

PAIGE ANNE STALLSWORTH, 1983-2004: A LIFE ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY

The following was presented at the 2004 National Right to Life Convention in Arlington, VA, during the "We are the Sheep. Where are the Shepherds?" workshop.

On May 31st (Memorial Day) of this year, Paige Anne Stallsworth died. Just over 21 years old, Paige was the only daughter, among three sons, of Marsha and me. Three nights later, over 600 people visited her body and her family. The next morning, over 400 people participated in A Service of Death and Resurrection for her, commended her soul to God's mercies and to the Communion of the Saints, and committed her body to the ground, there to await the general resurrection. During this Service of Worship, we were reminded that Paige had been blessed with a good life and a good death, and that she had lived and died in the Lord. Thanks be to God! Marsha and I can honestly give thanks for all this goodness—even though the pain still pierces.

In many ways, Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

She fought valiantly and proudly for her own life. Four times she had battled the same cancer—at 1 1/2 years old, at 12, at 19, and at 21. She had endured chemotherapy, radiation treatments, and a bone-marrow transplant—and numerous blood transfusions, ports in the chest, and bouts of fatigue, sickness, and pain. She fought to live.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

A biology major, she aimed to become a physician, who would care for the lives of others.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

She lived vigorously. She played hard; she socialized hard; and she worked hard—always in that order!

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

During her two years at North Carolina State University, she remained pro-life. Once, when her father questioned whether or not she was truly committed to the protection of the unborn child and mother, she was miffed. "Of course, dad, I am pro-life!" she protested. And she loved to travel to Washington, DC, with her father, to participate in pro-life events.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

Though she would have chosen otherwise, during her times of treatment, she was a constant reminder to her mother, father, and brothers that the ill, the weakest, among us deserve our love, our attention, our sacrifice, our time, our resources.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

Though she would have chosen otherwise, during her times of treatment, she was a constant reminder to her young and mostly carefree friends that life is a gift from God that should never be taken for granted. And she taught a few of those same friends to care for a sick, declining person.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

She was baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—for the sake of living in Christ's Body, the Church. And she received the presence of the living Christ, through Bread and Cup, regularly. Five nights before she was to die, she received the real presence of the living Christ through the Bread and Cup—for the sake of living her last days in Christ.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

She was a part of four (4) United Methodist churches—one in New Jersey and three in North Carolina. These congregations (and others) loved her, encouraged her, and supported her—in sickness and in health. There were countless cards, calls, gifts, and conversations after the church service or on the street. These Christians loved her, and she loved them. See how they love one another!

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

She was faithfully cared for by doctors and nurses and other hospital workers. Whether she was feeling well or weak, whether pain was absent or throbbing, whether recovery seemed certain or death imminent, her doctors and nurses and others tended to her with diligence and hope.

Paige's life was about the dignity of human life.

On that sad night, two men from a Morehead City, NC funeral home moved her frail, lifeless body with great respect—as if she had been the queen of an empire.

Even Paige's death was about the dignity of humanity.

Sometimes we can fall into the mistaken notion that being pro-life means only preaching pro-life sermons, writing pro-life articles, advancing pro-life politics, and

assisting pro-life centers. But much of our lives and much of our churches' lives are filled with pro-life assumptions and practices, with the dignity of human life. We just have to stop. See deeply. Think carefully. Then we can notice the pro-life stuff, the dignity of human life, are all around us and in us. Then it becomes easier, for us, to connect this everyday human dignity with the dignity of the unborn. Paige's life and even her death helped many of us to make this connection. (PTS)♥

PROVIDENCE AT GENERAL CONFERENCE

Last November, just two days before the deadline, I learned that I could offer legislation to be considered by the 2004 General Conference. I immediately wrote and mailed two pieces of legislation, which asked the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to recognize that "while...women have the legal right to abortion, some women regret that event later in life."

THE PRELIMINARIES

When printed in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate, proposed petitions and resolutions are assigned numbers. The numbers make it easier for delegates to locate the petitions and resolutions in the book, and the numbers lessen the possibility of misunderstanding when discussing and/or voting on the legislative items.

My petition, entitled "Ministry to Those Who Regret a Past Abortion," was assigned #40857. I also offered a resolution, which included five "whereas" statements, under the same name; and it was given #40860.

