♥

A version of this article first appeared in The (Raleigh, NC) News & Observer (April 8, 2005) and then in the United Methodist Reporter (April 15, 2005).

GUEST COLUMN: FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Psalms 139:13-18

Question: What does it mean to be made “fearfully?”

Certain crafts take a lot of time, patience, and skill. Take weaving as one example. Weaving is not a hobby that can be acquired in one afternoon. Approaching the task with a certain degree of reverence, those who excel at it take pride and care in their work. The same is true of the potter. The novice cannot turn a lump of clay into a vessel of beauty. The experienced potter treats mud with respect, not because of what it is but because of what it can become in a competent potter’s hands.

Verses 13-18, from Psalm 139, evoke a similar image of God, the expert Weaver who creates human beings “fearfully” and “wonderfully.” “For it was you who formed my inward parts...knit me together... your eyes beheld my unformed substance” (vv. 13, 16, NRSV, here and following). What does it mean to be made fearfully? The word fearfully, from the Hebrew root (*yare*), can mean fear of imminent danger, but it also can mean reverence, awe, and respect. When God creates a human being, it is not an afterthought or diversion from divine boredom. God takes great care in the fashioning, shaping, and forming of every human life.

If there is anything to be afraid of regarding the “fearfully created” human being, it is treating such life with less respect and awe than the Creator. The psalmist in this text is not distracted by modern arguments about where and when human life begins.

“Perhaps we get so used to birth and childbearing that we forget to marvel at the mystery...”

Such physiological and medical hair splitting has no place in the poet’s understanding. The sum total of egg, sperm, and subsequent embryo do not equal the theological

insight that God is busy weaving and fashioning a masterpiece even while life grows within the womb (v. 13). Perhaps we get so used to birth and childbearing that we forget to marvel at the mystery and majesty it contains.

God’s handiwork is not confined to the womb, but is continued throughout one’s life. All of our days are formed and fashioned with the same care, respect, and reverence. Such knowledge, such care, such intricate detail is more than the human mind can fathom: “[H]ow weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!” (v. 17) Verse 17 compares God’s thoughts with sand, and the analogy may prove illustrative in more ways than one. On the one hand, counting grains of sand proves to be as impossible a task as comprehending the limitless thoughts and knowledge of God. On the other hand, backing up and appreciating the beauty of a beach created by such sand can be an act of praise and reverent awe. Perhaps we should approach human life in the same manner, not by dissecting each of its parts, but by reverencing each life that has been fearfully and wonderfully made. ♥

—Rev. G. Kevin Baker is the pastor of Reconciliation United Methodist Church/P.O. Box 52326/Durham, NC 27717-2326/kevin@rumcdurham.org. Rev. Baker writes some of the most Biblically solid devotional literature around The United Methodist Church these days.

WHAT MOTIVATES LIFEWATCH?

Why does Lifewatch exist? Why does Lifewatch do what we do? Why does Lifewatch witness within The United Methodist Church today?

A few critics might contend that Lifewatch is nothing but a small band of United Methodist malcontents who cannot get along with the larger church and who enjoy stirring up a little trouble within the denomination. A few others might claim that Lifewatch is a group of Republicans who are dedicated to pushing United Methodism in a more Republican direction. To be sure, Lifewatch probably does attract a few malcontents and people primarily interested in partisan politics.

However, most basically, Lifewatch is theologically motivated in three ways.

First, Lifewatch is motivated by the desire to serve the faith of the Church catholic. We believe that the Church has been gathered, and given a definable faith, by God, so that the Church might witness to the world. The universal Church’s faith contains both

doctrine and morals. An essential part of the faith of the Church, we believe, is the recognition and protection of the God-given dignity of each and every human being. According to the Church's moral teaching that has endured through the ages, unborn children, their mothers, the severely disabled, the ill, and the dying are all people with human dignity from God. Lifewatch strives to remind United Methodists of the basic human dignity of "the least of these" (Matthew 25), whose dignity is most easily forgotten or disregarded, and trampled upon.

Second, Lifewatch is motivated by the desire to encourage obedience to the baptismal covenant of the Church. Most particularly, we encourage United Methodists to "accept the freedom and power God gives [us] to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves." ("The Baptismal Covenant I," The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 34) Since abortion involves the taking of innocent lives (that is, the lives of unborn children) and the wounding of others (that is, the lives of their mothers), and since there are over one million abortions in American society each year, United Methodists and our church should be "accept[ing] the freedom and power God gives [us] to resist [this] evil, injustice, and oppression..." Lifewatch's witness attempts to advance both protection of unborn children and their mothers, and resistance to abortion and the human wreckage it leaves behind.

