

Lifewatch

06/01/08
For United Methodists

BENEDICT'S CHALLENGE

Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States from April 15 until April 20. The theme of his visit was "Christ Our Hope." (It is interesting to compare this papal theme to the 2008 General Conference theme, "A Future with Hope.") During his time in the United States, Benedict proclaimed and taught the Gospel of Life in many places, to many audiences, and in many ways. But always his presentations were persuasive, profound, and winsome.

Below are several of Benedict's most notable statements that should remind all Christians—including United Methodists and the Lifewatch community—of the challenge of serving the Gospel of Life today. (Warning! To attain the highest degree of understanding, the reader may want to attempt multiple readings and keep a dictionary close at hand.)--PTS

WHITE HOUSE/Welcoming Ceremony/Washington, DC/April 16, 2008:

"As the nation faces increasingly complex political and ethical issues of our time, I'm confident that the American people will find in their religious beliefs a precious source of insight and an inspiration to pursue reasoned, responsible, and respectful dialogue in the effort to build a more human and free society. Freedom is not only a gift but also a summons to personal responsibility. Americans know this from experience. Almost every town in this country has its monuments honoring those who sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom, both at home and abroad. The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good, and a sense of responsibility for the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate. In a word, freedom is ever new. It is a challenge held out to each generation, and it must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Few have understood this as clearly as the late Pope John Paul II. In reflecting on the spiritual victory of freedom over totalitarianism in his native Poland and in Eastern Europe, he reminded us that history shows time and again, I quote, 'that in a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation, and a democracy without values can lose its very soul.'"

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA/Catholic Educators of the United States/ Washington, DC/April 17, 2008:

"The Church's mission, in fact, involves her in humanity's struggle to arrive at truth. In articulating revealed truth, she serves all members of society by purifying reason, ensuring that it remains open to the consideration of ultimate truths. Drawing upon divine wisdom, she sheds light on the foundation of human morality and ethics, and reminds all groups in society that it is not praxis that creates truth but truth that should serve as the basis of praxis. Far from undermining the tolerance of legitimate diversity, such a contribution illuminates the very truth which makes consensus attainable, and helps to keep public debate rational, honest, and accountable. Similarly the Church never tires of upholding the essential moral categories of right and wrong, without which hope could only wither, giving way to cold pragmatic calculations of utility which render the person little more than a pawn on some ideological chess board...

"Truth means more than knowledge: knowing the truth leads us to discover the good. Truth speaks to the individual in his or her entirety, inviting us to respond with our whole being. This optimistic vision is found in our Christian faith because such faith has been granted the vision of the Logos, God's creative Reason, which in the Incarnation, is revealed as Goodness itself. Far from being just a communication of factual data—'informative'—the loving truth of the Gospel is creative and life-changing—'performative.'"

UNITED NATIONS/General Assembly/New York, NY/April 18, 2008:

"Human rights are increasingly being presented as the common language and the ethical substratum of international relations. At the same time, the universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of human rights all serve as guarantees safeguarding human dignity. It is evident, though, that the rights recognized and expounded in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] apply to everyone by virtue of the common origin of the person, who remains the high-point of God's creative design for the world and for history. They are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts and present in different

cultures and civilizations. Removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception..."

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH/Representatives of Other Christian Communities/New York, NY/April 18, 2008:

"Too often those who are not Christians, as they observe the splintering of Christian communities, are understandably confused about the Gospel message itself. Fundamental Christian beliefs and practices are sometimes changed within communities by so-called 'prophetic actions' that are based on a hermeneutic not always consonant with the datum of Scripture and Tradition. Communities consequently give up the attempt to act as a unified body, choosing instead to function according to the idea of 'local options.' Somewhere in this process the need for...communion with the Church in every age...is lost, just at the time when the world is losing its bearings and needs a persuasive common witness to the saving power of the Gospel..."

"My dear friends, the power of the kerygma has lost none of its internal dynamism. Yet we must ask ourselves whether its full force has not been attenuated by a relativistic approach to Christian doctrine similar to that found in secular ideologies, which, in alleging that science alone is 'objective,' relegate religion entirely to the subjective sphere of individual feeling. Scientific discoveries, and their application through human ingenuity, undoubtedly offer new possibilities for the betterment of humankind. This does not mean, however, that the 'knowable' is limited to the empirically verifiable, nor religion restricted to the shifting realm of 'personal experience.'