Each petition or resolution submitted to General Conference is distributed to one of the eleven legislative committees. Each committee elects its own chair, vice chair, and secretary from among its members. When the committee is in session, parliamentary procedure is followed. Delegates on the committee may speak when recognized by the chair. Visitors may observe the proceedings, but they may not speak without the approval of the full committee. Such permission is granted when a delegate moves that the committee suspend the rules, requests that a specific non-delegate address the committee, and is supported by a vote of the full committee.

All abortion-related petitions and resolutions—as well as many related to homosexuality, marriage, and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC)—were among the 270 assigned to the Church and Society Legislative Committee. There were 106 General Conference delegates who were seated on the Church and Society Committee.

The Church and Society Committee officers divided their committee into 12 subcommittees, and then divided up their petitions and resolutions from the pages of the Advance Daily Christian Advocate among the 12 subcommittees. I chose to follow Subcommittee 12, which dealt with my proposals and the pro-RCRC resolution. (The Lifewatch-sponsored resolution to end the denomination's association with RCRC was

assigned to another subcommittee.)

Subcommittee 12 had seven members. They discussed both of my proposals. However, they would not question me—even though they knew I, the author of the proposals, was present and willing to speak. The subcommittee amended #40857 by changing the title slightly and by omitting the first sentence; then it voted concurrence as amended. Because it did not like the "whereas" statements of #40860, it voted 7-0 non-concurrence. So both items were placed on the consent calendar of the Church and Society Committee.

The consent calendar is a parliamentary tool which speeds up the legislative process. All legislation which receives 5 or fewer dissenting votes is lumped together and, without further debate, voted up or down en masse, at a later date, by the full body. This applies to the full legislative committee and to the General Conference plenary session. In order to have a consent calendar item reconsidered by the full committee, five or more delegates from that committee had to present a written request to the chair within 24 hours of the item's placement on the consent calendar.

Petition #40857 stayed on the consent calendar for the full committee. With the written request of five committee members, we were able to get #40860 pulled from the consent calendar. Therefore, we made it possible for that resolution to be debated by the full committee.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION, DIVINE ASSISTANCE

Resolution #40860 finally reached the Church and Society Committee floor about 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 2. The committee planned to recess at 6:00 p.m. for a dinner break.

All week long, the committee had often voted to suspend the rules and allow non-delegate visitors to speak to the full committee on behalf of various legislative proposals. When one delegate asked the committee to suspend the rules and allow me to speak in favor of #40860, most of the body voted No.

How ironic. Most of the Church and Society Committee—composed of loving, caring, tolerant, diverse, open, inclusive United Methodists—would not allow a person who disagreed with their agenda on abortion to speak to the full committee. Needless to say, I was very disappointed, though not particularly surprised. I had had similar experiences during my days in UMW years before. All I could do now was pray, "Please Lord..."

God knew what would happen, and He performed multiple miracles. It was incredible.

After the Church and Society Committee voted not to allow me speak, a female delegate went to the microphone. She stated that very few people in her life knew what she was about to say, and then she told of her own abortion experience of many years ago. Through her tears, she had difficulty describing her post-abortion pain. Nevertheless, she went on and spoke also of her husband's pain, for he had been a part of the decision to abort. The woman concluded with a statement about how they have carried pain every day of their lives since the abortion. You could have heard a pin drop: the room was

motionless, and all ears were focused on her words and emotion. As she returned to her seat, the chair announced the dinner recess.

During the recess, several people huddled around the female delegate, laid hands on her, and prayed for her. Another post-abortion woman and man also participated in the group. It was powerful. The Spirit of the Lord was present.

Also during the recess, an alternate delegate, who had been seated on the committee for Sunday evening, called me over to her chair. Together we amended my resolution. She deleted all of the “whereas” statements, wrote two new ones, and adjusted the “be-it-resolved” statements to fit. To indicate that men as well as women suffer from post-abortion pain, the references to “women” in my resolution were replaced with “all.”

When the committee reconvened, the alternate delegate introduced her amended version. There was no discussion. By a vote of 68-0-1, the committee passed the amended version. The result of the Church and Society Committee’s hardheartedness was that the resolution was broadened to include the post-abortion stress of all and was placed on the consent calendar for the plenary session!

Instead of leaving for home on Monday as planned, I stayed longer. I wanted to know if, and how, the amended resolution actually appeared on the consent calendar. After reading it in Tuesday’s Daily Christian Advocate, I left on Wednesday for home.