Third, Lifewatch is motivated by the desire to "be loyal to The United Methodist Church, and do all in [our] power to strengthen its ministries." ("The Baptismal Covenant I," The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 38) We strive to increase genuine loyalty, among all United Methodists, laity and clergy, to The United Methodist Church. Loyalty to the church is not, and never has been, blind loyalty to the church as it is. Authentic loyalty to The United Methodist Church demands that the truth be spoken and written about life and abortion, that love and respect be displayed toward all in the church, and that moral falsehoods and blind spots in the church be identified and corrected. Authentic loyalty to The United Methodist Church involves truth and love at all times, and disagreement and discipline at some times.

Service of the Church's faith. Obedience to the Church's baptismal covenant, which requires resistance to "evil, injustice, and oppression." And loyalty to The United Methodist Church. These are the ideals that motivate Lifewatch. Not malcontentedness. Not the lust to win arguments. Not partisan politics.

Is Lifewatch's work and witness perfect or perfectly faithful? Hardly. We stumble. We fall short. And in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Know that we are deeply grateful for your participation in our ministry. Most of all, we thank God for your faithful witness, and works of mercy, for the Gospel of Life. (PTS) ♥

TERRI SCHIAVO AND REDEMPTION

Terri Schiavo was one of us and one with us. She was not only a member of the human community, but also a woman baptized into Jesus Christ and His Church. Her baptism was renewed as the drops of Communion wine touched her tongue for the last time. For the Lifewatch community and millions of others, these truths made her long, slow, painful death by starvation and dehydration horribly difficult to follow in the news media.

During the Easter weeks of celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we were profoundly reminded that suffering and death can be powerfully redemptive. After enduring suffering and death, Terri Schiavo is now redeemed. Because of God's grace established through the death and resurrection of our Lord, Terri Schiavo's soul has joined the Communion of the Saints, and her body awaits the general resurrection of the dead when the Kingdom will come in fullness and glory. Terri Schiavo's suffering and death have been redeemed, and are also being redeemed, through the intense moral debate, in American public life, that they inspired. This debate about end-of-life issues is, to be sure, simply the abortion debate in another key.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the Church, in the United States and beyond, to propose her time-tested wisdom about life, at the end of life, in the public arena. The Church's wisdom can be briefly stated in this way. When confronted with a severely, disabled person like Terri Schiavo, this simple moral rule applies: "Always to care, never to kill" (The Ramsey Colloquium). That is, the disabled person requires care; she does not deserve to be made to die. At the same time, the Church teaches that it is morally allowable to let a dying person die, without burdening that person with extraordinary medical treatment that would only prolong the dying process. Food and water, even through a simple feeding tube, are naturally required—except when they actually sicken or otherwise harm the dying person. This wisdom from the Church can help American society to move towards becoming a "culture of life," to use the phrase that John Paul II coined and that President George W. Bush employs.

NPRC ENTERS THE PUBLIC DEBATE

On March 23, the National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC), to which Lifewatch belongs, distributed a press release. It was drafted by Lifewatch's editor and edited by Rev. Kirk vander Swaagh, a New York City pastor. Relying on the Church's wisdom outlined above and entitled "Ecumenical Group: Care for Terri Schiavo, Do Not Kill Her," NPRC's press release read in full: "The case of Terri Schiavo is complex. First, there is the medical dimension that is filled with technical vocabulary. Then there is the legal dimension and its

uncommon procedures. The political dimension involves each claim being quickly met with a counterclaim. With political arguments added to the conflicted medical and ever-shifting legal challenges of the case, it is no wonder that complexity seems to be winning the day.

“Responding to the complex case of Terri Schiavo, the Great Tradition of the Church universal offers this simple truth: Terri Schiavo, the person, deserves care, not killing. The authoritative traditions of Evangelical and Oldline Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism declare in one strong voice that each person is created in the image of God and is invested with human dignity. This God-given human dignity is not erased by debilitating disabilities or enhanced by admirable abilities. This God-given dignity remains constant, despite the condition and the circumstance of the person. This God-given dignity demands the recognition and protection of the state.