"For Christians to accept this faulty line of reasoning would lead to the notion that there is little need to emphasize objective truth in the presentation of the Christian faith, for one need but follow his or her own conscience and choose a community that best suits his or her individual tastes. The result is seen in the continual proliferation of communities which often eschew institutional structures and minimize the importance of doctrinal content for Christian living.

"Even within the ecumenical movement, Christians may be reluctant to assert the role of doctrine for fear that it would only exacerbate rather than heal the wounds of division. Yet a clear, convincing testimony to the salvation wrought for us in Christ Jesus has to be based upon the notion of normative apostolic teaching: a teaching which indeed underlies the inspired word of God and sustains the sacramental life of Christians today.

"Only by 'holding fast' to sound teaching will we be able to respond to the challenges that confront us in an evolving world. Only in this way will we give unambiguous testimony to the truth of the Gospel and its moral teaching. This is the message which the world is waiting to hear from us. Like the early Christians, we have a responsibility to give transparent witness to the

'reasons for our hope,' so that the eyes of all men and women of goodwill may be opened to see that God has shown us His face and granted us access to His divine life through Jesus Christ. He alone is our hope! God has revealed his love for all peoples through the mystery of His Son's passion and death, and has called us to proclaim that He is indeed risen, has taken His place at the right hand of the Father, and 'will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.' (Nicene Creed)"

ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY/Seminarians and Youth/Dunwoodie, NY/April 19, 2008:

"Have you noticed how often the call for freedom is made without ever referring to the truth of the human person? Some today argue that respect for freedom of the individual makes it wrong to seek truth, including the truth about what is good. In some circles to speak of truth is seen as controversial or divisive, and consequently best kept in the private sphere. And in truth's place—or better said, its absence—an idea has spread which, in giving value to everything indiscriminately, claims to assure freedom and to liberate conscience. This we call relativism. But what purpose has a 'freedom' which, in disregarding truth, pursues what is false or wrong? How many young people have been offered a hand which in the name of freedom or experience has led them to addiction, to moral or intellectual confusion, to hurt, to a loss of self-respect, even to despair and so tragically and sadly to the taking of their own life? Dear friends, truth is not an imposition. Nor is it simply a set of rules. It is a discovery of the One who never fails us; the One whom we can always trust. In seeking truth, we come to live by belief because ultimately truth is a person: Jesus Christ. That is why authentic freedom is not an opting out. It is an opting in; nothing less than letting go of self and allowing oneself to be drawn into Christ's very being for others."

YANKEE STADIUM/Mass for Easter V/Bronx, NY/April 20, 2008:

"My dear young friends, like the seven men, 'filled with the Spirit and wisdom' whom the Apostles charged with care for the young Church, may you step forward and take up the responsibility which your faith in Christ sets before you! May you find the courage to proclaim Christ, 'the same yesterday and today and for ever' and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in Him. These are the truths that set us free! They are the truths which alone can guarantee respect for the inalienable dignity and rights of each man, woman, and child in our world—including the most defenseless of all human beings, the unborn child in the mother's womb. In a world where, as Pope John Paul II, speaking in this very place, reminded us, Lazarus continues to stand at our door, let your faith and love bear rich fruit in outreach to the poor, the needy, and those without a voice..." ♥

NOTES ON GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008

General Conference 2008—April 23 until May 2 in Fort Worth, TX—has come and gone. Due to publishing deadlines, only a brief review of matters of relevant to Lifewatch will be covered. More coverage of, and commentary on, the 2008 General Conference will be carried in forthcoming issues of this newsletter. For now, we will comment on the grandson, the Council of Bishops, and three significant legislative actions.

THE GRANDSON

On Sunday, April 27, during a long dinner break of the conference, this fatigued pastor was blessed with a visit from family members. The Stallsworth's of Abilene, TX—Ryan, our eldest son who is a captain in the US Air Force, Brandie, his bright and lovely wife, and Jonas, their infant son—and Mark Lemke, a brother-in-law from Fort Worth, met this pastor for an enjoyable dinner together. As might be imagined, little Jonas stole the show. Cute, expressive, and active beyond words, he kept all of us entertained throughout the evening. (Here full disclosure is mandated: Jonas is our first grandchild. So, during the evening visit, this grandfather was especially taken by the little one.)