THE RESULTS

The final vote on the amended resolution was overwhelming. It passed 835-26. Therefore, The United Methodist Church now officially recognizes post-abortion stress in women and men. This official recognition comes in the form of the following resolution, which will become part of The Book of Resolutions (2004): “Ministry to Those Who Regret a Past Abortion:” “Whereas, we recognize that there is a legal right to an abortion, we also recognize that some regret that event later in life. Whereas, the church should be about offering healing ministries for all types of brokenness. Therefore, be it resolved that the 2004 General Conference of The United Methodist Church urges pastors to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with post-abortion stress. And be it further resolved that the 2004 General Conference of The United Methodist Church encourages local churches to make available contact information for counseling agencies that offer programs to address post-abortion stress for all seeking help.” This is amazing. God’s providence performed this miracle and many others; and the result was better than I could have imagined.

Petition #40857 also passed the plenary session’s consent calendar. It reads: “We urge local pastors to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with post-abortion stress. We further encourage local churches to make available contact information for counseling agencies that offer programs to address post-abortion stress for all seeking help.” This statement now becomes part of the 2004 Book of

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

Discipline’s Social Principles—Paragraph 161K on “Ministry to Those Who Have Experienced Abortion,” to be specific.

God is so good, and His providential work is so surprising. He used the hardheartedness of those who deny that abortion affects more than the baby, who loses his/her life, to open redemptive, United Methodist doors to all who suffer from post-abortion pain. —Cindy Evans, Lifewatch Administrator ♥

TO TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT RCRC

The top legislative body of The United Methodist Church, which parallels the United States Congress, is General Conference. Like Congress, General Conference uses the ways and means of democracy to pass legislation. And the legislative process of General Conference, like that of Congress, relies on truthfulness to the greatest extent possible. Again, democracy in the church (and in the state) works optimally when the truth is served during the consideration of, the deliberation over, and the debate of legislative proposals. When the truth is not served at General Conference, the legislative process is harmed, the quality of legislation is diminished, and the church is undermined.

THE RCRC PETITION DEBATED

Take this example. On the last night of the 2004 General Conference—that is, on May 7th—the Conference rushed to complete its legislative work. One legislative item considered that night was Petition No. 40994 (Advance Daily Christian Advocate, pp. 284-285). Entitled “Support for Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice,” this petition would have the 2004 General Conference “support the work of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice” and “affirm the continued membership of the General Board of Church and Society and the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries in the Religious Coalition of Reproductive Choice.”

According to the public record (Daily Edition, Vol. 4, No. 11) of the Friday night proceedings, this petition, which had been approved by the Church and Society Legislative Committee, was placed before the General Conference with a brief speech in its favor.

A speech which opposed the petition followed. The speaker stated: “The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice [or RCRC], according to its literature, is an advocacy group for the pro-choice side of the abortion debate. Their position is in conflict with a more balanced position of The Book of Discipline. The RCRC supports abortion at any time, including abortion as a means of birth control and/or gender selection. The RCRC supported partial-birth abortion in a recent press release, even though The United Methodist Church opposes partial-birth abortion...

Understand that the RCRC allows each denomination the right to determine their own position, but I do believe by inference that membership in this organization casts a

shadow on the clarity of our statement...in The Book of Discipline. I urge you to vote no...on this concurrence.” It should be noted that the above speech is entirely truthful. That is, the speech’s claims are factual.

Then came a second speech in favor of Petition No. 40994. Here is the speech in full (and in some broken English): “It’s in regard to Rule 9; and in that regard, it would also be a speech for, Bishop. Unless there has been a change, it is my understanding that the coalition [i.e., RCRC] does not do or advocate for anything which is inconsistent with that which we as United Methodists—since we are a significant contributor—have in our Social Principles. It is also my understanding that because of that, after our last General Conference, the coalition conformed to their advocacy to that which we had passed. And I do want to clear up this misinformation. It is true that, consistent with our Social Principles, it does—the coalition does advocate for free choice—for choice; and there are many of us who... Thank you, Bishop. There are many of us who hope that that continues so that we don’t return to the desperate situations that existed prior to Roe v. Wade.”

TWO FALSEHOODS

This speech in favor of the petition contains two glaring falsehoods.

First, it claims: “Unless there has been a change, it is my understanding that the coalition [i.e., RCRC] does not do or advocate for anything which is inconsistent with that which we as United Methodists—since we are a significant contributor—have in our Social Principles.” This claim is not backed up with evidence. It is based only on the speaker’s “understanding.”

