

## **LIFEWATCH IS SO GRATEFUL...**

...for your prayers for, and your gifts to, our ministry. Thank you, and thanks be to God for you. Currently, Lifewatch has just over \$3,000 in the checking account. This will cover this newsletter's expenses, but not much more. Please ask yourself: Have I started giving a monthly gift (even \$10/month) to Lifewatch? If not, please do so. Today. Your gifts sustain Lifewatch's ministry. It is as simple as that. Again, thank you.

## **UNITED METHODIST SILENCE SURROUNDS KERMIT GOSNELL**

This is written on a Saturday afternoon—May 4th to be exact. Last night the documentary "See No Evil: The Kermit Gosnell Case" played for the first time on Fox News. The documentary displayed and described a den of abortion-related horrors, in which Gosnell stood at the center. For his deeds and misdeeds, Kermit Gosnell, the operator of the Women's Medical Society in West Philadelphia, is on trial. As this article is written, the jury is taking a break from its deliberations.

Gosnell is charged with over 250 criminal counts—including four counts of first-degree murder (of newborn children), one count of third-degree murder (of a woman seeking an abortion), and many "counts of conspiracy, criminal solicitation and violation of a state law that forbids abortions after the 24th week of pregnancy." (Jon Hurdle, New York Times, March 18, 2013) In fact, according to the testimonies and guilty pleas of some Women's Medical Society staff, Gosnell and his colleagues routinely used scissors to "snip" the spinal cords of children just born and thereby murder them. This horrendous procedure was done in an abortion clinic that was filthy and blood-stained, that warehoused bags containing aborted children and bottles of the body parts of the unborn, and that employed staff who were neither trained nor licensed to fulfill their tasks. Kermit Gosnell and his Women's Medical Society serviced primarily poor, African American, and immigrant women;

so these women and their children became his victims.

Since The United Methodist Church has a Social Principle (Paragraph 161J in The Book of Discipline), or teaching, on abortion, what have the leaders of our denomination had to say about Kermit Gosnell and his abortion operation? Nothing. Not one word.

This afternoon I went to the website of the General Board of Church and Society and googled "Kermit Gosnell." "Your search did not return any results."

Then to the website of United Methodist Women. Gosnell was googled. "No results found."

On to the web site of the Council of Bishops. "Approximately 0 results for query Kermit Gosnell."

Then, out of curiosity, to the website of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). As is widely known, the General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women belong to RCRC. "Your search returned 0 file(s)."

The United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Women, and Council of Bishops are not shy about entering the public arena and speaking boldly about many things there. In addition, RCRC makes its living through political lobbying, and otherwise holding forth in public, on abortion-related matters. But in the case of Kermit Gosnell—in which seemingly countless unborn and newborn children were destroyed, and their poor mothers were mistreated (medically and socially)—there is silence. Silence!

Paragraph 161J favors "the legal option of abortion." However, such abortions, according to church teaching, are to be "proper medical procedures by certified medical providers." Our leaders, because of the Ten Commandments, would also oppose the "snipping" of newborns. On these bases alone, United Methodist leaders could have, and should have, denounced Kermit Gosnell's abortion operation.

If the silence continues, it simply shows that institutions within The United Methodist Church are so committed to a pro-choice ideology that they cannot recognize the unborn child as a child, and they cannot bring themselves to denounce the abortion industry, even when it is criminally out of control in the most grisly ways imaginable.

This silence must be broken. For the sake of Jesus

Christ, for the sake of His Gospel, for the sake of the truth, for the sake of humanity (especially the least of these), for the sake of decency and civilization, this silence must be broken.

*The silence was indeed broken, on May 14, by the General Board of Church and Society. Posted on Church and Society's website, "Gosnell's Actions are Reprehensible" is a strong denunciation of crimes committed and immoralities exhibited. Thanks is due to Church and Society for this word. (PTS)♥*

## **UNITED METHODISM'S OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROE V. WADE**

Ms. Julie Taylor works in the Office of Children, Youth and Family Advocacy of the United Methodist Women, and Ms. Ameer Paparella is the new Director and Organizer for Women's Advocacy at the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church. On January 18, they posted their article, "Clearly More to Be Done," on the General Board of Church and Society website (<http://umc-gbcs.org>).