“To be sure, Terri Schiavo is a severely brain-damaged person. But her disability did not put her in a dying condition. Nor did her disability make her a ‘vegetable.’ Nor did her disability make her an animal. Rather, Terri Schiavo, disabled as she is, is a person with human dignity. As such, she is deserving of loving care, which includes food and fluid.

“While medical nuances, legalities, and politics can create a fog of complexity, the public vocation of the Church universal, on this Wednesday of Holy Week 2005, is to call judges, lawyers, politicians, and citizens to act in the simple truth: recognize and protect the human dignity, indeed the human life, of Terri Schiavo. Care for Terri Schiavo. Do not kill her.

“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 fosters ministry to those vulnerable to the violence of abortion or euthanasia. NPRC is composed of Alpha Omega Life (an Orthodox group), Black Americans for Life, Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church, LEARN, Lutherans for Life, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life, National Clergy Council, NOEL (an Anglican-Episcopalian group), Presbyterians Pro-Life, Priests for Life, Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, and United Friends for Life.”

UNITED METHODIST TEACHING

The United Methodist Church’s official moral teaching is compellingly supportive of the NPRC press release. The following three quotations are taken from helpful longer statements located in the

PLEASE JOIN US ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH IN PRAYING AND FASTING FOR LIFEWATCH’S CONTINUING MINISTRY.

2004 Book of Discipline’s “Social Principles” and in the 2004 Book of Resolutions.

(1) “The Church opposes assisted suicide and euthanasia.” (“Suicide,” 161N, Discipline, p.104) This Social Principle indicates that United Methodism officially stands against the euthanizing, the “mercy killing,” of Terri Schiavo.

(2) “We recognize and affirm the full humanity and personhood of all individuals with mental, physical, developmental, neurological, and psychological conditions or disabilities as full members of the family of God. We also affirm their rightful place in both the [C]hurch and society... We call on the Church and society to protect the civil rights of persons with all types and kinds of disabilities.” (“Rights of Persons with Disabilities,” 162G, Discipline, p. 107) This Social Principle declares that the brain-damaged condition of Terri Schiavo should have deprived her neither of “full humanity and personhood” nor “civil rights.”

(3) “Historically, the Christian tradition has drawn a distinction between the cessation of treatment and the use of active measures by the patient or caregiver which aim to bring about death. If death is deliberately sought as the means to relieve suffering, that must be understood as direct and intentional taking of life, whether as suicide or homicide. This United Methodist tradition opposes the taking of life as an offense against God’s sole dominion over life, and an abandonment of hope and humility before God...” (“Faithful Care for Persons Suffering and Dying,” 115, Resolutions, pp. 323-324) This Resolution is consistent with the Church’s moral wisdom—“Always to care, never to kill,” and allowing the dying to die.

Particularly after the suffering and death of Terri Schiavo, United Methodists have an important role to play in the current public debate on end-of-life issues. This debate, like so many others in American public life, has two sides. One side is tempted to assume and/or to claim that life and the quantity of life are ultimate goods; if biological life itself is considered the greatest good in this world, then life has become an idol. The other side is tempted to assume and/or to claim that “the good life” and the quality of life are the ultimate goods; if the goodness of life becomes the greatest good in this world, then the quality of life has become an idol. Resisting both of these idols that tempt, the Church discerns in each and every human being God-given dignity. Furthermore, the Church knows every person’s life is a gift from God. Therefore, the Church advances this moral principle: “Always to care, never to kill,” even while acknowledging that the dying should be allowed to die, even as they are loved by the living.

United Methodists should clarify this classical Christian teaching in our congregations. The next step is to go public with the same teaching. Faithfully

addressing and practicing these matters in the churches and in the larger society, you will be demonstrating the redemptive character of Terri Schiavo's suffering and death. (PTS) ♥

“The next step is to go public ...”

Methodist Women members came from all over the country. Once there, they sought us out so we could march together.

They had deep-rooted

concerns that cover a broad range of reasons and experiences. To deny these reasons and stories denies their humanity, life experiences, and own relationship with Christ.

Mr. Stallworth cited the Women's Division of the denomination as an organization his church protests because of their stances on women's and children's issues and as the reason that his church evaluated their apportionments.

First, the Women's Division does not receive funding from apportionments. All funding comes from the gifts of United Methodist Women for work and mission with women and children. Women's health—in all its dimensions—is part of this mission. For United Methodist Women, women's health includes advocacy, teen pregnancy prevention programs, adoption services, family counseling, youth centers, shelters for families suffering from domestic violence, child-care centers and more.