Jonas is a miracle baby. Early in utero, a dangerous cyst was discovered in one of his lungs; it was putting extreme pressure on his heart. The majority medical opinion was to end the pregnancy. However, one of the doctors on hand advised the parents to strive to give their baby a chance; so they decided to employ every measure, including surgery to drain the cyst, to keep the little one alive. Soon after his birth at 30 weeks, Jonas was in an operating room for surgery and then placed under intensive care at Baylor Medical Center NICU. After three months, he was sent home and continued receiving extra oxygen. Five months later the oxygen line became unnecessary. Since then, Jonas has been growing bigger, stronger, and louder.

Jonas Paul Stallsworth is alive and well because of the grace of God. All along the way, God's grace, working through Christ's Church, informed and formed his parents, doctors, and nurses to respect the God-given dignity of Jonas' life. This is the Gospel of Life at work. This is also Lifewatch—that is, the watching of a life—at work.

Thanks be to God!

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

General Conference 2008 was quite a production. Many of the Services of Worship were grandly attractive and symbolically rich. Much of the music was beautiful, engaging, and inspiring. Some of the preaching was thoughtful and powerful. And there was a lot of earnest talk about, and demonstration of, "holy conferencing." But underneath all of the gifts that pleased the senses and the emotions, there seemed to be a certain uneasiness. That uneasiness was provoked, most probably, by uncertainty about how the

conference would respond to the challenge to change The United Methodist Church's doctrine and discipline on homosexual behavior.

The Council of Bishops was seated, in front of the conference delegates, on the stage of the arena. Evidently, months ago the Council had decided to consider the matter of homosexuality a "non-essential issue." In other words, the Council thought it prudent to move all concerns related to homosexual conduct down on their list of General Conference priorities. Instead of spending so much time discussing homosexuality, the bishops wanted the conference to concern itself with four significant, unifying goals: developing and strengthening leaders, establishing new congregations and renewing existing congregations, partnering with the poor, and implementing a global health initiative.

Contrary to the sincerest wishes of the Council of Bishops, homosexuality was not a "non-essential issue" at this General Conference. It was an essential issue. Advocacy to change the church's doctrine and discipline on homosexuality was all over the place during the conference. Demonstrations near the entrance of, and inside, the convention center. Continual literature distributions. Message-promoting stoles and buttons. Countless petitions and resolutions considered by many of the legislative committees and by the entire conference. Matters related to homosexuality were everywhere.

Why the Silence?

The puzzling question is: why has the Council of Bishops remained silent about The United Methodist Church and homosexuality? The Order for the Consecration of Bishops, in The United Methodist Book of Worship (pp. 700-710), clearly urges the bishops to speak up. At one point, the Order describes the ministry of bishops: "You are called to guard the faith, to seek the unity, and to exercise the discipline of the whole Church... As servants of the whole Church, you are called to preach and teach the truth of the gospel to all God's people..." In addition, bishops promise to "accept the call to this ministry...and fulfill this trust in obedience to Christ." Furthermore, they vow to "guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church against all that is contrary to God's Word." To be sure, bishops of The United Methodist Church have all they need to accomplish this high calling and these difficult tasks. They have been blessed with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, the Great Tradition, the episcopal office, the church's doctrine and discipline, theological education, resources for communication, and on and on. And yet, the Council of Bishops remains silent on this essential issue. Why?

Three Possible Reasons

One reason often given for the silence of the Council of Bishops is that the bishops themselves are not of one mind with regard to homosexual behavior. That is undoubtedly true, as was demonstrated once again at this General Conference. However, The United

Methodist Church has doctrine and discipline (decided by many General Conferences) on this matter, and all bishops have vowed to teach and practice what the church teaches and practice. Therefore, the bishops in dissent should not be allowed to set the agenda for the Council of Bishops. Indeed, they should keep their personal opinions on this matter, which are out of sync with historic-ecumenical Christianity, to themselves; then the other bishops on the Council can "guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church against all that is contrary to God's Word." (Also, it could be noted that United Methodists are not of one mind about, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity. Does that stop the church from teaching Trinitarian doctrine? Of course not.)