But as a matter of fact, RCRC routinely advocates positions on a variety of matters (including abortion) that contradict United Methodist teaching as stated in the Social Principles. As Holy Abortion? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice by Michael J. Gorman and Ann Loar Brooks (Wipf and Stock, 2003) makes clear, RCRC advances:

*an absolute sexual and reproductive freedom (including abortion), while The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (Par. 161G and Par. 161J) do not;

*the idea of the person as a sovereign moral agent isolated from others, from Christian community, and from tradition, while The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (Par. 161J) do not;

*the trivialization of the moral status of unborn human life, while The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (Par. 161J) do not;

*the legitimacy of abortion as a means of birth control, while The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (Par. 161J) do not;

“Two United Methodist organizations remain affiliated with RCRC.”

*the holiness of abortion, while The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles (Par. 161J) do not; and

*a pro-choice God who blesses all human decisions, while The

United Methodist Church’s Articles of Religion (Article VI) do not.

Again, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice does not advocate what The United Methodist Church teaches. Indeed, RCRC advocacy regularly contradicts United Methodist teaching. That is the truth of the matter.

And second, the speaker for the pro-RCRC petition states: “It is also my understanding that because of that, after our last General Conference, the coalition conformed to their advocacy to that which we had passed.” Again, this claim is based on the speaker’s “understanding,” and no evidence is presented.

This is a reference to the 2000 General Conference, which added to Par. 161J of the Social Principles this sentence: “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.”

As a matter of fact, before the 2000 General Conference, while not maintaining an official policy on partial-birth abortion, RCRC did indeed lobby against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban. This is clearly documented in Lifewatch (06/01/02) and need not be restated here. And since the 2000 General Conference’s statement against partial-birth abortion, RCRC has continued to oppose federal legislation which banned this form of abortion. For example, RCRC’s National Report (Issue 41, June 6, 2003) contains an article entitled “RCRC Urges Bush to Reject ‘Partial-Birth Abortion Ban’ Bill.” It concludes: “The Board of Directors of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice issued a statement denouncing the ‘deceptive and corrupt’ campaign ‘to further restrict the right of women to make reproductive decisions that is being waged under the guise of the ‘partial-birth abortion ban’ bill...and urging President Bush to refuse to sign the bill on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and endangers the health of women.’” Furthermore, the RCRC Board of Directors declared in its June 4, 2003 statement: “The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice denounces the ongoing campaign to further restrict the right of women to make reproductive decisions that is being waged under the guise of the ‘partial-birth abortion ban’ bill of 2003 (S. 3 and H.R. 760). As a people of faith, we urge the President and Congress to recognize this insidious campaign and reject it. We likewise urge the President and Congress to acknowledge the far-reaching, adverse effects of this legislation on women’s health. We oppose this legislation...” Many other RCRC statements, press releases, and articles that argue in favor of the partial-

birth abortion right—such as “Reintroducing So-Called ‘Partial-Birth Abortion Ban’ Bill Defies Reason,” “Unconstitutional ‘Partial-Birth’ Abortion Ban,” “Unconstitutional ‘Partial-Birth Abortion Ban’ Bill Politically Motivated,” and “RCRC Vows to Continue to Expose Deceptive Campaign about Abortion Procedures, Applauds Lawsuits to Stop the Ban”—could be quoted.

The point is this. In its 2000 General Conference, The United Methodist Church opposed partial-birth abortion in a qualified way. Before 2000, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice lobbied to keep partial-birth abortion legal. And after 2000, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice continued its lobbying efforts, without alteration, to keep partial-birth abortion legal. That is, RCRC has not, as the speaker stated, “conformed” its “advocacy to that which we [United Methodists] had passed [at the 2000 General Conference].” That is the truth of the matter.

TRUTH MATTERS

After they were stated, these two falsehoods—that RCRC’s advocacy is not inconsistent with United Methodist teaching and that RCRC adjusted its advocacy on partial-birth abortion to conform with United Methodist teaching—were not challenged during the General Conference plenary debate on the RCRC petition. Therefore, it is not surprising that General Conference voted to support Petition No. 40994. It would be reasonable to suggest that this petition passed only because it was supported by unchallenged falsehoods.

So, two United Methodist institutions remain affiliated with RCRC. Their affiliation was sustained, in large part, by the telling of falsehoods.