Co-written, their article serves as their personal response to the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade. But given their positions in denominational agencies, their article also functions like an official response of The United Methodist Church to Roe's anniversary. The United Methodist Reporter suggests as much by publishing "Clearly More to Be Done" in its February 8th issue. (The Reporter is to be heartily commended for also carrying, in the same issue, a thoughtful critique of their article by Rev. Teddy Ray.)

Unfortunately, the article by Ms. Taylor and Ms. Paparella does not accurately represent what The United Methodist Church teaches about life and abortion. In fact, the article distorts United Methodist teaching on this crucial matter.

This is how "Clearly More to Be Done" distorts United Methodist teaching on life and abortion.

As is well known, The United Methodist Church's official teaching on life and abortion is found in Paragraph 161J (pp. 112-114) of The Book of Discipline (2012). Paragraph 161J indeed contains the one sentence from the Discipline that the Taylor-Paparella article quotes: "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 by certified medical providers." Relying heavily on that one sentence from Paragraph 161J, the article makes its case that there is "clearly more to be done" to realize "reproductive justice" in American society and throughout the world.

However, Paragraph 161J says much more about life

***Please remember to pray and fast for the ministry of Lifewatch on the first Tuesday of every month.***

and abortion than the one sentence quoted above.

First, Paragraph 161J speaks explicitly about the little one carried by the mother. It refers to "the sanctity of unborn human life" and to "the unborn child." In contrast, the article under review does not mention, even once, the unborn child. Given the fact that over 55,000,000 million unborn children have been aborted, since Roe v. Wade was handed down by the United States Supreme Court in 1973, that is a blatantly obvious oversight. That oversight distorts United Methodist teaching.

Second, Paragraph 161J, in one degree or another, stands against birth-control abortions, gender-selection abortions, eugenic abortions, and partial-birth abortions. It also stands in favor of parental notification, "diminishing high abortion rates," and aiding ministries that "help women find feasible alternatives to abortion." The article under consideration overlooks these claims of Paragraph 161J, which aim to protect the unborn child and mother from abortion. Therefore, in a second way, this article distorts United Methodist teaching.

The article under critique is dedicated to seeking "reproductive justice" for women. All United Methodists are for justice for women. However, true justice for women is never reached by neglecting or supporting massive, ruthlessly violent injustices against unborn children, half of whom are little women. True justice for women does not turn pregnant women over to an abortion industry that frequently harms them.

Roe v. Wade is one of the most morally problematic, legally contested, and societally unsettling United States Supreme Court decisions in American history. On its 40th anniversary, The United Methodist Church deserved a more thoughtful response, that more accurately reflects denominational teaching on life and abortion, than "Clearly More to Be Done." (PTS)♥

## **ANGEL TO MARY/US: "THE LORD IS WITH YOU"**

by The Reverend Dr. Amy C. Schifrin

In the fall of 1983, I didn't know there would be over 1.2 million legal abortions performed in North America that year, nor did I know that in 1984 another 1.3 million would also take place. I was newly married, just beginning my senior year at seminary, and nauseated around the clock. My husband and I had just traveled to New York and back on a Greyhound Bus (we lived in St. Paul, MN), and I had attributed my sensitive stomach to the grease-laden food at the truck stops along the way. But now we were settled into our little apartment and ready to do some home cooking, and I could barely stand the smell of food. Could it be, would it be, we hoped and prayed and bought a drug-store pregnancy test, whose results were ultimately unclear. Lacking a home physician, we made an appointment at the local Planned Parenthood clinic where I could have a pregnancy test.

Sitting together in the waiting room anxious for the results, a healthcare worker called me in and said that my husband would have to stay in the waiting room. I didn't understand; couldn't he come in with me? No, she said, they

wanted to talk to me alone first. I didn't understand. Even more anxious and worried that something was terribly wrong with me, I was finally given the news that I was pregnant. Overjoyed, I wanted my husband to hear, and I found out from Planned Parenthood that they always tell the mother alone first, in case she does not want to continue the pregnancy. In fact, she was surprised that I did, for I had been the first woman in many weeks for whom the news was heard as good news.