Another, more political, reason might be given for the silence of the Council. A political saying, from decades ago, claims that there are "no enemies on the left." That is, there is tendency for some to see no problems on the political-cultural-theological left. Such folks perceive problems only on the right—and there are many!—with ease. But these same people have difficulty mustering the will and the arguments to critique the church's challengers on the left. If that is the case, the Council will simply have to get over its ideological bias and gain the courage to assert the church's doctrine and discipline in our day.

A third reason might help to explain the Council's silence. A particular theological tradition, Liberal Protestantism, might be an unacknowledged block to the bishops teaching the Christian truth about human sexuality. Especially when Liberal Protestantism is distanced from the Church's Great Tradition of doctrine, morals, and theology, it fosters habits of heart and mind that resemble elite culture (which is made up of academic currents, entertainment fashions, and prestige-media assumptions in the West) and that let the autonomous individual make more and more choices based on prevailing elite culture. That is, Liberal Protestantism can demonstrate difficulty in decisively saying No or Yes; furthermore, it can have difficulty in giving reasons for its positions or lack thereof; thus, it can remain silent. In other words, this style of thinking advances a doctrinal, moral, and theological timidity in some crucial areas of church life—including moral teaching on human sexuality. If Liberal Protestantism is indeed silencing the Council of Bishops on human sexuality, only one or two courageous bishops might well challenge the Council's theological captivity and lead the Council to teach the church on sexuality.

Real Teaching, Real Leadership

Were the Council of Bishops to address the matter of homosexuality, in a loving, truthful way that is consistent with United Methodist teaching and with historic-ecumenical Christianity, the pressing dissent in the church would not simply vanish. Such teaching would not be a silver bullet for our denomination. However, such teaching would most certainly recast the atmosphere within the denomination, remind the church

of its moral and ecclesial foundations, place those who object to the church's teaching in the role of dissenters, and bring a modicum of peace and unity that the church has not known for some time.

The issue here is leadership. The Council of Bishops seems very concerned about the local church's pastoral leadership and lay leadership; and that is good. However, at the same time, the Council might also pay attention to episcopal leadership and what that might require of the bishops. On his recent trip to the United States, Benedict XVI set an excellent example for all church leaders to ponder. Though tempted to do otherwise, Benedict did not avoid the sad, disgusting matter of priests' abuse of young people. He did not call this matter a "non-essential issue." Instead, he stepped up and addressed this situation in a direct, loving, and truthful way; and he met with several victims of the abuse. That is leadership, real leadership, in the Church.

United Methodists, laity and clergy, can and should expect no less leadership from the Council of Bishops in response to the rejection of the church's doctrine and discipline on homosexuality. The same Holy Spirit who empowers Benedict XVI also empowers the Council of Bishops and its members.

So, Council of Bishops, teach the gospel truth, in love, about human sexuality. Your teaching will help unify the church for the sake of The United Methodist Church's mission and ministry in the world.

THREE SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

When the dust that had been kicked up by days of "holy conferencing" had finally settled, the 2008 General Conference had made numerous decisions about The United Methodist Church. Among them were legislative actions on the Social Principles' paragraph on abortion, the Social Principles' paragraph on human sexuality, and United Methodist membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). These three legislative actions will be reviewed below.

On Abortion

The 2008 General Conference, as most of the recent General Conferences, edited The United Methodist Church's foundational teaching on abortion. Located in the Social Principles of The Book of Discipline, the 2004 paragraph on abortion was changed or edited in the ways indicated below. In other words, the new 2008 Social Principles' paragraph on abortion will read, perhaps with a new paragraph number, in this way:

"Paragraph 161J) *Abortion*—The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. 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 **and the unborn child**, ~~for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy.~~ In

continuity with past Christian teaching, wWe 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 support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood.** We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection. We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. **Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.** We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may warrant ~~cause them to~~ **consider** abortion. **The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies.** We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth. We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption. (See Paragraph 161L.) **We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.** Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, **family**, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel." (delete, add)