In The United Methodist Church, we should expect better. We should expect the truth to be told. And when the truth is not told, the truth about falsehood should be told. That is what is attempted above. (PTS) ♥

CORRESPONDENCE ON THE MARCH FOR WOMEN’S LIVES

Last June the editor of *Lifewatch* wrote to Ms. Genie Bank of the Women’s Division/General Board of Global Ministries and to Mr. Jim Winkler of the General Board of Church and Society. The letter invited them to respond to “The March for Women’s Lives and The United Methodist Church” (*Lifewatch*, June 2004) and to offer a defense of their institutions’ co-sponsorship of the March. A response from the Women’s Division is promised. Below is Mr. Winkler’s response and a reply from your editor.

July 21, 2004

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter and invitation to respond to the current issue of *Lifewatch*—specifically, your reflections on the March for Women’s Lives. As you

know, we did co-sponsor the March along with 1300 other organizations in the United States and around the globe.

I recognize that deep differences exist between Lifewatch and the position taken by GBCS [General Board of Church and Society] on the March. In spite of these differences, I am very grateful to you for your openness to ongoing dialogue. In fact, Paul, you reach out to me and this board on a regular basis. Thank you. I am also pleased Lifewatch holds its annual January 22 worship service in Simpson Memorial Chapel here at the United Methodist Building.

GBCS did not consider co-sponsoring what was then called the “March for Choice” last spring during the early stages of the planning process due to its narrow focus. Over time, additional primary sponsors and co-sponsors raised broader concerns and subsequently, a decision was made by the organizers to expand the March’s purpose to include major issues and

challenges faced by women around the world. These issues included justice, access to health care including reproductive health, access to family planning, access to safe and legal

abortion, access to economic opportunities to prevent and/or eradicate poverty[,] and access to safety and freedom from violence. Because our *Social Principles* advocate strongly for women’s rights, for access to comprehensive health care, family planning, educational opportunities, economic justice, the eradication of poverty and HIV/AIDS, our agency made the decision to sign-on.

Our participation in the March provided us a chance to advocate for those issues that, in fact, prevent abortion such as those listed above. In many respects, I believe the ministry of GBCS complements the mission of Lifewatch by working toward the enhancement of the quality of life for women around the world, which, in turn, would reduce or eliminate the need for abortion. Where Lifewatch and GBCS part ways is on the affirmation to keep abortion safe and legal and over our participation in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Grace and peace,

Jim Winkler

General Secretary

The Lifewatch community commends Mr. Jim Winkler for his willingness to engage some tough political, moral, theological, and ecclesiological issues. But of course this is possible when the power of the Holy Spirit maintains all of us in unity in Jesus Christ, and because the strength of the baptismal covenant binds The United Methodist Church to Jesus Christ and to His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Trusting in the Holy Spirit’s power and the baptismal covenant’s strength, we can enter into serious deliberation, even sharp debate, while respecting each other.

“Their affiliation [with RCRC] was sustained, in large part, by the telling of falsehoods.”

That said, this editor believes Mr. Winkler's thoughtful letter warrants a three-point response.

First, Lifewatch's article, "The March for Women's Lives and The United Methodist Church" (June 2004), reported how, during the planning stage, the framing of the March changed from a single-issue March (for choice) to a multi-issue March (for the sake of women's lives). According to newspaper sources, this change was probably made for organizational reasons: to involve younger leadership types in the event. Also, it was probably made for public-relations or marketing reasons: to promote the March beyond the hardcore, pro-choice community. It should be remembered that, even though the March was being advertised as a multi-issue event, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), to its credit, truthfully maintained that the March was fundamentally, first and last and always, about abortion rights.

Also, it must be admitted that the March for Women's Lives, as it played out on the ground, was not about many issues. Rather, the March was essentially for the freedom to choose abortion—and for the people, groups, and institutions that maintain that freedom. As the Lifewatch article indicated, Washington Post reporters declared as much. Most importantly, the speeches, signs, slogans, chants, and assemblies made quite clear: this March was about abortion, this March was motivated by pro-choice sentiment, this March was structured by pro-choice politics.

Consider the annual Orange Bowl. It could be said that the Orange Bowl is about elaborate parties, marvelous marching bands, exuberant school spirit, and college football. But the reality, the bottom line, is this: the Orange Bowl is about an important college football game. Remove the football game, and the Orange Bowl experience would vanish. Likewise, remove the abortion issue from the March for Women's Lives, and the March would have collapsed.