While Mr. Stallworth may choose to call the March for Women's Lives an “abortion march,” the event was about choice, justice, access, health, abortion, global issues and family planning.

We are keenly aware of our General Conference mandates as found in The United Methodist Book of Resolutions and Book of Discipline. The Book of Resolutions mandates the Women's Division to expand its health and wholeness public policy advocacy to include this critical issue of reproductive and end-of-life health care. The Discipline is also clear on our stance around women's health.

My hope is that the denomination's members will read the entirety of the Discipline's text about abortion. Too often this is pulled out of context: “Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. In continuity with past Christian teachings [sic] we recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures.”

We marched for safe options, for access to contraception, for affordable health care for women throughout their lives, especially during the reproductive years, for effective and comprehensive sexuality education for our children.

In the meantime, we know that women and children are suffering in our own cities, in Iraq, in Israel and Palestine, and in countless situations and

THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

The December 2004 issue of Lifewatch carries “A Letter to a Bishop.” This letter describes how St. Peter's United Methodist Church of Morehead City, NC decided to pay in full its 2005 apportionments, while protesting in public some abortion-related activities of the general church. As the letter indicates, the congregation's payment in full and protest in public are based upon the baptismal covenant of the Church catholic and the Discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Several weeks after the letter to a bishop appeared in Lifewatch, the United Methodist Reporter (02/18/05) published “Why We Will Pay Our Apportionments,” which gives an account of the story behind the letter mentioned above. The letters to the Reporter below—by Genie Bank and Donna L. Burkhart—are responses to the Reporter's article on apportionments. The response of the Lifewatch editor, in italics, follows the letters from Ms. Bank and Ms. Burkhart.

St. Peter's United Methodist Church and Lifewatch contend that, by co-sponsoring and participating in this march, the Women's Division and the General Board of Church and Society placed their seals of approval on a pro-abortion, political event that, officially and in principle, The United Methodist Church at least questions and perhaps opposes. (By the way, this claim is not based on emotion, opinion, or wishful thinking. It is based on evidence.) Therefore, abiding by the baptismal covenant and submitting to the Discipline, St. Peter's Church, Lifewatch, and I will continue to protest the involvement of the Women's Division and the General Board of Church and Society in the March for Women's Lives. (PTS)

READER: MARCH WAS ABOUT RIGHTS

After reading the Rev. Paul T. Stallworth's article (see Reporter, 02/18/05), I affirm his congregation's struggle with the baptismal covenant, apportionments and what it means to be part of the connectional system.

I was at the March for Women's Lives, alluded to in Mr. Stallworth's article, along with hundreds of thousands of other women, of all ages, races, cultures and faiths, concerned about women's health. United

countries around the world. We pray that those who disagree with us on one issue will join us on the others as we work for a peaceful world for women and children and as we try to live out Jesus Christ's ministries to the "least of these."

Genie Bank

Lexington, MI

([United Methodist Reporter](#), 03/18/05)

I HAVE TO WONDER

From reading the article by the Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth (see [Reporter Interactive](#) archives, Feb. 16), I have to wonder if he was at the March for Women's Lives and if he has a different version of the [Book of Discipline](#).

I was at the March for Women's Lives on April 25, 2004. I traveled to Washington to protest the proposed restrictions on women's rights. It was a march for women's rights—all the rights that it has taken over a century to achieve. United Methodist Women have been in the forefront of advocating for these rights. A century ago, women were chattel—property with no rights as individual people. This was not a pro-abortion rally as Mr. Stallsworth would like readers to believe.

I don't believe that any woman or man who attended the march was favoring abortion as an easy solution to pregnancy (whatever the situation). There were young people to very elderly people, men and women, and all religious denominations in attendance. All the speeches were about protecting women's rights.

I have had people ask me why I attended the march. My reply is that I believe in the protection of women's rights. I am pro-choice, not pro-abortion. I never had to face the difficult decision of whether to terminate a pregnancy, but I do not want the choice for another woman taken away. Until you walk in another person's shoes, you cannot make the decision for them. Do we want to return to the time of the back alley abortionists and all the difficulties and deaths that resulted?

I am proud to call myself a United Methodist Woman who has served her local unit in a variety of offices including president, who was a district president among other offices, who was on the Conference level as Mission Coordinator for Social Action and now Vice-President. I would not have attended the march if I didn't believe strongly in women's rights.