Word spread like wildfire among the doctors, nurses, and technicians, who then treated us like royalty. Even those who dealt in death could yet be surprised by life, and in that moment our joy was contagious. I can only hope that in some small way it had a lasting effect to help turn their hearts to life.

In the Annunciation, the Good News given to Mary, Most Holy Theotokos, we come to know the gift of every life in a new way, and we come to know the holiness and sacredness of the womb as a sanctuary of mercy for all humankind. She who is our mother in the faith shelters the One who is the Savior of the world with her very body, with her very womanhood. She gives her life for another, a model of trust beyond all fear, a model of obedience beyond all personal security, a model of faith in the One who is yet unseen, until the glorious day of His birth, when at her breast she revels in His radiant face.

In the kenotic [self-emptying] movement of God in the Incarnation, He was never more vulnerable, more helpless, than when He was in utero, swaddled in amniotic fluid, yet He was also never more intimately protected, swaddled in the myriad layers of a mother's love. And it is the vision of this love that is ever so needed, a death-defying love, an eternal love, a fierce love, a sacrificing love, that we are called to bear for the sake of generations to come. For in the disordered loving of a fallen world that removes sexual intercourse from the fidelity and delight of the marriage bed, there will continue to be the littlest among us, made in the image and likeness of God, who without such love, will be unprotected from the lies that say they are neither human nor of any value.

If, as St. Paul teaches us, faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17), then we need to sing to all the world as the angel did for Mary, so that the anti-Gospel of self-determination, self-liberation, and self-exaltation (an unholy trinity) will not be the last word that any man or woman hears in the landscape of a time when abortion is legal and considered moral by many. From the moment of conception, our Lord is fully human and fully divine, veiled in Mary's flesh, His protector, His sanctuary. From the moment of conception, we are indeed who we are as well. It is only our relationship to others that will take on new dimensions as we grow into the world, for our humanity is fully present (i.e., all that is needed for faith has been given us as we have no choice but to depend upon another for life). And if the glory of God is man fully alive (St. Irenaeus), then the rapid multiplication of your cells is as glorious as a Bach cantata!

What if every woman with a child in her womb were to hear the angel's words, "The Lord is with you"? The Lord is with you in this pregnancy, whether you loved your husband or not, whether you had a husband or not. The Lord is with

you, whether this child was conceived in love or whether you suffered through a horrific rape. The Lord is with you, whether you were trolling for anonymous sex in a seedy bar or whether you were looking for comfort in all the wrong places. The Lord is with you, whether your father sold you to this brute or whether your own father was the brute. Whatever unspeakable shame was done is not the last word because the Lord is with you and with your little one. The Lord is suffering with you, and the Lord will lead you to that day when He will be rejoicing with you. In this pregnancy, however untimed or unplanned, the Lord is with you, because no life is made without Him. As Luther's Small Catechism attests, "I believe that God has created me and all that exists."

*Dr. Schiffrin is the pastor of mission in Christ and Faith Lutheran Churches in the Iowa Mission District of the North American Lutheran Church. The above is taken from "Sanctum: Womb, the Sanctuary of Mercy" at [www.clcumary.com/sanctum-womb-the-sanctuary-of-mercy/](http://www.clcumary.com/sanctum-womb-the-sanctuary-of-mercy/). Dr. Schiffrin's essay originally appeared in *The Lake Louise Commission: The Sacred Family* (Delhi, NY: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 2011). She can be reached at [missioninchristlc@gmail.com](mailto:missioninchristlc@gmail.com).♥*

## **BENEDICT XVI: A THANK YOU, A REPORT, AND A FINAL WORD**

On February 11, Benedict XVI announced his resignation from papal ministry, effective at the end of February, to the Roman Catholic Church, to the Church catholic, and to the world. The news of his resignation was like a shot heard round the world.