Second, Mr. Winkler "recognizes that deep differences exist between Lifewatch and the position taken by the GBCS on the March." Those "deep differences" are real, to be sure. But Lifewatch is more concerned that there are deep differences between The United Methodist Church's teaching on abortion (Paragraph 161J of The Book of Discipline) and what the March said about abortion. The United Methodist Church teaches "belief in the sanctity of unborn human life;" not once did the March recognize the humanity of the unborn. The United Methodist Church "cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control;" not one aspect of the March rejected birth-control abortion. The United Methodist Church "unconditionally reject[s] it [abortion] as a means of gender selection;" the March did not reject gender-selection abortion. The United Methodist Church "oppose[s] the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call[s] for the end of this practice..." with qualifications; the March favored the legality and use of partial-birth abortion without qualification. The United Methodist Church believes that "a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND
THE ANNUAL LIFEWATCH
SERVICE OF WORSHIP

(9:30 a.m.)

and the

ANNUAL LIFEWATCH
BOARD MEETING

(3:00 p.m.)

on January 24, 2005 (Monday)

at The United Methodist Building
100 Maryland Avenue, NE—Washington, DC

Fill a van or bus with brothers and sisters from your church, and join us for these events, which will serve the Gospel of Life.

consideration by the parties involved, with medical, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel;" the March declared that abortion is strictly a woman's choice, devoid of any counsel whatsoever.

Again, the deep differences are between The United Methodist Church and the March. Yet, Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society signed up to co-sponsor the March. Again, Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society supported a cause that flatly contradicted United Methodist teaching in the public, political arena. Again, supported by United Methodist dollars, Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society opposed United Methodist teaching. That is troubling. Very troubling.

And third, why does Mr. Winkler remain silent about the radicalism, even the fanaticism, of the March? Why does he not denounce the current of hatred—toward President Bush and all pro-life people—that fueled the March? (After all, that hatred was directed toward the many, if not most, United Methodists who are pro-life in some degree.) Why does he not denounce the vulgarity, the obscenity, the irreverence, the indignity of the March? Why does he not denounce the complete and total lack of reasoned, moral-political engagement displayed at the March? Intellectual honesty, it would seem, would lead a United Methodist leader, no matter what his or her position on abortion, to offer these critiques (and others) of the March.

Lifewatch, standing on United Methodist teaching on abortion (ambiguous and insufficient as it is), continues to believe that Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society made a grave error by co-sponsoring the March for Women's Lives. By co-sponsoring this March, they compromised and sullied The United Methodist Church and her witness in the political arena. By co-sponsoring this March, they led The United Methodist Church to participate in the demoralization of American society, the degradation of moral-political discourse, the coarsening of the general culture, and the undermining of Christian unity.

Mr. Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society have betrayed The United Methodist Church. However, they are capable, I believe, of changing from practicing pro-choice politics as usual to providing faithful witness on life and abortion. (PTS) ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- Lifewatch needs people in each Annual Conference who will create a manual of pro-life resources that pastors can use. If you (or anyone you know) would like to put together such a manual for your Annual Conference, please contact: Mrs. Cindy Evans/Lifewatch/1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043/(573)-896-2582/Lifewatch@mchsi.com. Thank you.
- While planning your 2005 church budget this fall, you would do well to remember the ministry of Lifewatch. Your congregation's contributions, however small or large, will be most helpful to our service of the Gospel of Life within The United Methodist Church. Many thanks, in advance, for remembering and supporting our ministry for life.
- The RENEW Network offers good, solid, evangelical materials for women's ministries in The United Methodist Church. RENEW is the women's program arm of the Good News organization; and it is led by Mrs. Faye Short, a gracious, wise, and faithful sister in Christ. As Mrs. Short puts it, "The RENEW Network provides information and supplemental resources for orthodox Christian women who network with us, uniting their voices for renewal within the organization of United Methodist Women and for accountability on the part of the Women's Division." If you or your church's women's group(s) would like more information about the RENEW Network, please contact Mrs. Faye Short/RENEW Network/P.O. Box 889/Cornelia, GA 30531/(706)-778-4812 (telephone)/(706)-778-4818 (fax)/renew1@hemc.net (email).
- Encourage others—through conversation, through teaching in the church, and through preaching from the pulpit—to vote in November for those candidates who

support policies that are respectful of the dignity of human life. Since there are around 1,300,000 abortions per year in the United States, abortion is currently the greatest assault on human dignity—among other assaults, to be sure—in our society. Therefore, learn where the candidates stand on abortion, and vote to increase the protection of unborn children and their mothers.