Donna L. Burkhart

Erie, Pennsylvania

([United Methodist Reporter](#), 04/01/05)

SOURCES BACK CLAIM

Along with the Administrative Council of St. Peter's United Methodist Church (Morehead City, NC) and many others, I am deeply grateful for the

willingness of Genie Bank [and Donna L. Burkhart] to offer reasons for the Women's Division's co-sponsorship of, and for United Methodist Women members' participation in, the 2004 March for Women's Lives (see [Reporter Interactive](#) archives, March 16).

It is certainly true that The United Methodist Church, the Women's Division and United Methodist Women advance many ideas, principles, policies, programs, and ministries that are beneficial to women and children. According to a few, the March for Women's Lives was indeed supposed to address a wide variety of women's issues.

However, the actual March for Women's Lives was first and last dedicated to promoting abortion for any reason (or no reason) and abortion rights without compromise. The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice made this clear on its Web site. The [Washington Post's](#) April 26, 2004 report on the march said the same. Writer Sarah Blustain noted the same on the [American Prospect](#) (www.prospect.org, Dec. 6, 2004). And on the day of the march, April 25, 2004, I saw and heard with my own eyes and ears the pro-abortion, political activism of the march (see [Lifewatch](#), June 2004).

The pro-abortion agenda of the March for Women's Lives went far beyond, and therefore contradicted, The United Methodist Church's official, basic teaching on abortion ([The Book of Discipline](#), Paragraph 161J). The march wholeheartedly supported abortion and abortion rights without qualification, while United Methodism officially favors choice under certain circumstances.

Yes, Ms. Bank and I are in disagreement about only one issue among many, but that one issue is highly significant. It involves the destruction of "the sanctity of unborn human life" and the undermining of "the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother" ([Discipline](#)) in over a million lives each year in the United States.

Our protest is placed before the entire denomination in the hope that many throughout the church will do what they can to make sure this will not happen again.

Paul T. Stallsworth

Morehead City, North Carolina

([United Methodist Reporter](#), 04/01/05) ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

● Remember your contributions to Lifewatch, be they small or large, are crucially important to our witness, and to the advancement of our witness, to the Gospel of Life within The United Methodist Church. And please do not be shy about suggesting, to your church's pastor and/or lay leadership, that your congregation support the witness of Lifewatch through your missions budget or through a special offering. Your gifts to Lifewatch are always received with gratitude to God for your faithfulness.

● When copies of Lifewatch are returned to the Lifewatch office because they are “undeliverable” for any reason, their addresses on the mailing list will be updated. Later, copies of the next regular issue will be mailed to the new addresses. If readers want the missed issues, please contact Mrs. Cindy Evans (1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043/ (573)-896-2582/Lifewatch@mchsi.com), and she will mail them out as requested.

● There has been more than a little interest in, and response to, Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker’s sermon, “Do No Harm!,” which was preached at the 2005 Lifewatch Service of Worship in Washington, DC. (The sermon is published, in full, in the March 2005 issue of Lifewatch.) Bp. Whitaker continues to make engaging, powerful comments on abortion and his episcopal ministry. Take, for example, these paragraphs from a January 31, 2005 letter to your editor: “I believe the ambiguity in [The United Methodist] Church’s position [on abortion] is the result[,] in part[,] of the legacy of Christendom in America. We have been conditioned to ask, ‘How can we be Christians and Americans?’ Hence we try to fit into the culture and political life of America while still wanting to be disciples of Jesus Christ. I think the question really is, ‘How can we be Christians in America?’ This question clarifies where our primary loyalty lies, and it is [with] Christ. Then we are able to understand more clearly when to fit in[,] and when to stand apart from[,] the established norms of culture and political life. I think we have to stand apart from the status quo regarding abortion[,] since it rests upon an understanding of human nature

that is different from that of the ecumenical [C]hurch.

“I am aware of my mortality and the relative brevity of my ministry. I cannot go to my grave without at least speaking a word of protest against the killing of human beings by abortion and against the arrangement between mainline Protestants and the culture in which the churches are co-opted in an agenda contrary to the witness of the ecumenical [C]hurch.”

In addition, we are very pleased to announce that Bp. Whitaker has agreed to become a member of Lifewatch’s Advisory Board. Once again, our heartfelt thanks to the good bishop!