Let this be well known: Lifewatch is deeply grateful to God for Benedict XVI—his life, his faith, and his ministry. As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, he was elected to papal office at a most challenging time. (But then again, every time this side of the Kingdom Come is a challenging time.) Following perhaps the most charismatic, and perhaps the first celebrity, Pope of all time, John Paul II (no easy task, that), Benedict XVI stepped into papal office when the Roman Catholic Church was challenged by Islamism and secularism from the outside, and by sexual scandal on the inside.

Though well advanced in years, Benedict brilliantly carried out the theological component of his papal ministry. His statements, sermons, encyclicals, and books consistently and continually served the Gospel and its evangelical truth. In addition, his relentless joining of the Gospel and reason blessed all of world Christianity. That means he proposed the Gospel of Life, again and again, to the Church and to the world. God bless Benedict XVI for so regularly speaking up for the very least of these, the unborn child and mother!

### **A REPORT**

Years ago, this United Methodist pastor had the opportunity to meet Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. The following paragraphs provide the details. They are from this pastor's editorial written for the March 2013 issue of the Whiteville (NC) United Methodist Church's newsletter.

"In January of 1984, I began serving a special appointment to assist Rev. Richard John Neuhaus at The

Center on Religion and Society in New York City. Strongly devoted to Christian unity, Rev. Neuhaus had invited Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (who later became Pope and Benedict XVI) to deliver a lecture and participate in a conference on Biblical interpretation. The lecture and the conference resulted in a book entitled Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church (Eerdmans, 1989).

"On an afternoon in January of 1988, Rev. Neuhaus and I found our way to John F. Kennedy International Airport and awaited the arrival of Cardinal Ratzinger from Rome. During the wait, Rev. Neuhaus buried himself in a book. Reading In Cold Blood by Truman Capote, I followed his example. After Ratzinger's arrival, the four of us (including Ratzinger's assistant, who was originally from Missouri) took a limo ride to Manhattan and to their headquarters for the next couple of days. The ride was pleasant, and the conversation was laced with Cardinal Ratzinger's German-accented English.

"The next day was the 1988 Erasmus Lecture, which was held in the sanctuary of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Citicorp Center on the Upper East Side. Not surprisingly, it was a full house. As I recall, over 500 were in attendance. Then and there, Cardinal Ratzinger delivered a very thoughtful lecture on rightly understanding the Bible. In the middle of the lecture, tens of militant pro-homosexual protesters (from Act-Up) stood and shouted accusations and names at the Cardinal. For example, they blamed the AIDS crisis on the Roman Catholic Church, and they called the Cardinal a 'Nazi.' In the midst of this attack, Ratzinger remained calm and replied: 'We have now heard your voice; now listen to mine!' This brave resolve, plus arrests by the NYPD, allowed the lecture to continue until the end.

"At the conclusion of the lecture, a group of us went to dinner at the residence of the Archbishop of New York, John Cardinal O'Connor.

"Then the conference on Biblical interpretation, centered on Ratzinger's lecture, went on for two days. Another unexpected interruption occurred as well. The plumbing in the hotel, where all the conference participants were staying, went on the blink; so we did not have hot water during the conference. As one of the participants joked one morning at the conference table, 'This feels like the Middle Ages.'

"This brief story reveals the courage that Benedict has and his resolve when challenged. In America today, compared to 40 years ago, it takes a little more courage to be Christian in this world. So stories of the saints in action, and under duress, are good for all of us."

#### A FINAL WORD

Just before his resignation took effect, Benedict addressed a crowd of some 200,000 in Rome. These words of his are memorable: "At this time, I have within myself a great trust [in God], because I know—all of us know—that the Gospel's word of truth is the strength of the Church: it is her life. The Gospel purifies and renews: it bears fruit wherever the community of

believers hears and welcomes the grace of God in truth and lives in charity. This is my faith, this is my joy.