- The April 15-17, 2004 poll by Zogby International uncovered some heartening public-opinion trends on life and abortion in American society. Read for yourself.

Which of the following statements most closely describes your own position on the issue of abortion?
(African-Americans - 11% of respondents)

Abortions never legal: 22%

Abortions legal only when the life of the mother is in danger: 15%

Abortions legal only when the life of the mother is in danger or in cases of rape or incest: 25%

Abortions legal for any reason during the first 3 months: 23%

Abortions legal for any reason during the first 6 months: 7%

Abortions legal for any reason at any time during a woman's pregnancy: 8%

Notice that 62% (22% + 15% + 25%) of the respondents are generally protective of the unborn and mother, while only 38% (23% + 7% + 8%) are not.

Would you consider yourself pro-life or pro-choice?

Pro-Life: 49%

Pro-Choice: 45%

Do you agree or disagree that tax dollars should be used to pay for abortion?

Disagree: 74% Agree: 22%

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; and ④ HOLY ABORTION? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

I wish to order: ___ copies of The Right Choice (\$10.00/copy); ___ copies of The Church and Abortion (\$5.00/copy); ___ copies of Thinking Theologically about Abortion (\$7.00/copy); and ___ copies of Holy Abortion? (\$8.00/copy).

These prices include shipping/handling.

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Taskforce of
United Methodists on
Abortion and Sexuality

1564 Skyview Drive/Holts Summit, MO 65043

- * General Conference: Divine assistance, legislative action
- * RCRC involvement sustained by two falsehoods
- * March for Life on January 24, 2005

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Abortion should not be permitted after the fetal heartbeat has begun. (strongly/somewhat agree, strongly/somewhat disagree)

Agree: 61%
Disagree: 34%

Abortion should not be permitted after fetal brainwaves are detected. (strongly/somewhat agree, strongly/somewhat disagree)

Agree: 65%
Disagree: 28%

There is a growing consensus among scientists that human fetuses can feel pain after 20 weeks in the womb. Do you favor or oppose laws requiring that women who are 20 weeks or more along in their pregnancy be given information about fetal pain before having an abortion?

Agree: 77%
Disagree: 16%

(From National Right to Life News [May 2004])

● “Raisin in the Sun,” a play by Lorraine Hansbury about “a black family living on the cusp of cultural liberation in 1950s America,” is enjoying a revival on Broadway. The cast includes rapper P. Diddy (or Puff Daddy or Sean Combs, take your pick). Peggy Noonan, who has written weekly political and cultural essays for The Wall Street Journal, attended a press preview of the play and gave it a nice review in the Journal (April 29, 2004). In her review, Noonan writes that she “must tell you of the small moment that was actually a big moment. (There’s a possible spoiler coming up, so if you don’t know the story and mean to see the play, stop here.) An important moment in the plot is when a character announces she is pregnant, and considering having an abortion. In fact, she tells her mother-in-law, she’s already put \$5 down with the local abortionist. It is a dramatic moment. And you know as you watch it that when this play came out in 1960 it was received by the audience as a painful moment—a cry of pain from a woman who’s tired of hoping that life will turn out well.

“But this is the thing: Our audience didn’t know that. They didn’t understand it was tragic. They heard the

young woman say she was about to end the life of her child, and they applauded. Some of them cheered. It was stunning. The reaction seemed to startle the actors on stage, and shake their concentration. I was startled. I turned to my friend. ‘We have just witnessed a terrible cultural moment,’ I said. ‘Don’t I know it,’ he responded.

“And I can’t tell you how much that moment hurt. To know that the members of our audience didn’t know that the taking of a baby’s life is tragic—that the taking of your own baby’s life is beyond tragic, is almost operatic in its wailing woe.

“But our audience didn’t know. They reacted as if abortion were a political question. They thought that the fact that the young woman was considering abortion was a sign of liberation. They thought this cry of pain was in fact a moment of self-actualizing growth.

“Afterwards, thinking about it, I said to my friend, ‘When that play opened that plot point was understood—they knew it was tragic. And that was only what, 40 years ago.’ He said, ‘They would have known it was tragic even 25 years ago.’

“And it gave me a shiver because I knew it was true.”

Peggy Noonan’s point is probably softened by the fact that the audience, in which she watched this play, was composed of mostly press people, who are notoriously pro-choice. ♥

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.”