All of the changes to Paragraph 161J, both the deletions and the additions, make the paragraph on abortion more pro-life. The deletion of the phrase, "[i]n continuity with past Christian teaching," is slightly problematic. This phrase, before deletion, was located in the sentence that justifies abortion rights; so the phrase seemed to give ecclesiastical cover to pro-choice abortion law. At the same time, this phrase, before deletion, served as a way to link United Methodist teaching on abortion with historic Christianity's teaching on abortion. On balance, it is probably beneficial to delete this phrase, since then it can no longer serve as a prop for the pro-choice sentence, and since the Wesleyan quadrilateral will keep Church Tradition (or "past Christian teaching") as a source for moral instruction on abortion. So, once again, all the changes are for the good.

That said, the pro-choice sentence of the paragraph—"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."—is left standing. So, though the conference deleted some pro-choice language from the paragraph, and added much pro-life language to the paragraph, Paragraph 161J's pro-choice foundation is maintained. To be sure, the 2008 paragraph's pro-choice foundation is much better hidden by the many pro-life claims and challenges. Still, the pro-choice foundation remains.

On Human Sexuality

Due to the deliberation and decision-making of the General Conference, the 2008 Book of Discipline will contain a new paragraph on human sexuality. The following paragraph, before editorial changes, was offered as a minority report. (This minority report was written in response to a committee report that would have simply recognized differences in the United Methodist household over homosexuality. In other words, the committee report would have fundamentally changed church teaching on human sexuality, while the minority report maintains current church teaching on sexuality.) This minority report was adopted, with the indicated amendments, by a vote of 501-417.

"Paragraph 161G) *Human Sexuality*—We recognize ~~affirm~~ that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the Church, and society. We call all persons ~~everyone~~ to the disciplined, responsible fulfillment of themselves, others, and society in the stewardship of this sacred gift. We also recognize our limited understanding of this complex gift and encourage the medical, theological, and social science disciplines to combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely. We call the Church to take the leadership role in bringing together these disciplines to address this most complex issue. Further, within the context of our understanding of this gift of God, we recognize that God challenges us to find responsible, committed, and loving forms of expression. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are only clearly affirmed **only within** the covenant of **monogamous, heterosexual** marriage bond. Sex may become exploitative within as well as outside marriage. We reject all sexual expressions that damage or destroy the humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only that sexual expression that enhances that same humanity. We believe that sexual relations where one or both partners are exploitative, abusive, or promiscuous are beyond the parameters of acceptable Christian behavior and are ultimately destructive to individuals, families, and the social order. We deplore all forms of the commercialization, **abuse**, and exploitation of sex, with their consequent cheapening and degradation of human personality. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation or use of children by adults and encourage efforts to hold perpetrators legally and financially responsible. We **and** call for the establishment of adequate protective on

services, guidance, and counseling opportunities for ~~abused~~ children. ~~thus abused.~~ We insist that All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured **and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.** We recognize the continuing need for full, positive, age-appropriate and factual sex education opportunities for children, young people, and adults. The Church offers a unique opportunity to give quality guidance and education in this area. Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual. **We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.** All persons need the ministry and guidance of the Church in our struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. **and We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us.** We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

On RCRC

General Conference deliberated on The United Methodist Church and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice very late in the conference. By then, a large number of the more evangelical, African delegates were on their way home. Even so, the vote was quite close. By a razor-thin margin (416-384, or 52% to 48%), the conference decided to maintain the memberships of the General Board of Church and Society, and the Women's Division/General Board of Global Ministries, in RCRC. Had more of the delegates been present, the vote would probably have turned out differently.

In the debate on RCRC, a few delegates claimed that RCRC does not support all types of abortion. In point of fact, RCRC has lobbied for all abortion rights, in all circumstances, without compromise. Not once in its history has RCRC backed away from advocating for the right to any abortion.

Though the 2008 General Conference did not vote to withdraw two United Methodist agencies from RCRC, the vote itself was very close. Furthermore, many of the conference delegates are now better informed about what RCRC is and what RCRC does. That is progress.

Again, look forward to [Lifewatch](#)'s continuing coverage of the results of the 2008 General Conference. There will be much more to report. (PTS) ♥

GUEST COLUMN: MY JOURNEY FROM PRO-CHOICE TO PRO-LIFE

by Watson A. Bowes, Jr., M.D.