"When, almost eight years ago, on April 19th, [2005] I agreed to take on the Petrine ministry, I held steadfast in this certainty, which has always accompanied me. In that moment, as I have already stated several times, the words that resounded in my heart were: 'Lord, what do you ask of me? It [is] a great weight that You place on my shoulders, but, if You ask me, at Your word I will throw out the nets, sure that you will guide me'—and the Lord really guided me. He has been close to me: daily could I feel His presence. [These years] have been a stretch of the Church's pilgrim way, which has seen moments [of] joy and light, but also difficult moments. I have felt like St. Peter with the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee: the Lord has given us many days of sunshine and gentle breeze, days in which the catch has been abundant; [then] there have been times when the seas were rough and the wind against us, as in the whole history of the Church it has ever been—and the Lord seemed to sleep. Nevertheless, I always knew that the Lord is in the barque, that the barque of the Church is not mine, not ours, but His—and He shall not let her sink. It is He, who steers her: to be sure, He does so also through men of His choosing, for He desired that it be so. This was and is a certainty that nothing can tarnish. It is for this reason that today my heart is filled with gratitude to God, for never did He leave me or the church without His consolation, His light, His love." (<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2013/02/dear-friends-god-guides-his-church.html>, February 27, 2013, accessed on February 28, 2013).

Well said, Benedict XVI. You were, are, and will be a good and faithful servant of Christ. Now, go and pray and write in peace. (PTS)♥

## WELCOME, POPE FRANCIS

As we know, the new Pope was elected, without unnecessary delay, by the conclave of cardinals in Rome. Early in the process, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J. of Buenos Aires, Argentina was chosen. He took the name Francis, as in Francis of Assisi.

Lifewatch acknowledges the positive impact of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church on world Christianity, including The United Methodist Church. It can be reasonably proposed that Catholicism is the last institution that can, and often does, stand up against the relativizing and secularizing forces in this world. And when the Catholic Church stands strong, she assists all other churches to do the same. God truly provides for all His people and all His churches—sometimes in surprising ways.

Lifewatch—as if it matters!—welcomes Pope Francis to his new ministry, and we pray God's strength and guidance on him.

#### HIS FIRST SERMON

Pope Francis preached his inaugural sermon on the "solemnity of St. Joseph." In it, he spoke of "the mission

which God entrusts to Joseph: he is to be the *custos*, the protector. The protector of whom? Of Mary and Jesus; but this protection is then extended to the Church...

"How does Joseph exercise his role as protector? Discreetly, humbly and silently, but with an unfailing presence and utter fidelity, even when he finds it hard to understand. From the time of his betrothal to Mary until the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he is there at every moment with loving care. As the spouse of Mary, he is at her side in good times and bad, on the journey to Bethlehem for the census and in the anxious and joyful hours when she gave birth; amid the drama of the flight into Egypt and during the frantic search for their child in the Temple; and later in the day-to-day life of the home of Nazareth, in the workshop where he taught his trade to Jesus.

"How does Joseph respond to his calling to be the protector of Mary, Jesus, and the Church? By being constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans, and not simply to his own...

"Be protectors of God's gifts!

"Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are 'Herods' who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women." (<http://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2013/03/19/full-text-of-pope-francis-inauguration-homily/>, accessed on 03/22/13)

Also, some of Pope Francis' words to the media are inspiring: "The Church is certainly a human and historical institution with all that that entails, yet her nature is not essentially political but spiritual: the Church is the People of God, the Holy People of God making its way to encounter Jesus Christ. Only from this perspective can a satisfactory account be given of the Church's life and activity.

"Christ is the Church's Pastor, but His presence in history passes through the freedom of human beings; from their midst one is chosen to serve as his Vicar, the Successor of the Apostle Peter. Yet Christ remains the center, not the Successor of Peter: Christ, Christ the center. Christ is the fundamental point of reference, the heart of the Church. Without Him, Peter and the Church would not exist or have reason to exist. As Benedict XVI frequently reminded us, Christ is present in [the] Church and guides her. In everything that has occurred, the principal agent has been, in the final analysis, the Holy Spirit. He prompted the decision of Benedict XVI for the good of the Church; he guided the Cardinals in prayer and in the election." (<http://cvcomment.org/2013/03/16/text-of-pope-francis-address-to-media/>, accessed on 03/23/13)

Pope Francis, you are off to an excellent start! (PTS)♥

## REPORT ON A CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

"Faith Support for Reproductive Health, Rights & Justice" was the title and subject of a Congressional Briefing, on March 11, at the Capitol Visitors Center on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights (RCRC) were among the seven organizations that sponsored the briefing. Approximately fifty—mainly young, probably congressional, staffers—attended this event. Representing Lifewatch, your friendly scribe was also there.