● Lifewatch is also delighted to announce that Bishop William H. Willimon, of the Birmingham Area of The United Methodist Church, has joined our Advisory Board. It is no secret that Bp. Willimon is one of the great theologians, writers, preachers, and teachers in United Methodism today. As we welcome Bp. Willimon aboard, we give thanks to God!

● Every once in a while, it is good to be reminded of history’s facts and embarrassments. Consider this from the time of the American Civil War. When Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens made his famous “cornerstone speech,” he admitted slavery’s central role in the Civil War. Soon after the formation of the Confederacy, Vice President Stephens claimed: “[The Confederate constitution] has put to rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution—African slavery as it exists amongst us—the proper status of the Negro in our form of civilization. This was the

BOOK ORDER FORM: ① THE RIGHT CHOICE: Pro-Life Sermons; ② THE CHURCH AND ABORTION: In Search of New Ground for Response; ③ THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT ABORTION; ④ HOLY ABORTION? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; and ⑤ THE JERICHO PLAN: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing.

I wish to order: ___ copies of The Right Choice (\$12.00/copy); ___ copies of The Church and Abortion (\$5.00/copy); ___ copies of Thinking Theologically about Abortion (\$7.00/copy); ___ copies of Holy Abortion? (\$8.00/copy); and ___ copies of The Jericho Plan (\$8.00/copy). These prices include shipping/handling.

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Lifewatch is published by the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.



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- **UMW members on March for Women's Lives**
- **Bishop Whitaker and Bishop Willimon join Lifewatch board**

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immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution.” Furthermore, he said that “[o]ur government is founded...upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition.” (USA Today, February 15, 2005, p. 11A)

In the eighteenth century, our country and our church had an extended argument, which became a war, over the meaning of freedom and the humanity of the African American. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, our country and our church are having an extended argument, which involves countless political clashes, over the meaning of freedom and the humanity of the unborn child and the severely disabled.

From this brief history lesson, we would be wise to be reminded that false and destructive ideas can arise in history. However, in time, such ideas can be corrected and justice sought anew. Thanks to the mysterious, yet persistent, providence of God.

- When reviewing articles on the Planned Parenthood Web site, we ran across this notice: “The Reverend Dr. Ignacio Castuera is the first National Chaplain for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and currently also serves at St. John’s United Methodist Church in the Watts area of Los Angeles...” (www.plannedparenthood.com, 04/15/05) Do you have any confusion about what Planned Parenthood Federation of America does? Its “facilities now take the lives of nearly a quarter of a million babies each year. The nation’s largest abortion chain now accounts for nearly one out of every five abortions performed in the U.S. each year.” (National Right to Life News, February 2005, p. 9) As long as The United Methodist Church maintains ambiguous teaching on abortion, we will permit our clergy to be chaplains for the abortion industry, chaplains for the culture of death.

- One of these days a United States Supreme Court justice will retire. When that happens, the mother of all

American political debates will commence. In preparation for that eventuality, Cardinal William H. Keeler, the Chairman of the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops’ Committee for Pro-Life Activities, wrote a January 6, 2005 letter to all U.S. Senators. What follows is a part of Cardinal Keeler’s letter: “We are troubled by reports that national abortion advocacy groups, and even some U.S. Senators, view nominees who oppose the purposeful taking of innocent human life as somehow unfit for judicial office in the United States. It is further reported that attempts would be made to deny them a vote on confirmation by the full Senate.

“Insisting that judicial nominees support abortion throughout pregnancy is wrong. By any measure, support for the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade decision is an impoverished standard for assessing judicial ability. For over three decades, Roe has sparked more informed criticism and public resistance than any other court decision of the late 20th century. Even legal scholars who support abortion have criticized Roe for not being grounded in the U.S. Constitution. Further, in 2000, the Supreme Court relied on Roe to rule that the gruesome and inhumane practice of partial-birth abortion must be constitutionally protected.

“When considering nominees, the Senate should not allow itself to be held captive to such an unfair and unreasonable standard.” (Life Insight, February/March 2005, p. 3) ♥

Our Mission:

Out of obedience to Jesus Christ, the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS) “will work to create in church and society esteem for human life at its most vulnerable, specifically for the unborn child and for the woman who contemplates abortion.” Therefore, TUMAS’s first goal is “to win the hearts and minds of United Methodists, to engage in abortion-prevention through theological, pastoral, and social emphases that support human life.”