In 1959, the year I graduated from medical school, there were few if any medical schools that offered courses in medical ethics. The defining ethic of a physician, as expressed by one of my professors, was the duty to save life, relieve pain, and correct deformity.

My first confrontation with a serious ethical dilemma occurred when I was a resident in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Colorado Medical Center in 1961-1965. There were uncommon occasions when we performed abortions for women with very severe heart disease, when pregnancy was a serious threat to their lives. In Colorado at that time, induced abortion was illegal, unless it was performed to save the life of the mother, in which case a physician was protected by a statutory defense. No consultation was needed, since the physician's judgment was trusted. Such abortions were indeed rare.

Then came the rubella epidemic of 1964. We illegally performed abortions on women who had rubella infections early in pregnancy because of the 25% risk that the baby would be born with one or more of the defects associated with the rubella syndrome: congenital heart defects, deafness, blindness, and mental retardation. Most of these abortions were performed in the first trimester of pregnancy, but a substantial number were performed in the second trimester. What became very clear to me, as I performed one abortion after another, is that the bits and pieces that were being curetted out of the uterus were indeed tiny body parts of tiny human beings: arms, hands, legs, ears, shoulders, they were all there, but scattered about in the bucket. I could not avoid the obvious—in each abortion, whatever good service I was performing for the woman, I was killing a tiny human being.

My internal strife about abortion was magnified by, as much as anything, my involvement with fetal transfusions. In 1964, the same year that I was performing abortions during the rubella epidemic, I also performed the first successful intrauterine fetal transfusion in Colorado for Rh disease. On one day I was going to great lengths to correct in utero a baby's severe anemia so the baby could live long enough to be born and survive; and on another day I was pumping a hypertonic salt solution into the uterus to kill a fetus of about the same age.

Between 1965 and 1967, when I was in the private practice of Ob/Gyn but still working as a half-time faculty member at the medical school, I somehow partitioned off my new found awareness of the illogical and contradictory notion of abortion as a "therapeutic measure." Indeed, all induced abortions were called "therapeutic abortions." I became caught up in the rhetoric of, and the enthusiasm for, abortion-law

liberalization in Colorado. The effort was championed by Governor Richard Lamm and resulted in Colorado being the first state to legalize abortion. In addition to the emerging feminist claim that women had the right to do with their bodies as they wished, the rationale for changing the laws that restricted abortion included the claim that it would reduce the number of "back-alley abortions" that resulted in serious maternal illness and, on rare occasions, death. The new law allowed abortions for certain medical and psychiatric indications, rape and incest, and serious fetal abnormalities.

This legislative accomplishment necessitated a little known, and never publicized, amendment to statutes involving child abuse. Child-abuse statutes define the life of a child beginning at conception. The more recent abortion statute changed the definition of the beginning of a child's life from conception to birth. (The research that resulted in the first description of the "battered child syndrome" was published by doctors at the University of Colorado Medical Center, and Colorado was one of the first states to enact legislation providing for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse. So, ironically, my home state was the first to protect children from intentional abuse and the first state to legalize the abuse of pre-born children.)

Even though the liberalized abortion statute rather narrowly defined the serious medical and psychiatric circumstances for which an induced abortion could be performed, the psychiatric indications were stretched to cover almost any situation in which a woman could be regarded as being upset or inconvenienced by her pregnancy. The liberal view of abortion was eventually codified in the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that made the United States the most permissive abortion nation in the world.

By 1969, when I finished my two-year tour of duty in the Army Medical Corps, I had arrived at a firm pro-life, anti-abortion position. It was not a sudden epiphany or bolt-out-of-the-blue experience. It was a slow, creeping, incessantly rational awakening to the awareness that should have been crystal clear to me from the first: there is something inherently wrong with killing a human being to solve the problem of another human being.

It is a great sorrow to me that the sub-specialty of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, in which I am board certified,

has increasingly become preoccupied with prenatal testing (blood and amniotic fluid tests and ultrasound examinations) in pursuit of finding fetuses with congenital abnormalities so that they can be killed before they are born. As physicians who allegedly care simultaneously for two patients, a woman and her unborn child, it is a tragedy that we often accomplish the task by deliberately killing one patient to serve the other.