RCRC played an especially prominent role during this particular Congressional Briefing. Rev. Harry Knox, RCRC's president and CEO, and Rev. Rob Keithan, RCRC's public policy director, made major presentations. If the General Board of Church and Society was actually represented by its staff at the briefing, its representative(s) did not have a significant voice during the proceedings.

What follows are some notes from, and some commentaries on, the event. The notes are in plain-text font, and the commentaries are in italics. (1.) RCRC's work is based, first and last, on the progressive theology of our era. Progressive theology understands its task in this way: survey society, discover oppressed people who have little or no voice in public

life, and organize and enable such people to speak for themselves, so that their unjust treatment might be addressed and remedied. This Congressional Briefing assumed this progressivist-theological approach to society and politics.

*If progressive theology was genuinely faithful to its calling to identify and assist the oppressed in society, it would identify and assist the unborn child and his/her mother. After all, the unborn child is totally without voice and without defense, except for the voice and defense that others lovingly offer, in this world.*

(2.) Rev. Knox indicated that "compassion" is a "core value" of RCRC's work. Compassion is what clergy have for the woman who is fearful about being pregnant and what causes clergy to help such a woman obtain an abortion. He also suggested that compassion draws together all clergy—pastors, priests, rabbis, and imams—in their efforts to minister to those in need.

*Indeed, compassion is essential for all Christian ministry and for all religious agents. However, authentic compassion—which can also be called love—is not just about strong feelings that arise in one's heart. Authentic compassion is well directed by God's grace and truth, even Christian truth, and it results in Good-Samaritan love to endangered others. So authentic compassion would encourage and help a fearful woman to receive the child she carries.*

*"If progressive theology was genuinely faithful to its calling to identify and assist the oppressed in society, it would identify and assist the unborn child and his/her mother."*

(3.) "Reproductive justice," as defined by Rev. Knox, means that all people should have equal means to enjoy the sacred gift of sexuality. Furthermore, it was said that "access to abortion is critically important," one could say essential, to reproductive justice.

*Justice, of any kind, in a situation is never achieved when the weakest person in the situation is simply destroyed. Justice favors the weakest. Justice does not eliminate the weakest.*

(4.) Since RCRC's current name (Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice) and RCRC's actual mission are now out of alignment with the new organizational driver of "reproductive justice," RCRC will probably be rebranded. The group was told to watch for an RCRC-rebranding announcement at the end of October 2013.

*When the 2012 General Conference of The United Methodist Church was prevented (by procedural and scheduling maneuvers) from passing a committee-approved petition that would have removed United Methodist agencies from RCRC, did that alert RCRC to the need to rebrand itself? Whatever the answer to that question, rebranding RCRC will not alter the fundamental pro-abortion-choice mission of the political lobby.*

(5.) RCRC, said Rev. Knox, operates out of a "theology of pluralism" and a "theology of love." This contrasts with "Right-wing religion," which operates on the basis of fear, and with a "theology of stigma" and a "theology of oppression." Also, he claimed that "Right-wing religion has a stranglehold on the sexuality issues."

*It can be presumed that "Right-wing religion" includes Roman Catholic teaching, Evangelical teaching, and even United Methodist teaching (Paragraph 161J, which contains much language that is protective of the unborn child and mother from abortion, and that seeks to limit the total number of abortions performed in society). Let us be clear: religion that seeks to protect the weakest is a religion of love. And religion that seeks to defend the unborn child in a pro-choice society relies on the pluralism that encourages all to deliberate, in truth, with one another about the dignity of the human person, and to decide such matters in a way that serves the dignity of the human person and the common good.*

(6.) Rev. Keithan encouraged those present to reframe their arguments, for reproductive choice and other issues, with moral and religious language. (For example, "reproductive choice" becomes "reproductive justice.") This will help convince the American people that, with regard to reproductive justice, the religious community is divided and not simply against abortion and choice. In a handout entitled "Leveraging Faith...in Reproductive Justice," RCRC encourages its allies to: (a) "amplify supportive religious voices" that favor reproductive justice, (b) "normalize disagreement" about reproductive justice, persuade people that disagreement about such matters is okay, and point out that often religious leaders (e.g., the Catholic bishops) go against the actual views of their constituents (e.g., Catholics

*"[Since] RCRC's actual mission [is] now out of alignment with the new organizational driver of 'reproductive justice,' RCRC will probably be rebranded."*

in the pews), and (c) "keep an eye out...for places where supportive religious voices [for reproductive justice] could be represented and useful." All in all, it was said, "values language" is more effective than economic and taxpayer language.

*No doubt about it, moral and religious language can be used—*

*used!—to achieve political ends. But is it not better for religion to shape morality, and then for morality to contribute to the political debates and decisions in the larger society? Morality and religion should not be transformed into blunt weapons for use in political battles.*

*Furthermore, Rev. Keithan does not have to worry about normalizing disagreement in the Church. Disagreement has been alive and well in the Church from its beginnings. For evidence, simply skim through the letters of St. Paul. Important as such disagreement is, it does not obscure the fact that the Church, as Church, has teaching. At its best, this teaching is Biblically based, traditionally supported (beginning with the Apostles), reasonably proposed, and existentially confirmed. To be sure, some in the Church will disagree with, or dissent from, such teaching. But that does not change the reality that the Church has truthful teaching and that the Church at its best teaches truthfully. Even when confronted with disagreement, the Church teaches. That is, the Church is not afraid of dissent.*

(7.) Politically, RCRC and its friends are dedicated to working for "clean budget" bills (that is, bills without pro-life riders), covering abortions in government healthcare for Peace Corps workers, allowing Defense Department funds and facilities to be used for abortions, and resisting legislative attempts to amend the Affordable Care Act to exempt from healthcare coverage (on the basis of religious liberty and conscience) morally problematic goods and services.

*RCRC is free to adopt whatever political agenda it desires. Obviously, it is an agenda that wants to promote abortion and governmental payment for abortions performed.*

(8.) The briefing ended with a call for politicians and their staffs not to fear the social issues, to face such issues with resolve, to reframe them in moral and religious language, and to call on RCRC and the other sponsoring organizations for help in advancing the agenda of reproductive justice.

*That means The United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society might be called on to assist politicians in passing pro-choice legislation. Do United Methodists want their apportionment dollars being used for such purposes?*

Recalling this Congressional Briefing, this pastor remembers a room full of bright, energetic, politically engaged people. They are gifted people. They could even be called elites in our society. And there they were: assembled in an attractive room, located in the halls of power, with a food-and-drink reception waiting, to politically promote ways that the strong in our society could continue to exploit the weakest in our society. This is not what the Church universal, The United Methodist Church, and United Methodists are dedicated to doing. (PTS)♥

## ONLY GOVERNMENT, ONLY DOLLARS

Using the new media to help spread its message, the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS)—through its "Healthy Families, Healthy Planet Project" (HFHPP)—is hosting a series of "webinars" this year. GBCS is highlighting women's healthcare needs related to "maternal health and family planning."

Having participated in the first two sessions ("Maternal Health and HIV/AIDS" in February and "Maternal Health and Domestic Violence" in April), this observer came to see that "maternal health" is not the actual goal of the series. The increased funding for worldwide abortion on demand is. Of course the goal is called "family planning," not "abortion on demand."

Presenter Katie Zeh, project director, explained in February that HFHP began in 2010 and is "funded by a grant from the United Nations and serves to support the work of the United Nations." In April, the "sequester" in Washington, DC was blamed for the lack of funding for their "family planning" and other programs. Webinar participants were encouraged by Linda Bales Todd to contact their legislators and encourage them to restore cuts to family-planning programs and to "vote for the highest levels of funding they can possibly vote for in terms...for international family planning..."