How has my Christian faith related to my pro-life position? It is enough to say that I believe that the unborn, in the state of complete innocence, defenselessness, and vulnerability, are among "the least of these," who should be subjects of our care and concern, according to the admonishment of our Lord (Matthew 25:40). This should have always been clear to me, though I was blind to it when I first performed abortions. Since childhood my religion has been defined by The Book of Common Prayer, which is to say, I am a confirmed Episcopalian in the Anglican Communion. As you can imagine, I am dismayed that the Episcopal Church is a member of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Membership in this organization essentially defines the position of the Episcopal Church as supporting the right of a woman to terminate a pregnancy and thereby end the life of her unborn offspring (embryo, fetus, baby—call the unborn what you like) regardless of the reason. Much rhetoric is used to mollify this position, but I personally find it unpersuasive. Fortunately, there are Episcopalians who are pro-life (www.anglicansforlife.org), although they are a minority among both the laity and the clergy.

For reasons that may seem contradictory and irrational, I choose to continue in my profession and in my church to serve as a witness, for the pro-life cause, from within—rather than to criticize as an outsider.

Dr. Bowes received his medical degree from the University of Colorado in 1955. His internship was at Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in Hanover, NH. This was followed by one year of General Practice residency, a year of fellowship in fetal physiology, and three years of residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Colorado Medical Center in Denver. Following two years of private practice in Obstetrics and Gynecology in Denver and two years in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Vietnam conflict, he was a member of the full-time faculty in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Colorado for fourteen years. In 1982, he joined the faculty at the

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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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* Doctor's journey from pro-choice
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University of North Carolina as a full professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. In June of 1999, he retired and is now professor emeritus. His major professional interests include high-risk obstetrics, pre-term birth, and all aspects of labor and delivery. From 1995 to 1999, he served on the Committee of Ethics of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and was, for the last two years of that time, chairman of the committee. In 2003, he served on The Reproductive Genetics Advisory Committee of The Genetics and Public Policy Center (The Phoebe R. Berman Bioethics Institute at Johns Hopkins University). From 1999 to 2007, he served on the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and currently he is Chair of the Ethics Committee of the University of North Carolina Hospitals.♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- The ministry of Lifewatch was well represented at General Conference 2008 in Fort Worth, TX—in large part because of your generous contributions during the last several months. Thank you. And thank you, again. Your faithful gifts help sustain our witness for the Gospel of Life in The United Methodist Church.
- You are invited to send a gift to Lifewatch/P.O. Box 306/Cottleville, MO 63338. Also, you can give to Lifewatch through PayPal on our homepage at www.lifewatch.org. Now there is another way to help. In addition to cash, check, and PayPal, you can support Lifewatch's mission and ministry by donating stocks (since we recently opened a "DTC Brokerage Account"). For more information, please contact Cindy Evans at the Lifewatch office.
- During the business sessions of the 2008 General Conference and while reading through transcripts of the same sessions, your humble editor had a thought. (I do not have that many thoughts, so the ones that occur are remembered.) Bishops—with varying degrees of parliamentary knowledge, ability, and savvy—preside over these business sessions. However, since the rules of General Conference have become so complicated, since Robert's Rules of Order can be so challenging, and since the nature of conference business has become so politicized and polarized, the General Conference might be

wise to hire a professional, objective parliamentarian to be the presiding officer over each business session. If The Book of Discipline were amended to make that possible, the bishops could then function more as theological advisers to General Conference. Again, just a thought.

- There is IQ (Intelligence Quotient), and there is EI (Emotional Intelligence). Now there should be a PI (Political Intelligence). After all, to know when to make a motion, when to amend a proposal, and how to speak for or against a proposal takes some political intelligence and skill. After observing the legislative dimension of General Conference, this pastor is convinced that some United Methodists have a very high PI, and some are utterly challenged in that area. To be sure, our Lord came to proclaim, teach, demonstrate, and initiate the Kingdom of God—not Robert's Rules of Order. Even so, United Methodists would be wise to learn the ins and outs of getting things done in and through church committees and conferences. That is, all of us should work at increasing our PI.♥

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