Tragic, personal stories aside, the only solution to the problems presented in these webinars was "more money" and the involvement of GBCS, government, and government-funded organizations. Nowhere in either webinar was God's most basic plan for sexuality—celibacy before marriage and faithfulness within marriage—mentioned. Never was the family or the local church mentioned as a source of help, compassion, or assistance.

The resources offered at the end of each webinar came primarily from the Alan Guttmacher Institute—i.e., Planned Parenthood. Not one came from a "pro-life," or an evangelical-orthodox, position.

If HFHP and GBCS are so concerned about the maternal health and welfare of woman worldwide, why do they not include even one women, program, or resource from a diverse viewpoint? If HFHP and GBCS are truly dedicated to helping women prevent unwanted pregnancies and lead the best lives possible for themselves and their families, they should promote as much education and information as is humanly possible; and then they should encourage women, in consultation with others, to make the best decisions for their families and themselves.

These webinars, while tugging at the participants' heart strings, did little more than solicit help in procuring additional funding for abortion on demand, and its accompanying ideology, around the world. (CE)♥

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Thank you for your faithful and generous responses.

- The fortieth anniversary of Roe v. Wade kicked up all kinds of cultural and political stuff. For example, there was a video produced by the Center for Reproductive Rights. It featured an apparently Mr. Cool—cool in speech, outfit, and demeanor—with drink in hand. With jazz playing in the

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**Lifewatch**  
Taskforce of  
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Abortion and Sexuality

P.O. Box 306, Cottleville MO 63338

06/01/13

\* **United Methodist Agency  
Response to 40 Years of  
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\* **A Glimpse into RCRC's Thinking**

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background, he wistfully and thankfully said "happy fortieth anniversary" to Roe. We have been through a lot all these years, he said to Roe, yet we are still together. It was a very strange video. A "creepy" video, as noted by some. Notice that the verbs in this paragraph are past tense. The video was taken down. For good reason.

- Father Thomas Hopko is one of the most thoughtful, engaging, and persuasive teachers of the Orthodox faith in the United States. His 2011 talk on "Orthodox Christianity and Homosexuality" is especially excellent. This talk will bring renewal in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Listen to it at [http://ancientfaith.com/specials/hopko\\_lectures/theological\\_vision\\_orthodox\\_christian\\_faith\\_and\\_human\\_sexuality1](http://ancientfaith.com/specials/hopko_lectures/theological_vision_orthodox_christian_faith_and_human_sexuality1). It is well worth the hour or so.

- How are "gay marriage" and abortion similar? Both those who promote "gay marriage," and those who advance abortion, do not take children seriously. Children need both a mother and a father in a preferred, optimal family life. "Gay marriage" does not provide as much. Likewise, those for abortion support the direct and intentional elimination of the child in the womb. Again, in both of these issues, men and women are not taking children seriously. At the same time, they seem to be taking their own sexual lives with ultimate seriousness.

- Back on December 9 of last year, Ms. Kim Ketola interviewed your scribe on Cradle My Heart Radio. If you are interested in listening to the interview, go to <http://cradlemyheart.org/media/> and scroll down to 12-9-12. The wide-ranging discussion centers on the local church's role, and the pastor's part, in responding to the challenges related to life and abortion.

Ms. Ketola does faithful, excellent ministry through

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the spoken and written word. Listen to her program; read her book (Cradle My Heart: Finding God's Love after Abortion); and you will be strengthened as a hopeful disciple of Jesus Christ.

- "In my little black book, I came across a quote from W.H. Auden: the 'principal enemies of the True Word are two: the Idle Word and the Black Magician.' The Black Magician whispers falsehoods in our ears, tempting us to compromise when we shouldn't, or to despair when we mustn't. The Idle Word twiddles his thumbs as he talks about lots of things that avoid hard issues and tempt us to evade hard choices." This word from Dr. R.R. Reno, the editor of First Things and the author of "First Things in 2013" (<http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2013/01/first-things-in-2013>), is a good reminder to those of us who preach, teach, and lead in the churches today. Let's beware of the Black Magician and the Idle Word. And let's hold fast to the True Word.

- *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* "Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail."♥

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